



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

WORLD REPORT

2015



Public Affairs and Religious Liberty
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904 USA



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

WORLD REPORT

2015



Public Affairs and Religious Liberty
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904 USA

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 5

COUNTRIES 7

SOURCES 403

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH & RELIGIOUS FREEDOM 406

THANK YOU 407

CONTACT INFORMATION 408

INTRODUCTION

In spite of an unprecedented global mobilization to promote religious freedom, including the recent advocacy of the pope, Catholic bishops, and politicians of various parties, the state of religious freedom in the world remains bleak. Various statistics point in the same direction, namely an increase in restrictions to religious freedom.

It seems that wherever a state favors one religion over others, or over non-belief, minorities experience discrimination. Sometimes they are physically and emotionally abused, persecuted, or even murdered.

This World Report examines each country's record in protecting and promoting the religious freedom of its citizens. Under each entry, a first section describes that nation's geopolitical, social, and economic circumstances. Then, the constitutional provisions for religious freedom are considered. The next section reports on government leaders' and public officials' active commitment or resistance to religious freedom. Next, the population's response to their constitution, as it relates to religious freedom, is examined, along with social attitudes toward minority faiths. The final section of each report focuses on the specific experience of Seventh-day Adventists in each country—it looks at the church's institutional freedom, along with any difficulties that have been experienced within the reporting period of 2012-2014.

The overarching thread that weaves together all the themes of this report is that of religious freedom. Religious freedom is more than freedom to worship. It is the freedom to profess, to practice, to propagate one's faith or belief. It is also the right to own property devoted to worship, the right to teach others, and to educate one's children within a specific faith tradition. Religious freedom also expresses itself in every person's prerogative to wear symbols and signs meaningful to one's religious allegiance. It is the right to perform religious rites that are not harmful to oneself or to others. It is every person's right not to be coerced or forced to believe or to deny one's deep convictions. Religious

freedom is therefore inseparable from the most intimate freedom: freedom of conscience.

Our focus on religious liberty is motivated by the fact that it is a distinctive freedom: at a popular level, it is a fundamental civil and political right. But, for us, it is much more. The working policy of the Seventh-day Adventist Church specifies that religious freedom is the primordial freedom, which undergirds all freedoms. It is central to every other human freedom. As such, we must do everything we can to promote and protect this foundational right.

As with other human rights, all freedoms are interdependent, interrelated, and indivisible. Advocating religious freedom, therefore, makes us participants in the affirmation and restoration of a core value—one that is necessary for the wholeness and fulfillment of human destiny.

Today, millions of people are suffering in many parts of the world. These are men and women who deliberately choose to remain loyal to their beliefs rather than compromise their conscience. It is clear that their ultimate value is not religious freedom *per se* but their God. It is not religious freedom that is their idol—God is their supreme value. For this, we honor them and give tribute to their loyalty.

My heartfelt thanks goes to José Ortiz and Bettina Krause who have tirelessly, diligently, and with competence worked on making this 2015 World Report a reality.

We hope this World Report will contribute to make us more human and humane as we continue to promote this fundamental freedom: religious liberty.

Ganoune Diop, Ph.D

Doctor Honoris Causa

Director, Public Affairs & Religious Liberty

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Secretary General, International Religious Liberty Association

LIST OF COUNTRIES

Afghanistan	11	Bulgaria	62
Albania	13	Burkina Faso	64
Algeria	14	Burma (Myanmar)	66
American Samoa	16	Burundi	68
Andorra	17	Cambodia	70
Angola	19	Cameroon	72
Anguilla	21	Canada	74
Antigua and Barbuda	22	Cape Verde	76
Argentina	24	Cayman Islands	77
Armenia	26	Central African Republic	79
Aruba	28	Chad	80
Australia	29	Chile	82
Austria	32	China	84
Azerbaijan	33	Colombia	87
Bahamas	36	Comoros	89
Bahrain	38	Congo, Democratic	
Bangladesh	40	Republic of the	91
Barbados	41	Congo, Republic of the	93
Belarus	43	Cook Islands	95
Belgium	44	Costa Rica	96
Belize	46	Cote d'Ivoire	98
Benin	48	Croatia	100
Bermuda	50	Cuba	102
Bhutan	51	Cyprus	104
Bolivia	52	Czech Republic	106
Bosnia and Herzegovina	54	Denmark	108
Botswana	56	Djibouti	110
Brazil	57	Dominica	112
British Virgin Islands	59	Dominican Republic	113
Brunei Darussalam	61	Ecuador	115

Egypt.....	117	Ireland.....	178
El Salvador.....	119	Israel	180
Equatorial Guinea	120	Italy.....	182
Eritrea.....	122	Jamaica	184
Estonia	125	Japan	186
Ethiopia.....	126	Jordan	188
Falkland Islands	129	Kazakhstan	190
Fiji.....	130	Kenya.....	192
Finland	132	Kiribati.....	194
France.....	134	Korea, Democratic	
French Guiana.....	136	People's Republic of.....	196
French Polynesia	137	Korea, Republic of	
Gabon.....	139	(South Korea)	198
Gambia.....	140	Kosovo.....	200
Georgia.....	142	Kuwait	202
Germany.....	144	Kyrgyzstan.....	204
Ghana	146	Laos	206
Greece	148	Latvia.....	208
Grenada.....	150	Lebanon	210
Guadeloupe	151	Lesotho	212
Guatemala	152	Liberia	214
Guinea.....	154	Libya.....	216
Guinea-Bissau	156	Lichtenstein	217
Guyana	157	Lithuania.....	219
Haiti	159	Luxembourg	220
Honduras	161	Macedonia	222
Hong Kong.....	163	Madagascar.....	224
Hungary	165	Malawi.....	226
Iceland.....	167	Malaysia	227
India	169	Maldives	229
Indonesia	171	Mali	231
Iran	173	Malta.....	233
Iraq	176	Marshall Islands.....	235

Martinique.....	236	Pitcairn Island.....	289
Mauritania.....	237	Poland.....	290
Mauritius.....	239	Portugal.....	292
Mexico.....	241	Puerto Rico.....	294
Micronesia, Federated States of.....	243	Qatar.....	295
Moldova.....	244	Reunion.....	297
Monaco.....	246	Romania.....	298
Mongolia.....	247	Russian Federation.....	300
Montenegro.....	249	Rwanda.....	302
Montserrat.....	251	Saint Kitts and Nevis.....	304
Morocco.....	252	Saint Lucia.....	306
Mozambique.....	254	Saint Pierre and Miquelon.....	307
Myanmar (Burma).....	66	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.....	308
Namibia.....	256	Samoa.....	309
Nauru.....	258	San Marino.....	311
Nepal.....	259	Sao Tome and Principe.....	313
Netherlands.....	261	Saudi Arabia.....	314
New Caledonia.....	263	Senegal.....	316
New Zealand.....	264	Serbia.....	318
Nicaragua.....	265	Seychelles.....	320
Niger.....	268	Sierra Leone.....	322
Nigeria.....	269	Singapore.....	324
Niue.....	272	Slovakia.....	326
Norway.....	273	Slovenia.....	328
Oman.....	274	Solomon Islands.....	329
Pakistan.....	276	Somalia.....	331
Palau.....	278	South Africa.....	333
Panama.....	279	South Sudan.....	335
Papua New Guinea.....	281	Spain.....	337
Paraguay.....	283	Sri Lanka.....	340
Peru.....	285	Sudan.....	342
Philippines.....	287	Suriname.....	344

Swaziland.....	345	Uganda.....	374
Sweden	347	Ukraine	376
Switzerland	348	United Arab Emirates	378
Syria	350	United Kingdom	380
Taiwan	352	United States of America.....	382
Tajikistan.....	354	United States Virgin Islands	384
Tanzania.....	356	Uruguay	385
Thailand	358	Uzbekistan	387
Timor-Leste.....	360	Vanuatu	388
Togo.....	362	Venezuela	390
Tonga	364	Vietnam	392
Trinidad and Tobago.....	365	Wallis and Futuna.....	395
Tunisia	367	Yemen	396
Turkey	369	Zambia	397
Turkmenistan	371	Zimbabwe	399
Tuvalu	373		

COUNTRIES

AFGHANISTAN

Population: 31,822,848 (July 2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 5

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 80%, Shia Muslim 19%, other (Sikh, Hindu, Baha'i, Christian) less than 1%, Christians range between 2,000-3000 persons

Perspectives on Current Issues: Afghanistan sits on the ancient “Silk Road” that connected European and Asian trade routes. As such, the Afghan people are a culturally diverse nation living on a very rugged landscape. Decades of war have left the Afghan economy in shambles and international aid represents 98% of the GDP. While the fall of the oppressive Taliban regime at the hand of international forces in 2001 was welcomed, the invasion created a power vacuum eagerly filled by other extremist groups. Analysts speak of the need for an “international financial perfusion,” but ongoing insecurity makes Westerners leery of investing in the country. A severe drought has affected more than three million people in the north and west of the country, yet the harvest of opium continues unabated. Afghanistan provides 90% of the world’s opium, which is processed to make heroin. A potential financial boon may be found in Afghanistan's considerable natural resources (copper, iron, cobalt, chromite, and lithium), which have an estimated value of one to three trillion dollars. The treatment of women, though much better than during Taliban rule, is far from satisfactory. The rights to food, to water, and to life are fundamentally jeopardized by armed conflicts.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution declares Islam to be the religion of the state. “We the people of Afghanistan: Believe firmly in Almighty God, relying on His divine will and adhering to the Holy religion of Islam . . .

observing the United Nations Charter as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” It also states “no law can be contrary to the beliefs and provisions of the sacred religion of Islam.” However, it contains provision for followers of other religions “to exercise their faith and perform their religious rites within the limits of the provisions of the law.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The state does not in reality allow for other religious practices. All citizens are considered Muslim by default. Legally, non-Muslims are not permitted to marry; however, the Supreme Court has ruled that they may as long as they have not declared themselves to be such. Though there are no laws against proselytizing, the practice is viewed as being contrary to Islam and conversion away from Islam is punishable by death. By the end of 2013, however, no religious minorities were still imprisoned based solely on practicing their religion.

Private Attitudes and Actions: The minority Sikh, Hindu, and Christian communities experience social pressure regarding the practice of their religion. Hindus and Sikhs have found it difficult to cremate dead loved ones; their children also face discrimination at school. Reportedly, most Baha’is and Christians choose not to worship publically for fear of harassment or violence.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are serious problems for non-Muslim religious minorities.

Freedom to Evangelize: Proselytizing is frowned upon and it is illegal to attempt to convert a Muslim.

ALBANIA

Population: 3,020,209 (July 2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 384

Religious Groups: Muslim 59% (Sunni 57% and Bektashi 2%—a form of Shi'a Sufism), Catholic 10%, Albanian Orthodox 7%, other (Baha'i, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), no response 20% (2011 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Albania lies along the Adriatic coast and just north of Greece. Though this country declared independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912, the rest of the 20th century brought two more invasions during the World Wars. Albania reclaimed its independence, but fell into communist and strongly isolationist rule for 47 years before the first openly democratic elections in 1992. Due mainly to its long stretch under Ottoman rule, a great majority of Albanians are Muslim. The Albanian economy is showing signs of growth, particularly in the area of agriculture. The country's debt, however, continues to be equal to 60% of its GDP. Human rights concerns include domestic violence, human trafficking, poor prison conditions, and allegations of torture and mistreatment while in police custody. Albanians seek EU membership, but the country must take steps to correct these issues. According to Transparency International, Albania is currently the most corrupt country in Europe.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Part Two, Chapter II, and Article 24, "(1) Freedom of conscience and of religion is guaranteed. (2) Everyone is free to choose or to change his religion or beliefs, as well as to express them individually or collectively, in public or private life, through cult, education, practices or the performance of rituals. (3) No one may be compelled or prohibited to take part or not in a religious community or in religious practices or to make his beliefs or faith public."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice, though the predominant religious communities (Sunni Muslim, Bektashi, Orthodox, and Catholic) enjoy a greater degree of official recognition (for example, national holidays) and social status based on their historical presence in the country. Public schools in Albania are secular. Compensation was paid to the Orthodox Church for land seized by the Communist government. However, many property claims remain unresolved.

Private Attitudes and Actions: The government seeks to educate the population on issues of tolerance and diversity. For the most part, Albanians are tolerant of various religious communities. There are no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. The Interreligious Council of Albania reports that religious leaders frequently attend the ceremonies of other religious groups out of mutual respect.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are five Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a publishing house. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

ALGERIA

Population: 38,813,722 (July 2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 74

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 99%, Christian (Roman Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, Methodist, Reformed Christians, Anglican) and Jewish 1%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Over a century of French control sparked the violent conflict in the 1950s that led to Algerian independence in 1962.

Because the Sahara Desert covers four-fifths of the country, a great majority of Algerians live in the north, along the coast. The first attempt at open, multi-party elections led to decades of internal armed struggle. Because the secularist elite feared that an Islamist political party would come to power, elections were scrapped and civil war ensued. In 1999, the current head of state, President Bouteflika, was elected in what many consider a fraudulent election and he continued to dominate subsequent elections. The Algerian government continues to struggle with terrorist groups claiming to have ties with Al-Qaeda and operating within the country. Algeria is a major producer of oil and natural gas. This wealth, however, has not improved the lives of average Algerians. The country ranks 100th of 183 countries according to Transparency International's index of perceived corruption. Human rights concerns include police brutality, arbitrary detentions, death while in custody, and discrimination against women. The privilege or impunity of state officials is considered a social and political plague by several human rights organizations.

Constitutional Provision: Article 4 of the constitution states: "Islam is the religion of the State. The Republic guarantees each person the respect of his opinions and beliefs, and the free exercise of worship."

State Attitudes and Actions: Islam is the official state religion of Algeria, but the constitution purports to protect individual freedom of religion. In 2008, the government began enforcing Ordinance 06-03, which regulates non-Muslim religious practice. This resulted in the closure of approximately 27 churches and legal action against members of some Christian groups. Ordinance 06-03 restricts public assembly for the purpose of worship and calls for the creation of a national commission to regulate the registration process. The Catholic Church is the only officially recognized non-Muslim religious group in the country. The Anglican, Seventh-day Adventist, and other Protestant churches have pending registration requests with the government and report no government interference in holding services. Proselytizing by non-Muslims is illegal and

punishable by a fine of up to 1 million dinars (\$12,816 USD). Non-Muslims may, however, provide humanitarian aid in Algeria.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Foreigners of different faiths are generally treated with respect, as long as they do not proselytize. Radical Islamists, who seek to rid the country of those who do not share their extremist interpretation of Islam, commit violent acts and continue to pose a significant security threat.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no known Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church lost all of its institutions after the 1962 revolution.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: As a religious minority in a Muslim nation, Adventists who wish to keep Sabbath find it a continual hindrance in obtaining work and attending school.

Freedom to Evangelize: Proselytizing is illegal. Adventists who hold private worship services are threatened and harassed.

AMERICAN SAMOA

Population: 54,517 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,785

Religious Groups: Christian Congregationalist 50%, Catholic 20%, Protestant and other 30%

Perspectives on Current Issues: It is widely accepted that these Pacific islands were settled in about 1000 B.C. It was not until the 1700s, however, that any European explorers reached the Samoan islands. In 1899, Germany claimed the western portion of Samoa, followed soon thereafter by the United States claiming the eastern portion. The islands have been divided since. Germany lost control over Western Samoa during World War I, but it was not until 1962 that Western Samoa became the independent State of Samoa. Eastern Samoa is now known as American Samoa, an unincorporated territory

of the United States. American Samoans are United States citizens, but do not have the same voting rights as citizens living in any of the fifty states.

Constitutional Provision: The United States Constitution governs religious liberties in American Samoa. The First Amendment states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Under the United States Constitution, American Samoa respects the rights of individuals to worship according to the dictates of conscience.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of religious hostility or bias in American Samoa.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are ten Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is recognized as a legitimate Christian denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

ANDORRA

Population: 85,458 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 10

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic is majority; smaller groups include Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Anglican, Seventh-day Adventist, Baha’i, Unification

Church, New Apostolic Church, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witness

Perspectives on Current Issues: Landlocked between France and Spain and nestled among the Pyrenees mountains lies the tiny Principality of Andorra. For over 700 years, a co-principality consisting of Spanish (the Bishop of Urgell) and French (the French head of state) leaders ruled Andorra. In 1993, however, Andorrans enacted a modern constitution with parliamentary representation, limiting the two princes to ceremonial roles. A very rich country, Andorra's economy consists mainly of the tourism and international banking sectors. Though not formally a member of the EU, Andorra does share open borders with France and Spain, and has adopted the Euro currency.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Title II, Chapter 1, Article 6, "All persons are equal before the law. No one may be discriminated against on grounds of birth, race, sex, origin, religion, opinions or any other personal or social condition." Title II, Chapter 3, Article 11, states additional provisions, which safeguard religious freedom.

State Attitudes and Actions: The state generally supports religious freedom. While no law requires registration of religious organizations, only the Catholic Church has legal status. All other religious organizations are considered cultural institutions and are permitted to operate freely. The Catholic Church provides teachers for religion classes, and the government pays their salaries. The government was willing to offer Arabic classes, but the Muslim community was not able to find an Imam to teach. After concluding a study of Andorra, the Council of Europe recommended that the government work to inform Andorrans on various religious minorities living in their country.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Attitudes among religious groups appear to be amicable and tolerant.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no Seventh-day Adventist churches in Andorra.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

ANGOLA

Population: 19,088,106 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 431,809

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 50%, Protestant (including Methodist, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Congregationalist, Assembly of God) 33%, atheist 9%, other 8% (including animism, indigenous religious beliefs, and Islam)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Angolans achieved independence from Portugal in 1975 but suffered through a 27-year civil war that ended in 2002. It is estimated that 1.5 million people died and 5 million people were displaced due to this horrific conflict. In 2010, Angolans adopted a new constitution and elected Jose Eduardo Dos Santos president. Angola was the source of “blood diamonds” throughout the civil war that led the UN to freeze gem industry bank accounts in the country. This nation is currently working to rebuild much of the infrastructure lost during the conflict. Revenue from oil production has not been enough to lift the economy; government corruption has not allowed revenues to benefit Angolans relying on international food aid. Angola gained a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2015-16 term.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 8: “The Republic of Angola shall be a secular State, and there shall be separation between the State and Churches . . . Religions shall be respected and the State shall protect Churches and places and objects of worship, provided they abide by the laws of the State.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government requires religious groups to register with the Ministries of Justice and Culture for legal status and has thereby significantly limited the number registered. Groups must provide general background information and have at least 100,000 adult adherents to qualify for registration. The government recognizes 85 denominations. More than 800 other religious organizations, many of which are Congolese- or Brazilian-based Christian Evangelical groups, have registration applications pending. They do not meet the membership requirement of at least 100,000 members and are therefore not eligible to receive legal status, but the government does not bar their activity. The Muslim community in particular is affected by this numerical limitation, as many are believed to be illegal immigrants and do not count towards the legal minimum. The government banned 17 religious groups from practicing harmful religious rituals in private residences. In 2013, police shut down or destroyed various “illegal” mosques operating in the country that were not permitted to register.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Members of the clergy regularly use their pulpits to criticize government policies, although church leaders report self-censorship regarding particularly sensitive issues such as human rights, poverty, governance, and political intolerance. There are isolated reports of societal abuse or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Public attitudes toward Islam are generally negative. Cultural differences between Angolan and Muslim West African immigrants are cited as a basis for negative views toward Islam, as is the perceived link between Islam

and illegal immigration. Government agencies, church groups, and civil society organizations continue campaigns against traditional religions that involve shamans, employ animal sacrifices, or are identified as practicing witchcraft. Both private and government-owned news outlets continually criticize immigrants from the Democratic Republic of the Congo for allegedly importing syncretic faiths and witchcraft.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,107 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates two schools, one hospital, three healthcare facilities, one publishing house, and one Bible correspondence school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is officially recognized by the government.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: It is reported that there are some instances of employment problems related to employees wishing not to work on Saturday.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

Efforts to Promote Religious Freedom: In June 2008, an estimated 45,000 people attended the largest Festival of Religious Freedom ever organized in the world in Luanda, Angola. This followed a Congress on Religious Freedom that had 600 participants and was organized by the Angola Religious Freedom Association with the support of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Angola.

ANGUILLA

Population: 16,086 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,030

Religious Groups: Christian 90% (Protestant 45%, Anglican 30%, Methodist 23.9%, Seventh-day Adventist 7.6%, Catholic 5.50%), other 5.1%, none 4%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once administratively joined with Saint Kitts and Nevis, Anguilla separated in 1980 and has since been recognized as its own British Overseas Territory. With very few natural resources, the Anguillan economy consists mainly of luxury tourism. Almost all Anguillans claim African ancestry.

Constitutional Provision: Anguilla is an overseas territory of the United Kingdom and, consistent with United Kingdom policy, affords full religious freedom.

State Attitudes and Actions: All citizens of Anguilla enjoy full religious freedom.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Generally speaking, harmony exists among the various religious groups in Anguilla.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are three Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Population: 91,295 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 9,060

Religious Groups: Protestant 68.3% (Anglican 17.6%, Seventh-day Adventist 12.4%, Pentecostal 12.2%, Moravian 8.3%, Methodist 5.6%, Wesleyan Holiness 4.5%, Church of God 4.1%, Baptist 3.6%), Roman Catholic 8.2%, other 12.2%, unspecified 5.5%, none 5.9%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Antigua and Barbuda are two islands within one sovereign state. Colonized by the British before independence in 1981, the nation is currently a Commonwealth member. Antigua and Barbuda is one of the wealthiest countries in the Caribbean due, mainly, to its tourism and offshore banking industries. Over 90% of the country's citizens are of African descent.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter II, Article 3 of the constitution states: "Whereas every person in Antigua and Barbuda is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, that is to say, the right, regardless of race, place of origin, political opinions or affiliations, color, creed or sex, but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for the public interest, to each and all of the following, namely . . . b. freedom of conscience, of expression (including freedom of the press) and of peaceful assembly and association. . . ."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government has been consistent with regard to allowing religious freedom. The Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs is the main government contact with religious organizations. It is also the agency that issues visas for religious workers entering the country. Public education is secular and there is no religious instruction in public schools. However, Rastafarians have complained about being unable to use marijuana for religious purposes.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of strife among religious organizations.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 30 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is able to evangelize freely.

ARGENTINA

Population: 43,024,374 (July 2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 106,634

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 76%, other (Baptist, Jewish, Muslim, Jehovah's Witness, Lutheran, Methodist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) less than 5% each

Perspectives on Current Issues: The second largest country in South America, Argentina has a wide and varied climate that ranges from the sub-tropics to the sub-Antarctic. Though once considered one of the richest countries in the world, Argentina's turbulent 20th century has left its mark on the economy. Members of military dictatorships (called *Juntas*), who committed countless human rights atrocities, are only recently beginning to stand trial for acts committed particularly in the 1970s and 80s. Argentina has also been the refuge for Jewish communities fleeing from Spain in the 16th century as well as Nazi Germany during World War II. In recent years, the Argentine economy has begun to heal and the nation achieved a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council through 2014.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Part 1, Sections 2, 19, and 20: (2) "The Federal Government supports the Catholic Apostolic Religion." (19) "The private actions of men which in no way offend public order or morality, nor injure a third party, are only reserved to God and are exempted from the authority of judges. No inhabitant of the Nation shall be obliged to perform what the law does not demand nor deprived of what the law does not prohibit." (20) "Foreigners enjoy within the territory of the Nation all civil

rights of citizens; they may exercise their industry, trade and profession; own real property, buy and sell it; navigate the rivers and coast; practice freely their religion.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally allows and protects the free exercise of religion. However, the Catholic Church enjoys some privileges not afforded other religious communions. All non-Catholic religious bodies must register as civil, not religious, organizations with the Secretariat of Worship. Religious groups may operate privately in homes without registration, but in order to operate publicly they must register. Registration also allows a religious group to enjoy tax-exempt status. While Argentina is a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, there have been recent reports of anti-Semitism on the part of government officials. In 2013, a local municipality’s government issued tax payment receipts with a phrase calling for the extermination of Jews. The Federal Argentine government is investigating.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most faiths have an amicable relationship with each other. Reports of anti-Semitism have dropped by 7% since 2011, but other problems persist. As a result of a number of protests in Buenos Aires—the Argentine capital city—several United Methodist churches were vandalized along with the Metropolitan Cathedral. Jewish and Christian leaders banded together to denounce the attacks.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 563 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, 19 high schools, four radio stations, two sanitariums, and one hospital. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There have been some issues with employers. However, work has been done on the local level to allow for Sabbath exemptions. Students have been successful in winning exemption from testing on Sabbath.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

ARMENIA

Population: 3,060,361 (July 2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 833

Religious Groups: Armenian Apostolic 92%, other (Roman Catholic, Armenian Uniate Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelical, Molokan, Pentecostal, Seventh-day Adventist, Baptist, charismatic Christian, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Yezidi, Jewish, Sunni Muslim, Shia Muslim, pagan, other) less than 5% each (2011 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Armenia has been called the world's first officially Christian nation, a status it traces back to the 4th century A.D. The geographical location of Armenia, however, has made its political life difficult. Turks, Russians, and Persians have all left their mark on its national identity and challenged the country's autonomy. The horrific genocide of 1915-1917 and the dispute with Azerbaijan over the ethnic Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh are examples of international conflicts that have had a deep impact. In 1991, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the people of Armenia voted for independence and set up a presidential system of government with a western-style parliament. However, intimidation, harassment, and restriction of freedom of expression by political opposition movements, journalists, and media outlets are employed to stifle criticism of the government.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter 2, Article 26, "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

This right includes freedom to change the religion or belief and freedom to either alone or in community with others manifest the religion or belief, through preaching, church ceremonies and other religious rites. The exercise of this right may be restricted only by law in the interests of the public security, health, morality or the protection of rights and freedoms of others.”

State Attitudes and Actions: There are challenges to the practice of religious freedom in Armenia. According to the constitution, Armenia has no official state religion, however, the same document expresses the influence of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the history and culture of the nation. While all registered religious organizations are entitled to similar benefits, the Armenian Apostolic Church receives preferential treatment, particularly with respect to state subsidies and influence in some public school courses. In 2013, the government approved a change in law that allows private control over an alternative to military service. Jehovah’s Witnesses had been previously incarcerated for refusing to perform military service or any state-mandated alternative. Most have since been released. “Soul hunting” is a term used in Armenia to describe forceful conversion or proselytizing, and this is illegal. Reports indicate that this has been enforced on minority religious groups and never on the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Council of Europe concluded a study that found that public schools in this country promote negative ideas about ethnic and religious minorities.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are reports of societal abuses based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. In general, attitudes toward minority groups are negative. Most media outlets continue to label religious groups other than the Armenian Apostolic Church as “sects” in their broadcasting and some have transmitted negative reports about them. Some Protestant and Jehovah’s Witness groups have reported violent attacks on places of worship, clergy, and members.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 19 Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The anti-proselytizing law in Armenia is vague and selectively enforced. In some cases, Adventists are free to evangelize, but in some locations that freedom is greatly restricted.

ARUBA

Population: 110,663 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 833

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 75.3%, Protestant 4.9% (includes Methodist 0.9%, Seventh-day Adventist 0.9%, Anglican 0.4%, other Protestant 2.7%), Jehovah's Witness 1.7%, other 12%, none 5.5%, unspecified 0.5%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once part of the Netherlands Antilles (disbanded in 2010), Aruba separated and became an autonomous country associated with the Netherlands in 1986. The option for Aruban independence was tabled by the Netherlands in the 1990s. Aruba has enjoyed a healthy economy and one of the highest standards of living in the Caribbean thanks, in part, to mining and oil refining. Aruba has also developed a substantial tourism industry with over 1.5 million visitors per year, and a robust financial services sector.

Constitutional Provision: Aruba is governed by the constitution of the Netherlands, which states in Chapter 1, Article 6: “(1) Everyone shall have the right to profess freely his religion or belief, either individually or in community with others, without prejudice to his responsibility under the law. (2) Rules concerning the exercise of this right other than in buildings and enclosed places

may be laid down by Act of Parliament for the protection of health, in the interest of traffic and to combat or prevent disorders.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Aruba allows for the free exercise of religion. The Catholic Church receives preferential treatment, but other religions are not restricted from practicing.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of strife among the various religious groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are seven Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

AUSTRALIA

Population: 22,507,617 (July 2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 58,187

Religious Groups: Christian (Roman Catholic 25%, Anglican 17%, other) 61%, no affiliation 22.3%, Buddhist 2.5%, Muslim 2.2%, Hindu 1.3% and Jewish 0.5% (2011 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Settled by the British in the 1770s, Australia did not become one unified commonwealth until 1901. Now an independent member of the Commonwealth nations, Australia maintains close ties to Britain and the English monarchy continues to serve as Head of State for Australia. This nation was vital to the Allied efforts in the Pacific region for both World Wars. Australia’s rich ecosystem of flora and fauna are mostly unique to this

region of the world. The country's public services are among the best in the world. Australia ranks as the 11th least corrupt nation in the world according to Transparency International. However, human rights advocates have criticized the treatment of indigenous peoples, refugees, and asylum seekers. Australia's once heavily criticized immigration policy, "White Only," which preferred admitting only European immigrants, has been dismantled as more immigrants arrive from Asia and other parts of the world. Immigration continues to be a sensitive political issue. Australia gained a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council through 2014.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution provides, in Chapter V, Article 116: "The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth."

State Attitudes and Actions: Australia generally provides religious freedom for its citizens, and Australia has specific laws, such as the Racial Discrimination Act, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act, and the Workplace Relations Act, to protect individuals from religious discrimination in general and in the workplace in particular. Seven of the eight states have explicit provisions to protect against religious discrimination. South Australia is the only state that lacks explicit protection. All religions generally have the same rights to status, land, and building houses of worship. Religious education is provided in most public schools, and parents have the right to exempt their children from these classes. Australia's national government also provides some funding for private faith-based schools. There is no registration requirement for religious groups, but if a group wishes to obtain tax-exempt status it must register with the Australian Tax Office. The government has also recently instituted the "People of Australia" initiative to foster cohesiveness and religious tolerance in Australian society.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most faiths have an amicable relationship with each other. The Executive Council of Australian Jewry recently reported a significant increase in the number of incidents of anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, religious coalitions, such as the National Council of Churches in Australia and the Australian Council of Christians and Jews, have been working to promote greater religious cooperation. The International Religious Liberty Association Meeting of Experts—an annual event supported by the Adventist Church—was held at the Law school of the University of Sydney in August 2011.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 420 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college, one junior college, 23 schools, one hospital, 16 nursing homes, nine bookstores, and one health food company. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Problems occasionally occur for Adventists observing the Sabbath. Sometimes an employer adjusts the work schedule, requiring labor on the Sabbath. Students are sometimes required to take exams on the Sabbath. In most cases, a local pastor or church official has been able to intercede. Two Seventh-day Adventist doctors were required to write their exams on the Sabbath in order for them to gain opportunity to train as surgeons. Several official attempts were made to get an exemption, but they were all rejected. One doctor has withdrawn from the program and the other, at the time of this report, had his matter before the courts. Additionally, a Seventh-day Adventist was supposed to write a language exam as part of her application for permanent residence in Australia. The exam, which is administered by a private organization, was scheduled on a Saturday. The Australian Union Conference was able to get an exemption for her after it made a formal submission to the government's Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission.

Freedom to Evangelize: Seventh-day Adventists have typically enjoyed freedom to evangelize. Since the passage of the Racial and Religious Toleration

Act of 2001, Adventists and others could be in violation of the law through literature distribution and public evangelism, especially since Adventist literature often challenges widely accepted beliefs.

AUSTRIA

Population: 8,223,062 (July 2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 4,045

Religious Groups: Catholic 64%, Muslim 6%, unaffiliated 12%, other (Lutheran, Swiss Reformed, Eastern Orthodox, Jehovah's Witness, other Christian, Jewish, other non-Christian religious groups) less than 5% each

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once the seat of the mighty Austro-Hungarian Empire, Austria was reduced to its current borders following World War I. Austria was subsequently occupied by the Allied Forces following World War II and did not regain independence until 1955. Austria has since declared itself to be “perpetually neutral.” In 1995, however, Austria drew criticism as many argued the country abandoned its neutrality upon entering the European Union. Vienna—the nation’s capital city—is the seat of various international organizations. Austria has long enjoyed economic prosperity, but now faces the same challenges that have befallen the rest of the euro zone. Even though overall unemployment is still low compared to other European countries, youth unemployment is on the rise. Human rights advocates have criticized Austria for its treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers. Other allegations of mistreatment concern detainees held in police custody.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter 1, Article 7, “(1) All nationals (Austrian citizens) are equal before the law. Privileges based upon birth, sex, estate, class or religions are excluded.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice. However, religious minority groups complain about

second-class “confessional community” status and the government classifies some of these groups as “sects.”

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are some reports of societal abuse or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Muslims complain about incidents of societal discrimination and verbal harassment. Various reports of anti-Semitism perpetrated by Neo-Nazi groups were also reported.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 50 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a seminary, a high school, a mobile homecare service, a nursing home, and a publishing house. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is classified as a “confessional community” which limits the organizational privileges of the church in Austria. The government provides financial support to private schools run by any of the 14 officially recognized religious societies, but the Seventh-day Adventist Church is absent from this list.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventists have often lost their jobs due to Sabbath observance. In some cases, arrangements have been made to satisfy both employee and employer.

Freedom to Evangelize: Adventists are generally free to worship without hindrance, but sometimes members are not able to rent large halls to hold evangelistic meetings.

AZERBAIJAN

Population: 9,686,210 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 524

Religious Groups: Muslim 96% (Shi’a 65%, Sunni 35%), other (Russian

Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Seventh-day Adventist, other Christian, Jewish, Molokan, Baha'i, non-believers) 4% (2011 data). Since independence in 1991, a number of religious groups considered by the government to be foreign or "non-traditional" have established a presence, including Salafist Muslim, Pentecostal and other evangelical Christian, Jehovah's Witness, and Hare Krishna.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Azerbaijan spent most of the 20th century as a Soviet republic and gained independence upon the collapse of the Soviet Union. Azerbaijan is a nation of ethnically Turkic and predominantly Shi'a Muslim peoples. In 1988, a violent conflict erupted between this nation and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region—a collection of provinces in Azerbaijan's territory that is mostly inhabited by ethnic-Armenian Christians. Though a cease-fire was brokered in 1994, the area remains a point of contention for the two countries. Azerbaijan's economy is largely dependent on the country's petroleum and natural gas resources. Human rights defenders critique the government, which they see as repressive. In 2009, the government eliminated presidential term limits. According to Transparency International, Azerbaijan's government is among the most corrupt in the world. There are also reports of widespread restrictions of freedom of religion, of expression, of assembly, and of the press. Journalists are repeatedly harassed and intimidated. There are allegations that opponents of the regime are tortured while in police custody.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution was changed by national referendum in March 2009. Two changes put new limitations on the spread of religion. Chapter 1, Section II, Article 18 of the constitution reads: "Religion shall be separated from the State in the Azerbaijan Republic. All religions shall be equal by law." Article 18 Part 2 reads: "Spreading of and propagandizing religion (religious movements), humiliating people's dignity, and contradicting the principles of humanism are prohibited." Article 48 reads: "Everyone has the

right to define his/her attitude to religion, to profess, individually or together with others, any religion or to profess no religion, to express and spread one's beliefs concerning religion. Everyone is free to carry out religious rituals however this should not violate public order and contradict public morals. Religious beliefs and convictions do not excuse infringements of the law." A new section has been added to Article 48. It reads: "No one shall be forced to express (to demonstrate) his or her religious faith and belief, to execute religious rituals and participate in religious ceremonies."

State Attitudes and Actions: Though the constitution provides religious freedom, in practice this right has often been infringed upon. Traditional religious groups—Muslims, Russian and Armenian Orthodox adherents—and other religious organizations have faced harassment. The law prohibits foreigners from proselytizing but does not inhibit citizens' rights to do so. Religions that the government considers "non-traditional" have been denied registration and as such, the right to engage in financial transactions, own land or perform legally sanctioned marriages. Human rights monitors have criticized the government for not providing alternative service options for conscientious objectors. Religious leaders continue to report that the government seems to require the re-registration of certain religious groups as a means to inhibit those groups from operating in Azerbaijan.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Since the major religions of Azerbaijan are intimately linked with cultural heritage, changing one's religion is not favored. Non-traditional religious groups are generally viewed with a measure of suspicion. Muslim citizens who convert to other religions often become victims of religious prejudice and social ostracism. Groups, especially Evangelical Christians, involved in proselytizing often face hostility. Foreign Islamic missionary activity is also discouraged.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are five Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized denomination and is registered with the state.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: The religious climate in Azerbaijan contributes to Seventh-day Adventist employees experiencing difficulties in the workplace. Most businesses operate seven days a week, making it difficult for Adventists to observe the Sabbath.

Freedom to Evangelize: Adventists are allowed to have houses of worship, but they frequently have trouble when they seek to rent a public hall to hold evangelistic meetings. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is only allowed to evangelize in localities where it is officially registered and possesses its own house of worship. Restrictions are placed upon the amount and type of Adventist literature that can be imported, produced, or distributed. All literature must be reviewed by a government agency.

BAHAMAS

Population: 321,834 (July 2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 23,624

Religious Groups: Baptist 35%, Anglican/Episcopalian 15%, Roman Catholic 14%, Pentecostal 8%, Church of God 5%, Seventh-day Adventist 5%, Methodist 4%. Smaller religious communities include Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Baha'i, Jehovah's Witness, Rastafarian, Muslim, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (2010 census).

Perspectives on Current Issues: Situated just to the north of Cuba and to the east of the US state of Florida, the Bahamas is a Caribbean archipelago that achieved its independence from Britain in 1973. Though per-capita income is very high, the Bahamas faces many challenges related to illegal drug trafficking. While offshore banking and shipping remain major mainstays in the

Bahamian economy, millions of tourists visit the islands each year, and over half the population is employed in the service industry.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter III, Article 22: “(1) Except with his consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience, and for the purpose of this Article, the said freedom includes freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others, and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government of the Bahamas generally respects the religious freedom of its citizens. The government meets regularly with The Bahamas Christian Council to discuss social issues in the country. Religious instruction is provided in public schools and standardized testing, but parents may choose not to have their children participate. The practice of Obeah, a form of Voodoo, continues to be illegal and is punishable by up to three months in prison. In May 2013, a Rastafarian group lobbied the Bahamas Constitutional Commission to consider proposals that include the official recognition of the Rastafarian religion, the outlawing of discrimination against Rastafarians in jails and by police officers. The Commission referred the matter to the country’s judiciary branch.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Among the various religious groups in the Bahamas there is generally great harmony. In 2013, The Bahamas Christian Council was instrumental in leading a campaign against legalizing gambling in the country. A referendum held in January of that year resulted in the Bahamian people rejecting the proposal.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 55 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one high school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

BAHRAIN

Population: 1,314,089 (July 2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 59

Religious Groups: Muslim 90%, other (Christian, Hindu, Baha'i, Jewish) 1%. Foreigners constitute an estimated 51% of the total population. A majority of these are migrant workers and more than half of them are non-Muslim, including Hindu, Buddhist, Christian (primarily Roman Catholic, Protestant, Syrian Orthodox, and Mar Thoma), Baha'i, and Sikh.

Perspectives on Current Issues: The small, island nation of Bahrain is situated within the Gulf of Bahrain, off the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia. Bahrain was once a British protectorate, but was granted independence in 1971 and continued its tradition of governing by means of a powerful monarch. Unlike its neighbors, Bahrain's economy does not consist mainly of petroleum extraction and exportation; instead, Bahrain has grown its economy on international banking and petroleum refining. This country's Sunni-Muslim government has often been at odds with Bahrain's Shia majority. Protests related to the Arab Spring elsewhere in the region also erupted here. A National Dialogue, initiated in 2013 with the hopes of reforming the government, has ended in a stalemate and was suspended in early 2014. According to Human Rights Watch, an international NGO, Bahrain's human rights record deteriorated in 2013. Mainly, the government has been accused of harassing,

arbitrarily detaining, and torturing government dissidents and protestors.

Constitutional Provision: The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain states in Part III, Article 22: “Freedom of conscience is absolute. The State shall guarantee the inviolability of places of worship and the freedom to perform religious rites and to hold religious processions and meetings in accordance with the customs observed in the country.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The constitution and laws protect religious freedom and the right to assemble for the purpose of worship. Generally, the government enforced these protections, with few exceptions. Sunni Muslims have reportedly received preferential treatment by the government. Because predominantly Shia Muslim groups have conducted anti-government protests, there has been widespread discrimination against them. It seems that this discrimination is politically based and not necessarily religiously motivated.

Private Attitudes and Actions: In Bahrain, various religious groups have lived together in peace. Recent social and political unrest has sometimes spilled over into hostility against Shia Muslims. State-run media has, on various occasions, declared certain Shia clerics to be terrorists. Again, these actions may be more politically motivated than religiously motivated.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no established Seventh-day Adventist churches in Bahrain.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a recognized religious organization.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventists who observe the Sabbath do experience problems at work and school.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism is restricted officially by law and informally by widespread religious zealotry.

BANGLADESH

Population: 166,280,712 (July 2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 28,300

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 90%, Hindu 9.5%, Christian (mostly Roman Catholic) and Theravada-Hinayana Buddhist 0.5% (2011 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Nestled on the northern coast of the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh is one of the world's most densely populated countries. In the 10th century, this region began receiving Arab traders who also brought Islamic teachings. Once part of Pakistan, Bangladesh declared independence in 1971. Bengalis have suffered through years of authoritarian military rule and violent struggle even under democratic governments. It is estimated that hundreds of people have died due to violence between various political factions in the country. Economically, however, Bangladesh has benefited from a growth of 6.3% in 2011. Exports have reached 47%. Exports of textiles, which alone represent 80% of total exports, have contributed to this growth. The agricultural sector, which sustains half of the population, has also experienced a 5% growth. However, one third of the population lives below the poverty line. According to the Asian Development Bank, up to half of the budget is devoted to the eradication of poverty. A major human rights issue is the widespread practice of arbitrary detention. Freedoms of religion, of assembly, of speech, and of association are restricted. Violence against women is also of great concern.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 2A: "The State religion. The State religion of the Republic is Islam, but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in the Republic."

State Attitudes and Actions: Bangladesh is an Islamic State. Although the government lends public support to religious freedom, minority religions have faced attacks and the state has not been able to protect them. However, there is

evidence that the situation of religious minorities is improving. It has been increasingly difficult to differentiate between violence perpetrated for religious or political reasons.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Ahmadiyya Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and Hindus all experience discrimination at the hands of the majority Islamic population. The slowness by government authorities, including the police force, to defend minority religions has further complicated the situation. Conversion from Islam is socially unacceptable.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 121 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one seminary and college, four schools, a dental clinic, and one publishing house.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a recognized religious organization.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventists who observe the Sabbath do experience problems at work and school.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism is restricted officially by law and informally by widespread religious zealotry.

BARBADOS

Population: 289,680 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 18,587

Religious Groups: Anglican 24%, Pentecostal 19%, Seventh-day Adventist 6%, Methodist 4%, Roman Catholic 4%, no affiliation 21%, non-Christian less than 3% (2010 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: First settled by the British in 1627, the island of Barbados developed into a major producer and exporter of sugar and

molasses. After independence in 1966, Barbados invested heavily in its tourism sector, which has now surpassed sugar products as the main economic driver for the Caribbean nation. International organizations have identified Barbados as a major destination for sex-trafficking and forced labor—particularly of migrant women and children.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter 3, Article 19.1-19.5 of the constitution states: “Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience and for the purpose of this section the said freedom includes freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others, and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The attitude of the government is consistent with the constitutional provision for religious freedom. However, Rastafarians complain of being unable to use marijuana in the course of their religious practice.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Religious groups generally have amicable relationships with each other. Rastafarians continue to report some discrimination when seeking employment.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 58 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one high school, one clinic, and a nursing home. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is allowed to evangelize freely.

BELARUS

Population: 9,608,058 (July 2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 4,058

Religious Groups: Belarusian Orthodox 68%, Roman Catholic 14%, other (Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, Greek Catholic and Orthodox other than BOC) 3% (2013 survey)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Belarus is a former Soviet republic located to the north of Ukraine. Occupied by Nazi forces during World War II, it is believed that 2.2 million Jews were massacred—eliminating the Belarusian Jewish community almost entirely. Once among the most prosperous of Soviet republics, Belarus is now heavily dependent on Russian energy and the private business sector is virtually non-existent. President Lukashenko has held on to power since 1994 and is considered the last dictator on the continent. Belarus is also the only country in Europe to maintain the use of capital punishment. The government utilizes intimidation, harassment, persecution, imprisonment, and other forms of repression to control public opinion and election results. Since a 2010 uprising in the country that challenged election results, the government has justified further restriction of civil liberties such as freedom of assembly and religion.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Section I, Article 16, “(1) All religions and faiths shall be equal before the law. The establishment of any privileges or restrictions with regard to a particular religion or faith in relation to others shall not be permitted. (2) The activities of denominational organizations, their bodies, and representatives, that are directed against the sovereignty of the Republic of Belarus, its Constitutional system and civic harmony, or involve a violation of civil rights and liberties, shall be prohibited.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Though the state provides for religious freedom in its constitution, it seldom affords it to non-traditional Belarusian religious organizations. A 2002 Concordat with the Belarusian Orthodox Church grants this church full autonomy in its operation and agrees to work with the church to “combat” competing religious organizations that “pose a threat” to society. The government consistently abuses existing legal provisions against any religious organization that opposes the Belarusian Orthodox Church. The law also bans outright any unregistered group from operating in the country. Conscientious objectors are routinely imprisoned for refusing to fulfill military service requirements. Police frequently raid Protestant and other minority religions’ places of worship and clergies’ homes. Government-issued textbooks label minority groups, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as “sects.”

Private Attitudes and Actions: Prejudice against non-traditional religions is endemic in Belarus. Actions taken by the state and the media often reinforce such bigotry and make it difficult for these religions to function. Anti-Semitic vandalism, particularly of Jewish cemeteries and places of worship, is common.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 65 Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Seventh-day Adventists are a religious minority and suffer discrimination. Sabbath-keeping is a continual hindrance for them in obtaining work or attending school.

Freedom to Evangelize: Seventh-day Adventists are viewed as a sect, making evangelism and normal operations very difficult. Proselytizing by non-traditional religious organizations is illegal.

BELGIUM

Population: 10,449,361 (July 2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,266

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 75%, other (includes Protestant) 25%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Belgium is a country of diverse linguistic heritage; its three official languages are Dutch, French, and German. This has, however, become a point of contention for Belgians. Separatist movements in the Dutch-speaking Flanders region have been gaining momentum in the polls. The euro zone crisis has not spared Belgium and the country's debt is the current government's first priority. The country has been repeatedly criticized for its treatment of migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers. Belgium was a colonial power in Africa, at one point controlling Rwanda, Burundi, and Zaire (now, The Democratic Republic of Congo). In 2002, the Belgian government extended a formal apology to the Congo for abuses that occurred during the colonial period. Belgium is not only a member of the EU and NATO, but both international organizations are headquartered in Brussels—this nation's capital city.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Title II, Article 19, "Freedom of worship, public practice of the latter, as well as freedom to demonstrate one's opinions on all matters, are guaranteed, except for the repression of offenses committed when using this freedom."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice; however, conditions are not optimal for groups regarded as sects or cults. Government officials have the authority to monitor religious groups. In 2011, the Belgian government issued a law referred to as the "burqa ban" that prohibits the use of head coverings in public. The Council of Europe's human rights commissioner has denounced this law, but it remains law at present.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are some reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Jewish and Muslim groups have reported incidents of discrimination, as have religious

groups that are not accorded official recognition by the government. Various politicians used anti-Islamic rhetoric in their campaigns. A recent Flemish periodical published a survey where one in three Flemings expressed a completely negative view of Muslims. There were also various reports of anti-Semitic vandalism and one violent attack on an Israeli couple in Antwerp.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 30 Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely. The church has cultivated good relations with other churches.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

BELIZE

Population: 340,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 39,971

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 40%, no affiliation 15%, Pentecostal 9%, Seventh-day Adventist 6%, Anglican 5%, Mennonite 4%, Baptist 4%, Methodist 3%, Church of the Nazarene 3%, Jehovah's Witness 2%. Smaller groups (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Rastafarian, The Salvation Army, Baha'i) (2010 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Formerly British Honduras, Belize is the only English-speaking country on mainland Central America. The country's independence was delayed to 1981 due, mainly, to a border dispute with neighboring Guatemala that continues to the present day. Belize's main economic driver is the tourism industry. High national debt and unemployment rates, however, continue to suppress economic growth. Belize also faces the

challenges of increasingly powerful organized crime and narcotics traffickers as well one of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS infection in the Americas.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution in Part II, Article 3 protects: “(a) life, liberty, security of the person, and the protection of the law; (b) freedom of conscience, of expression and of assembly and association.” Article 11 states: “(1) Except with his own consent, a person shall not be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience, including freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others, and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government is constitutionally bound to refrain from involving itself in religious matters. The governor general is tasked with appointing one member of the Senate under the advisement of various Christian organizations. Although there is a statute that provides for students from grades K-6 to attend one class of religious instruction per week, no student is forced to attend.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There is considerable harmony among the various religious groups. The involvement of religious groups in addressing societal ills is also very prominent.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 85 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates three high schools and one bookstore. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

BENIN

Population: 10,100,000 (July 2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 6,146

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 27%, Muslim 24%, Voodoo 17%, no affiliation 7%, other indigenous beliefs 6%, Celestial Christian 5%, other (Methodist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witness, Baha'i, Baptist, Pentecostal, Unification Church, and Eckankar) less than 5% each (2002 census). Many who identify themselves as Christian or Muslim also practice Voodoo or other traditional religions.

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Kingdom of Dahomey dominated the region in the 17th century but fell under French control in 1894. In 1960, French Dahomey was granted independence and in 1975 changed its name to the Republic of Benin. After over a decade of authoritarian rule, Benin held free elections in 1991. Benin has continued to hold successful elections and transfers of power to the present. Corruption, however, continues to stymie economic growth for Benin. Current president, Thomas Yayi Boni, was elected on a platform of eliminating government corruption. Benin is one of the few countries in Africa that claim total religious freedom. All religions are free to practice and propagate their faith.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 23: "Every person has the right to freedom of thought, of conscience, of religion, of creed, of opinion and of expression with respect for the public order established by law and regulations . . . The institutions and the religious or philosophical communities shall have the right to develop without hindrances. They shall not be subject to the guardianship of the State. They shall regulate and administer their affairs in an autonomous manner."

State Attitudes and Actions: Religious groups must register with the Ministry of the Interior. The Constitutional Court determines the legal guidelines that

govern religious practice. In recent years the court determined that it is illegal to block the access of any group to its religious services and that criticism of religious belief is a protected free speech right. Government officials accord respect to prominent leaders of all religious groups by attending their induction ceremonies, funerals, and other religious celebrations. The President regularly receives leaders of all religious groups, and police forces are assigned to provide security to any religious event upon request. In accordance with Article 2 of the constitution, which provides for a secular state, public schools are not authorized to provide religious instruction. Religious groups are permitted to establish private schools.

Private Attitudes and Actions: The diversity of religious communities in Benin has helped foster understanding and a generally positive relationship between the various groups. An example is seen in what is called “Ecumenical Day.” This event has been held on the first Wednesday of May and traditionally includes a large celebration of inter-religious cooperation in the historic town of Ouidah. Individual religious leaders make an effort to bridge the divide between Christians and Muslims and preach a message of tolerance. Local security forces are sometimes required to intervene in occasional conflicts between Voodoo practitioners and Christians over Voodoo initiation practices.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 18 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a radio-TV production center and a Bible correspondence school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

BERMUDA

Population: 69,839 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 3,888

Religious Groups: Protestant 46.1% (includes Anglican 15.8%, African Methodist Episcopal 8.6%, Seventh Day Adventist 6.7%, Pentecostal 3.5%, Methodist 2.7%, Presbyterian 2%, Church of God 1.6%, Baptist 1.2%, Salvation Army 1.1%, Brethren 1%, other Protestant 2%), Roman Catholic 14.5%, Jehovah's Witness 1.3%, other Christian 9.1%, Muslim 1%, other 3.9%, none 17.8%, unspecified 6.2% (2010 est.)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Bermuda is a densely populated self-governing, British overseas territory. While its pristine beaches and colorful architecture attract nearly half a million tourists each year, this is not the driving force behind one of the richest economies in the world. Bermuda's offshore banking industry has attracted over 13,000 international corporations that now call the island home. Nearly three-fifths of the population rejected an independence proposal in 1995, but the issue of Bermuda's political future is far from settled.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter 1, Article 8 of the Bermuda Constitution Order of 1968 states: "(1) Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience, and for the purposes of this section the said freedom includes freedom of thought and religion, freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in the community with others, and both in public or in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, and observance."

State Attitudes and Actions: As an overseas territory of the United Kingdom, Bermuda allows the free expression of religion and does not seek to hinder it in any way.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of interfaith violence or strife.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 11 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one K-12 school and one bookstore. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

BHUTAN

Population: 733,643 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 637

Religious Groups: Lamaistic Buddhist 75.3%, Indian- and Nepalese-influenced Hinduism 22.1%, other 2.6% (2005 est.)

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Kingdom of Bhutan was established in 1907, and, while it is a sovereign state, Bhutan has been a de-facto protectorate of Britain and India. Britain once provided Bhutan financial assistance and Bhutan negotiated with India for military protection in exchange for “guidance” in its foreign affairs. After a century of absolute monarchy, a new constitution was ratified in 2008 and successful free elections for a representative parliamentary government have been held. Bhutan continues to develop its policy based on Buddhist principles.

Constitutional Provision: Article 3, Sections 1 and 2 of the constitution reads: “1. Buddhism is the spiritual heritage of Bhutan, which promotes the principles and values of peace, non-violence, compassion and tolerance. 2. The Druk Gyalpo is the protector of all religions.” Article 7, Section 4 states: “A

Bhutanese citizen shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. No person shall be compelled to belong to another faith by means of coercion or inducement.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Bhutan’s law and constitution protect religious freedom, but government policy restricts religious freedom. The National Security Act forbids “words either spoken or written, or by other means whatsoever, that promote or attempt to promote, on grounds of religion, race, language, caste, or community, or on any other ground whatsoever, feelings of enmity or hatred between different religious, racial or language groups or castes and communities.” This act helped to make the practice of non-traditional religions more difficult. The Christian population is miniscule and it is difficult for them to share their faith. Most Christians must practice their religion privately. In its attempt to preserve Bhutan’s religious and cultural identity, the government strictly regulates non-Buddhist religious minorities while granting liberal subsidies to Buddhist organizations, including money for education and stipends for clergy salaries.

Private Attitudes and Actions: The state is the major source of religious persecution. Isolated cases of discrimination against non-Buddhist children in schools have occurred and there are reports of harassment of non-Buddhists in rural areas.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are seven Seventh-day Adventist Churches.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church cannot evangelize.

BOLIVIA

Population: 10,631,000 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 97,908

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 78%, Protestant or Evangelical 16%, other Christian 3%, small number of Muslims and Jews (2012 estimate). Many indigenous communities practice a mix of Catholic and indigenous traditions.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Bolivia faces challenges on several fronts. One of every 16 children dies before the age of five. Indigenous populations experience widespread poverty. Protesters against road projects and for the preservation of indigenous territories continue to conflict with government policies. Bolivia is the second largest producer of gas on the continent, but it ranks 157 of 183 in the index of doing business. About 900,000 Bolivians receive an allocation for the elderly. In spite of these significant challenges, Bolivian exports have earned twelve billion dollars in 2013.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 4: “The State respects and guarantees freedom of religion and spiritual beliefs, according to persons’ worldviews. . . . Article 14, Section II: The State prohibits and punishes all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex, color, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, origin, culture, nationality, citizenship, language, religion, ideology, political or philosophical affiliation, marital status, economic or social, occupation, education level, disability, pregnancy, or others that have the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, of the equal rights of every person.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally follows the constitutional provision for religious freedom. According to the 2009 constitution, the state operates independent from religion. However, existing agreements with the Catholic Church at times impinge upon a full compliance with the constitution. Additionally, in order to obtain legal status, non-Catholic religious groups must be registered. Registered groups receive tax-exempt status and must submit a yearly report to the Director of Religion. Not all public schools provide religious education and the ones doing so only provide

Catholic religious instruction. Attendance at religious instruction is not compulsory. Non-Catholic religious instruction is not an option. There is a level of tension in the relationship between the Catholic Church and President Evo Morales. Amongst other things, President Morales has identified the Catholic Church as being his “enemy.” Evangelical leaders have reported that new registration policies favor Andean philosophical religions, and force small churches to operate informally in the country.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most faith communities have amicable relationships with each other.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 347 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, two high schools, and one radio station. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Population: 3,871,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 590

Religious Groups: Muslim 40%, Orthodox 31%, Roman Catholic 15%, other 14%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Civil War between various ethnic groups began when Bosnia and Herzegovina declared its sovereignty and split from Yugoslavia between 1991 and 1992. Recovery from the Balkan wars of the 1990s is ongoing and refugees have been slow to return. However, the International Criminal Tribunal has succeeded in bringing to trial numerous

people accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Police brutality is allegedly a current problem. European Union Peacekeeping Forces continue to patrol the region.

Constitutional Provision: Article II, Number 3, of the constitution states: “All persons within the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina shall enjoy the human rights and fundamental freedoms referred to in paragraph 2 above.” These include “(g) Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice. Local authorities are known to restrict the religious freedom of minority groups. Some cases of vandalism and violence have gone unprosecuted. While the government has taken steps to promote religious liberty, a weak judicial system inhibits attempts to defend minority rights.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice persist. Discrimination against religious minorities occurs in nearly all parts of the country. However, the number of incidents targeting religious symbols, clerics, and property in the three ethnic majority areas has steadily decreased for the last two years.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 23 Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Sabbath-keeping is a continual hindrance for Adventists in obtaining work or attending school.

Freedom to Evangelize: Though evangelism is permitted by the constitution, local politicians and influential clergy of other faiths often obstruct the Adventist Church’s attempts to evangelize.

BOTSWANA

Population: 2,155,000 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 37,557

Religious Groups: Christian 70% (Anglican, Methodist, United Congregational Church of Southern Africa make up the majority of Christians; also Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Seventh-day Adventist, Jehovah's Witness, Baptist, Dutch Reformed Church, Mennonite), no affiliation 20%, indigenous religion 6%, Muslim, Hindu, and Baha'i less than 1% each.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Formerly the British protectorate of Bechuanaland, Botswana was granted independence in 1966. Botswana is considered to have the most stable and sustained economic growth in Africa. It is also the most stable multiparty democracy in Africa. Diamond extraction has been the main economic sustainer for Botswana, but a growing ecotourism sector has developed due to nature conservation efforts by the government. While this nation has a very high infection rate of HIV/AIDS, it has also implemented one of Africa's most comprehensive programs for treating the epidemic. The country claims that it has adopted total religious freedom in theory and practice.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter II, Section 11: "Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience, and for the purposes of this section the said freedom includes freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others, and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance."

State Attitudes and Actions: There is no state religion and all organizations, including religious groups, must register with the government. Unregistered

groups are liable to penalties. Except for the case of the Unification Church, there is no indication that any religious organization has ever been denied registration. Public schools include religion as part of the curriculum, emphasizing Christianity, but also including discussion of other religious groups present in the country. Government meetings commonly begin with prayer, but members of other religious groups have also been invited to lead prayer.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious and there are no reports of significant tensions.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 118 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college of nursing, one hospital, and two clinics. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: The University of Botswana leaves it to the lecturers to arrange testing times for students and sometimes they insist on Saturday exams. This is also true concerning Mission Secondary Schools, which sometimes require Adventist teachers to supervise and students to study on Saturday. This has led to court cases, and so far Adventists have always won. To accommodate Seventh-day Adventists, elections held on Sabbath were once extended by two hours to allow Seventh-day Adventists to vote after sundown.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

BRAZIL

Population: 201,656,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,447,470

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 64.6%, other Catholic 0.4%, Protestant 22.2% (includes Seventh-day Adventist 6.5%, Assembly of God 2.0%,

Christian Congregation of Brazil 1.2%, Universal Kingdom of God 1.0%, other Protestant 11.5%), other Christian 0.7%, Spiritist 2.2%, other 1.4%, none 8%, unspecified 0.4% (2010 est.)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Brazil is not only South America's largest country, but also Latin America's largest economy. After military rule ended in 1989, Brazil's economy has grown significantly, due to the exportation of its vast natural resources and the development of industry and agriculture. While income inequality continues to be a serious problem, the World Bank has recently praised Brazil for its significant strides to close its wealth gap. The Brazilian government continues to lobby for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council while attempting to improve relations with its indigenous communities in the Amazon region.

Constitutional Provision: Title 2, Chapter 1, Article 5 (VI & VIII) of the constitution states: "(VI) freedom of conscience and of belief is inviolable, the free exercise of religious cults being ensured and, under the terms of the law, the protection of places of worship and their rites being guaranteed. . . . (VIII) no one shall be deprived of any rights by reason of religious belief or philosophical or political conviction, unless he invokes it to exempt himself from a legal obligation required of all and refuses to perform an alternative obligation established by law."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally allows for freedom of religion. Religious groups are not required to register and no state or favored religion exists. According to QEdu—a non-profit organization—religious instruction in public schools is not required by law, however, reports indicate that 49% of schools require religious instruction in practice and most of these do not offer students the option to reject it. The country's criminal code penalizes religious intolerance as well as the dissemination of any intolerant or discriminatory material. In 2013, the state government of Bahia created the

Network to Combat Racism and Religious Intolerance in order to assist victims. Later in 2013, the municipal government of Salvador rejected a bill proposal that would ban animal sacrifices as part of the Candomble religion. The government cited religious liberty concerns in their decision.

Private Attitudes and Actions: For the most part varying faith communities have amicable relationships. In Rio de Janeiro, members of the Candomble religion have complained about discrimination and harassment at the hands of local drug traffickers. There have also been sporadic reports of vandalism of churches and Jewish places of worship. Various NGOs have reported organizing events throughout the country to encourage interfaith dialogue. In Sao Paulo, the Catholic Church periodically met with Jewish community leaders to emphasize reconciliation. Interfaith marathons and similar sporting events have also sprung up in Brazil.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 7,780 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, one college, 48 academies, eight secondary school, 31 orphanages, 15 clinics, 15 radio stations, six hospitals, and one nursing home. In August 2009, the church launched its first college in Northern Brazil. It began providing instruction in February 2010. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Though some Seventh-day Adventists have had problems with Sabbath observance, there are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Population: 32,600 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,772

Religious Groups: Protestant 72.2% (Methodist 22.7%, Anglican 11.6%, Church of God 11.4%, Pentecostal 9.1%, Seventh-day Adventist 8.4%, Baptist 8.2%, other Protestant 0.9%), Roman Catholic 9.5%, Jehovah's Witnesses 2.2%, Hindu 2%, other 5.2%, none 6.4%, unspecified 2.7% (2001 est.)

Perspectives on Current Issues: This archipelago of sixteen inhabited islands (and various uninhabited islands) is a British Overseas Territory with the island of Tortola as its business and political center. In 2002, British Virgin Islanders were granted British citizenship and, with it, the right to work in the UK and the rest of the European Union. A new constitution in 2007 granted the BVI more political autonomy.

Constitutional Provision: Religious freedom extends to all the territories under the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom, including the British Virgin Islands. The 2007 Constitution states in Chapter II, Section 21: “(1) No person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his or her freedom of conscience. (2) Freedom of conscience includes freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change one’s religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and either in public or in private, to manifest and propagate one’s religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally allows for and protects the free exercise of religion. The 2007 Constitution also protects the rights of establishing religious schools and other institutions.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of strife or violence among varying communities of faith.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are eight Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

Population: 422,675 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: unknown

Religious Groups: Muslim 67%, Buddhist 13%, Christian 10%, other (Hindu, Baha'i, Taoist, Sikh, Nasrani, atheist, indigenous beliefs, and others) 10%

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Sultanate of Brunei is a tiny Southeast Asian kingdom on the island of Borneo. Because of vast natural gas and petroleum fields, Brunei is a very wealthy country. In Brunei, life expectancy is among the highest in Asia—79 years, which is just below Japan, South Korea, and Singapore. This country's GDP remains one of the most enviable in Asia. Citizens are entitled to free education and free health care, most pay no income tax, and they benefit from heavily subsidized housing, fuel, and staple foods. However, 20% of the population still lives below the poverty line.

Constitutional Provision: "The religion of Brunei Darussalam shall be the Muslim religion according to the Shafi'i 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."

State Attitudes and Actions: Though the constitution provides freedom for individuals to believe as they choose, in practice Brunei restricts the rights of non-Muslim adherents to practice their faith. In 2014, Brunei became the first country in East Asia to fully implement Sharia law. While analysts of the new law point to the possibility of human rights violations in implementing this harsh penal code, further information has not yet been reported. There has also

been added social, and at times official, pressure placed upon non-Muslims to conform to Islamic practices. All religious organizations that are not Shafi'i are required to register and recognition may be refused for any reason. Participating in a non-registered religious group is an offense and persons who encourage or invite others to unregistered groups can also face arrest and imprisonment. Zoning laws forbid house churches.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Generally, peace exists among members of various faith communities. Though the freedoms of non-Muslims are restricted, Muslims still treat non-believers with a measure of respect. Most citizens of Brunei do not know much about non-Muslim religions because they are forbidden from learning about other faiths.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no Seventh-day Adventist churches in Brunei.

Government Recognition: The government refuses to recognize new Christian denominations or to allow the expansion of existing denominations.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: The few Adventists in Brunei, all expatriates, have not reported problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: It is illegal to evangelize in Brunei, so the only way to share one's faith is in small house churches where the Bible is studied. Government policies place very strict constraints on the population being exposed to religions other than Islam, and it is illegal to import religious literature.

BULGARIA

Population: 6,924,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 7,380

Religious Groups: Bulgarian Orthodox 76%, Muslim 10%, no affiliation 12%, other (Roman Catholic, Armenian Christian, Jewish, Evangelical

Protestant, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and others) 2% (2011 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Bulgarian nation was born of an ancient Turkic tribe in the 6th century A.D. and is the birthplace of the Cyrillic alphabet. Bulgarians lived under the rule of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires before gaining independence in 1908. Through most of the 20th century, the Communist Party controlled the government and free, multi-party elections were not held until 1990. Bulgaria has since strived to open its economy and has been able to control its inflation and unemployment rates. Bulgaria is a member of both the European Union and NATO. Bulgaria has been criticized for its treatment of the Roma and Macedonian minority communities. It is reported that asylum seekers have experienced long-term detention in poor conditions. Some EU countries have warned that they would block Bulgaria's entry into the passport-free Schengen zone unless the government made efforts to combat organized crime and human rights issues.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter One, Article 13, "(1) The practicing of any religion shall be unrestricted. (2) Religious institutions shall be separate from the state. (3) Eastern Orthodox Christianity shall be considered the traditional religion in the Republic of Bulgaria. (4) Religious institutions and communities, and religious beliefs shall not be used to political ends."

State Attitudes and Actions: The constitutional provisions apply only to state-registered religious organizations. The government clearly favors the predominant faiths, which are the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and Islam, and allows them more latitude than other organizations. Registration is required for all other religious groups, and the government generally approves such registrations. Registered groups receive various levels of state funding for their

operations in the country. Religious freedom has improved for some religious minorities, but there is still some discrimination.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are ongoing reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Discrimination, harassment, and general public intolerance, particularly in the media, of some religious groups remain an intermittent problem. A number of religious groups broadcast radio programs: the Orthodox Radio Sion and the Christian Radio Svetlina air via Internet; Seventh-day Adventists broadcast a daily one-hour program in Bulgarian on their world radio Voice of Hope; the Evangelical Trans-World Radio network also broadcasts a daily program in Bulgarian.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 119 Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: Though the government recognizes the Seventh-day Adventist Church, members have been harassed and church property has been vandalized.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Employees and students encounter problems in keeping the Sabbath at work and at school.

Freedom to Evangelize: Adventists are free to worship as they please, but bigotry and overzealous government officials have hindered Adventist evangelism in particular locales.

BURKINA FASO

Population: 18,365,000 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 4,099

Religious Groups: Muslim 61%, Roman Catholic 19%, indigenous beliefs 15%, Protestant 4%, atheist or other religious group less than 1%. Muslims and Christians often adhere simultaneously to some aspects of indigenous religious beliefs.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Formerly named Upper Volta, Burkina Faso was granted independence in 1960. This nation faced a series of military coups and authoritarian rule that finally led to multi-party elections in 1990. President Compaore resigned after 27 years in office and a transitional government organized elections to be held in 2015. Political instability continues, however, with another military coup toppling the government in September 2015. Burkina Faso's rapid population growth and few natural resources foreshadow minimal economic growth. Burkina Faso also faces accusations of supporting armed rebels in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 7: "The freedom of belief, non-belief, conscience, religious opinion, philosophy, religious exercise, assembly, practice of custom, as well as the freedom of procession and demonstration are guaranteed by the present Constitution subject to respect of the law, public order, morality, and the human person."

State Attitudes and Actions: The country is a secular state. Islam, Christianity, and traditional indigenous religious beliefs are practiced freely without government interference. The government requires all organizations, religious or otherwise, to register with the Ministry of Territorial Administration. Registration confers legal status, but no specific controls or benefits. According to Article 45 of the Freedom of Association Code, failure to register may result in a fine. The government gives all religious groups equal access to registration and routinely approves their applications. The government taxes religious groups only if they engage in commercial activities, such as farming and dairy production. In May 2013, the government implemented a constitutional amendment that allots seats in the national Senate for representatives of Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Protestant communities. Some religious leaders refused to take part in the initiative, as they feared this would lead to limits on religious freedom.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious, and there are no reports of significant tension. Some Muslims consider the 1996 law against female genital mutilation as discriminating against their religious practices and continue performing the procedure. At times community members force old women, falsely accused of being witches, to flee their villages. The Catholic Church-funded Delwende Center, which houses and feeds women accused of witchcraft, reported several cases. The Ministry of Social Action & National Solidarity, along with various other nongovernmental and religious organizations, maintains similar shelters in Ouagadougou.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 11 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates an ADRA horticultural center, a radio-TV production center, a Bible correspondence school, a dental clinic, and a dispensary. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

BURMA (MYANMAR)

Population: 55,746,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 28,082

Religious Groups: Buddhist 89%, Christian 4% (Baptist 3%, Roman Catholic 1%), Muslim 4%, Animist 1%, other 2%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Burma is located in Southeast Asia, bordering Thailand to the east. Achieving independence from Britain in 1948, Burma fell under the rule of a military junta. In 2007, Burmese took the streets

in protests that were met by a violent government response. The regime held elections widely considered flawed in 2010, but the new government (largely consisting of former military junta members) has already instituted reforms. The dissolution of the military junta and recent dialogues with dissidents and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, liberated after many years of house arrest, seem to suggest the possibility of a more open society in Burma. There are signs of a desire to break with a past marked by a disastrous human rights record: persecution, killing of ethnic minorities, forced labor, arbitrary detentions of political prisoners, disappearances, appalling prison conditions, and numerous deaths while in custody. High ranking US and EU leaders have visited Burma for the first time in over 50 years in hope that diplomatic relations might be restored. Burma's government, however, continues to be ranked 156th in the world by Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. Burma also has one of the least developed economies in the world.

Constitutional Provision: The new constitution, approved by a referendum in May 2008, states in Chapter 1 Section 34: "Every citizen is equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess and practice religion subject to public order, morality or health and to the other provisions of this Constitution." (The international community, however, has seriously questioned the process whereby the new constitution was approved.)

State Attitudes and Actions: The government is intolerant towards non-Buddhist religions. In order to control the exercise of religion, the government requires everyone to carry ID cards, which indicate their religious preference. The military regime in Burma regulates and restricts the expression of religion and free speech. Even though the new constitution is supposed to guarantee freedom of religion, there are sections that are ambiguous and the authorities are not afraid of violating religious freedom. The government gives priority to Theravada Buddhism over all other religions and persons wanting to advance in the military or public service must be Buddhist. However, Buddhist monks

have been at the forefront in protesting against the government's abuse of religious freedom. The government also restricts the importation of religious literature, and local printing of religious literature is subject to censorship—including translations of the Bible and Qur'an into indigenous languages. The government does not allow Christian and Muslim believers to gather in large assemblies in order to celebrate religious occasions; there is also a limit to the number of Muslims who can gather in one place at any given time. The government does not allow Muslim employees to wear beards and it has dismissed some for doing so. The government has outlawed Muslims from having worship services in residential flats. There is a similar ban on Christian worship services. Police were reportedly slow to respond to acts of discrimination against Christians and Muslims.

Private Attitudes and Actions: For the most part, individual religious groups have an amicable relationship with each other. The only exception is in the state of Karen where there has been an ongoing conflict between a predominantly pro-government Buddhist faction and a predominantly Christian anti-government faction.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 228 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one seminary, eight schools, and one publishing house. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Keeping the Sabbath is sometimes difficult for those living in Burma.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism is tightly controlled and as a result it is important for members know the constitution and the law. The government prohibits Christian clergy from proselytizing in certain areas.

BURUNDI

Population: 10,395,000 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 98,153

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 62.1%, Protestant 23.9% (includes Seventh-day Adventist 2.3% and other Protestant 21.6%), Muslim 2.5%, other 3.6%, unspecified 7.9%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Ethnic tensions have created conflict in Burundi since it was granted independence in 1960. This country has a long history of human rights violations. The struggle to gain or maintain power has characterized relations between the two main tribes, the Hutu majority and the Tutsi minority. For many years, the Tutsis controlled the army, commerce, and education. With the election of a Hutu president in 2010, Burundi seemed to be stabilizing after establishing an army that is more representative of the population. Recent unrest over President Nkurunziza's attempts to rewrite the constitution to his party's benefit have stirred sentiments that many in the international community fear will spark violence during the upcoming 2015 elections.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 27: "Every person has the right to freedom of thought, of conscience, of religion, of worship, while respecting public order and the law."

State Attitudes and Actions: Religious groups are required to register with the Ministry of the Interior in accordance with the 1992 law that covers all non-profit organizations. Each association must provide the following: the denomination or affiliation of the institution, a copy of its bylaws, the address of its headquarters in the country, an address abroad if the local institution is a subsidiary, and information about the association's governing body and legal representative. It usually takes from two to four weeks for the Ministry of the Interior to process a registration request. During the reporting period, no religious institution had its request for registration refused. The government does not exempt religious groups from taxes, but does waive duties for

imported articles used in religious activities and for social development purposes. In 2013, at the request of the Catholic Church, police detained a splinter group of Catholic pilgrims on their way to a shrine. The incident caused 10 deaths, 35 injuries and the arrest and conviction of 182 pilgrims. The government also prosecuted three policemen involved in the deaths.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most members of religious groups in Burundi live and work together in harmony. A main issue in Burundian society is the tension between mainstream Catholic churches and splinter groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 351 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates two high schools, four health clinics, and two dispensaries. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

CAMBODIA

Population: 15,458,000 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 6,164

Religious Groups: Theravada Buddhist 96%, Muslim 3.5%, other (Baha'i, Jewish, ethnic Vietnamese Cao Dai, other Christian denominations)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Bordering Thailand and Vietnam, Cambodia is a Southeast Asian nation, full of treasures from its ancient Khmer past. The second-half of the 20th century brought violence and unstable, authoritarian governments to the people of Cambodia. While this nation has enjoyed two decades of stable government, it is still one of the poorest nations in the world. In recent years, however, the economy of Cambodia has maintained steady

growth. Rice exports have provided a significant boost to the economy. Cambodia is one of the countries most dependent on foreign aid, receiving an estimated one billion dollars annually—the equivalent of the national budget. Various human rights organizations have reported forced evictions, land disputes, and land-grabs that place an estimated 150,000 people at risk. Many cases of discrimination and harassment of refugees and asylum seekers were reported in 2013.

Constitutional Provision: Article 43 of the constitution states: “Khmer citizens of either sex shall have the right to freedom of belief. Freedom of religious belief and worship shall be guaranteed by the State on the condition that such freedom does not affect other religious beliefs or violate public order and security.” The constitution affirms, “Buddhism shall be the religion of the State.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Cambodia generally allows for the free exercise of religion, even though the state supports Buddhism. All religions are required to register, but there is no penalty for non-compliance. The government frowns upon any abuse of religious freedom, regardless of the source from which such alleged abuse emanates. It requires that religious houses of worship be at least two kilometers from each other and that religious groups refrain from being critical of each other.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There is general harmony among the various religious groups. Some Christians and Muslims complained of a few minor problems involving Buddhists, but these incidents were personal in nature and likely do not reflect a trend.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are six Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

CAMEROON

Population: 23,130,000 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 84,310

Religious Groups: Christian (Roman Catholic 38%, Protestant 26%, other Christian 4%, Orthodox 1%) 69%, Muslim 21%, animist 6%, other (Jewish, Baha'i) less than 5% (2005 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Cameroon comprises the unification of two former French and British colonies. The Federal Republic of Cameroon was established in 1961 after both the French and British portions were granted independence. In 1972, a new constitution was enacted which replaced the former federal government with a unitary Republic of Cameroon. Generally, Cameroon has enjoyed stability, development of modern infrastructure, and economic development. The major criticism directed against government authorities concerns freedom of expression. Also, poor prison conditions and abuses during detention have been reported. The government continues to struggle with Islamist extremist group, Boko Haram, in the far northern region of the country. Christians are present mainly in the south, with the two English-speaking regions being predominantly Protestant and the eight French-speaking regions being predominantly Catholic. Though Cameroon's democracy has developed into a multi-party system, President Paul Biya has a tight grip on the country's political systems.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in the preamble: “Freedom of religion and worship shall be guaranteed.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The “Law on Religious Congregations” governs relations between the government and religious groups. The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (MINATD) must approve and register religious groups in order for them to function legally. It is illegal for a religious group to operate without official recognition. In 2013, 34 mostly unregistered religious organizations were shut down for “disturbing the public order.” By September of that year, the government allowed all of these churches to reopen. There are no reports that the government has refused to register any group. The practice of witchcraft is a criminal offense under the national penal code, punishable by a two- to ten-year prison term. People are generally prosecuted for witchcraft only in conjunction with some other offense such as murder. There are no reports of convictions of witchcraft under this law. The government distinguishes between witchcraft and traditional indigenous religious practices. Witchcraft is defined by the law as the attempt to do harm by spiritual means. The government continues to subsidize even schools operated by religious denominations.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious, but there are reports of tensions between groups in some regions. Established churches have criticized unregistered sects, but have not obstructed them from practicing their faith. In the rural areas of the northern provinces, hostility persists between Muslims, Christians, and indigenous groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 835 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates four high schools, three hospitals, one dental clinic, three

dispensaries, one publishing house, and two radio-TV production centers. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

CANADA

Population: 34,834,000 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 66,579

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 39%, no affiliation 24%, Protestant (United, Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, and Pentecostal) 22%, Muslim 3%, Jewish 1%, other (Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Scientologist, Baha'i, Shintoism and Taoism) less than 4% (2011 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Developed as a federation of former British colonies, Canada became a self-governing country in 1867. Though it is a sovereign state, Canada continues to recognize the British monarch as head of state. Canadians enjoy a very high standard of living as the country has developed economically on par with its southern neighbor, the United States. Canada has often participated in United Nations peacekeeping missions and has led the exploration of the Arctic. Still, this North American country faces a number of challenges including new waves of immigrants entering the country from predominantly Asia, health and education systems in need of tuning and environmental concerns relating to fossil fuel extraction. Canada also continues to face separatist sentiments in Quebec and land disputes between various provinces and indigenous communities.

Constitutional Provision: Canada's constitution—while not contained in a singular document as in many other countries—was enacted as a series of legal acts dating from 1867 to 1982. The rights of Canadian citizens are enumerated

in a 1982 charter. Schedule B of the 1982 Constitutional Act under the Canadian Charter for Rights and Freedoms, Part I, subsection 2, which is basically a compendium of Canadian law, states: “2. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: (a) freedom of conscience and religion; (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication; (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and (d) freedom of association.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Canada, for the most part, equally enforces the 1982 “Charter on Rights and Freedoms,” providing religious freedom for most of its citizens. There are laws against religious discrimination. Religious organizations do not have to register in order to receive tax-exempt status at both the provincial and federal levels. Education is fully under the authority of provincial governments. Most provincial governments do not extend public funding to non-Catholic schools while partially funding Catholic schools. This continues to be the subject of litigation. There have been criticisms from some civil organizations, the media, and even parliamentarians of the application of hate speech laws. In their assessment, both the federal and provincial governments have at times encroached upon free speech and religious rights on the grounds that hate speech laws take precedence. In response, the federal government recently established the Office of Religious Freedom, which is headed by an ambassadorial-rank official. This office will seek to advocate for religious minorities within Canada and abroad.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most faith communities have amicable relationships with each other. However, there have been numerous reports of anti-Semitism and some incidents of vandalism at mosques.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 372 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, eight high schools, 38 elementary (primary)

schools, one healthcare corporation, one hospital, nine nursing homes, one media center, one radio station, three publishing houses, and four bookstores. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

CAPE VERDE

Population: 538,500 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 7,593

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 77%, not affiliated 11%, other Christian (Church of the Nazarene, Seventh-day Adventist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Assembly of God, Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, other Pentecostal and Evangelical groups) 7%, Muslim 2%, Christian Rationalist 2%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Cape Verde is an archipelago off the northwestern coast of Africa. Previously uninhabited, these islands were settled by Portuguese explorers in the 15th century. Cape Verde became a transport hub for the African slave trade as well as for whaling and other shipping expeditions. After independence in 1975, multi-party, democratic elections were not held until 1990. Since then, however, Cape Verdeans have enjoyed one of the most stable democracies in the region. Severe droughts throughout the 20th century caused many Cape Verdeans to emigrate, making the expatriate population larger than those residing on the islands. Money sent back to family members on the islands is a major economic sustainer. On par with its Portuguese colonial past, most Cape Verdeans are Roman Catholic.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 27: “Freedom of thought and expression; association; religion; worship . . . shall be guaranteed.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Cape Verde is a secular state with freedom of religion. The Penal Code, which came into force in 2004, states that violations of religious freedom are crimes punishable by a penalty of three months to three years imprisonment. All religious groups are required to register with the Ministry of Justice in accordance with the law of associations, but failure to register does not result in restriction of belief or practice. The government gives privileged status to the Catholic Church. The government provides free television airtime for all religious organizations, but as of 2013, only the Catholic Church has been able to make use of it.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious and there are no reports of significant tensions.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 32 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a radio-TV production center and a Bible correspondence school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

CAYMAN ISLANDS

Population: 54,914 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 5,311

Religious Groups: Protestant (Church of God 22.6%, Seventh-day Adventist 9.4%, Presbyterian/Uniting Church 8.6%, Baptist 8.3%, Pentecostal 7.1%, non-denominational 5.3%, Anglican 4.1%, Wesleyan Holiness 2.4%) 67.8%, Roman Catholic 14.1%, Jehovah's Witness 1.1%, other 7%, none 9.3%, unspecified 0.7% (2010 estimate)

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Cayman Islands were settled by the British in the 18th century and were administered together with Jamaica until 1959. The islands continue to be a British dependency. An economic powerhouse, the Cayman Islands has no direct taxation, which has made it a haven for foreign banking and investment, as well as the hub for over 93,000 companies. Cayman Islanders enjoy a very high standard of living and receive almost 2 million visitors per year.

Constitutional Provision: Religious freedom extends to all territories under the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom, including the Cayman Islands.

State Attitudes and Actions: The state respects and promotes religious freedom in both the public and private sectors. The 2009 Constitution states in Part I, Section 10: “(1) No person shall be hindered by government in the enjoyment of his or her freedom of conscience. (2) Freedom of conscience includes freedom of thought and of religion or religious denomination; freedom to change his or her religion, religious denomination or belief; and freedom, either alone or in community with others, both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his or her religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, observance and day of worship.”

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of conflict or strife among the various religious groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 16 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one high school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Population: 5,277,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 5,927

Religious Groups: Protestant 51%, Roman Catholic 29%, Muslim 10%, no affiliation 5.5%, other 4.5%. Some Christians and Muslims incorporate aspects of indigenous beliefs into their religious practices.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Achieving independence in 1960, the Central African Republic (CAR) descended into three decades of military authoritarian rule that ended in 1993. In 2013, ten years of civilian rule came to an end as a military coup led by General Bozize toppled the government. Elections widely considered questionable were held in 2005 and 2011 in which Bozize was elected president. The CAR's government struggled with a rebel group called the Lord's Resistance Army until a violent coup took control of the capital city and established a transitional government awaiting fresh elections in 2015. Security is probably the most significant human rights issue the Central African Republic now faces. The exodus of tens of thousands of people to neighboring countries has created a humanitarian nightmare. Life expectancy is 44 years. Violence against women includes not only domestic violence, but also assault by armed gangs. Widespread reports of rape are of deep concern for human rights advocates. The UN continues to warn that ethnic conflicts in the country run a very high risk of genocide.

Constitutional Provision: Currently, the CAR's constitution is suspended after the 2013 coup that placed a transitional government in power. The previous constitution stated in Article 8: "The freedom of conscience, of assembly and the free exercise of worship are guaranteed to all within the conditions fixed by law. Any form of religious fundamentalism and intolerance is forbidden."

State Attitudes and Actions: After the 2013 coup that replaced the formal government with a transitional government, the constitution was suspended and

replaced with a Transitional National Charter. According to International reports, the charter does protect religious freedom and criminalizes discrimination on various grounds, including religious belief. The transitional government, however, is very weak and has not been able to maintain control in many areas of the country that are currently under rebel control.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Tensions between Christian and Muslim groups have only worsened since the last reporting period. Constant reports of vandalism of places of worship and violence against members of either group continue to pour out of the CAR during this transitional period. Private entities also continue to abuse and discriminate against individuals accused of witchcraft. It is believed that some of the cases are largely due to interpersonal disputes and not to specific religious practices.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 51 Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

CHAD

Population: 11,412,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,223

Religious Groups: Muslim 58%, Roman Catholic 18%, Protestant 16%, indigenous beliefs or no affiliation 8%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Chad was granted independence from France in 1960 and was immediately plunged into civil war and a Libyan invasion. With a peace accord in 1990, a new constitution was drafted and Chad has held

mostly questionable elections to the present. Chadians continued to live through periodic rebel insurrections until 2010 when Chad reached a rapprochement with Sudan. Abduction of children, child trafficking, and child soldiers as part of various militia groups are sinister examples of human rights violations occurring in this country. Another challenge is the presence of more than 400,000 refugees from Darfur and the Central African Republic. This nation remains near the bottom of the Human Development Index. Chad gained a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2014-2015 term.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 27: “The freedoms of thought and expression, communication, conscience, religion, press, association, meeting, circulation, demonstrations and processions are guaranteed to all.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government requires religious groups to register with the Ministry of the Interior’s Department of Religious Affairs. Registration is reported to take place without discrimination. Foreign missionaries are also required to register and receive authorization. The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution; however, it has limited this right for certain groups. Non-Muslims report that the government continues to show favoritism toward the Islamic majority. For example, a committee of government officials helped arrange and sponsor the Hajj for any citizen wanting to make the trip. Al Faid al-Djaria, a Sufi group that adheres to a mystical form of Islam, continues to be banned because government officials have deemed many of their practices un-Islamic. In 2013, however, the government of Chad signed an accord with the Vatican to formally recognize the Catholic Church of Chad. The government is currently financing and overseeing the construction of Chad’s first Catholic basilica.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There is occasional tension between Christians and Muslims as well as between fundamentalist and moderate Muslims. A Baptist church in Abeche was reportedly vandalized in 2013. Prominent societal leaders, however, took positive steps to promote religious freedom during the reporting period. Despite the tension, religious leaders continue to meet regularly with the goal of easing tensions and working towards a greater peace. Christians and Muslims routinely participate in each other's social functions.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 42 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one hospital. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

CHILE

Population: 17,363,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 109,592

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 70%, Evangelical (Pentecostal 90%, other [Anglican, Baptist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Reformed Evangelical, Wesleyan] 10%) 15%, other (Baha'i, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Unification Church) less than 5% (2002 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: A country whose beaches span most of South America's Pacific coast, Chile has a vast and varied geography. Mountains in the north meet deserts, Mediterranean-style vineyards, and the Antarctic freeze of the southern tip of the continent. Following a 17-year military dictatorship responsible for the death and disappearance of countless dissidents, Chile is

now considered the most stable and among the most prosperous countries in South America. Chile's economy, while growing, has slowed since the 1990s. In 2014, Chile gained a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council through 2015.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter III Article 19 (6) of the constitution states: "The Constitution guarantees to all persons: (6) Freedom of conscience, manifestation of all creeds and the free exercise of all cults which are not opposed to morals, good customs, or public order. Religious communities may erect and maintain churches and their facilities in accordance with the conditions of safety and hygiene as established by the laws and ordinances. With respect to assets, the churches and religious communities and institutions representing any cult shall enjoy the rights granted and acknowledged by the laws currently in force. Churches and their facilities assigned exclusively for religious activities shall be exempted from all taxes."

State Attitudes and Actions: Chile retains a strict policy of separation of church and state. The executive branch of government runs the National Office of Religious Affairs that works to enforce religious liberty and tolerance among various groups. Religious groups are required to register and once registered the state cannot dissolve them by decree. Although there is no state religion, the Catholic Church is afforded special privileges. By law, other religious groups have the same right to have chaplains at public hospitals, in prisons, and in the military. Religious instruction at schools is almost exclusively Catholic, but students have the right to opt out. The Ministry of Education has approved curriculums for instruction in 14 other religions. In 2012 and 2013, government officials held a series of meetings with Protestant leaders to discuss better methods of increasing the participation of Protestant ministers in civil society.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Despite some reports of anti-Semitism, most religious groups have amicable relationships with one another. In 2008, the

government declared October 31 a national holiday to celebrate the country's Protestant community. Since 2012, the Chilean government has received reports of discrimination against Muslim tourists when applying for visas or visa extensions. The government has promised to work to eliminate this discrimination.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 670 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, 22 high schools, four radio stations, and one clinic. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely once they are officially registered.

Government Recognition: The government officially recognizes the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees. However, Sabbath employment difficulties do exist and are often worked out on an individual basis.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

CHINA

Population: 1,355,000,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 414,320

Religious Groups: Buddhist 11-16%, Christian 3-4%, Muslim 1-2%, Taoist 1-2% (All figures are estimates since, in addition to the groups which are formally acknowledged by the Patriotic Religious Association, there are numerous unrecognized groups. The nation is officially atheist.)

Perspectives on Current Issues: China's history and culture date back over 4,000 years and ancient Chinese inhabitants are credited for some of the world's greatest artistic and scientific wonders. The history of the world's most

populous country shifted dramatically when communists led by Mao Zedong took over control of the country in 1949 and established the People's Republic of China. China's government maintains strict regulations over every aspect of citizens' daily lives. Only the Communist Party of China is permitted to engage in elections and other government activity. China is the world's second largest economy, which is largely due to its 1979 economic reforms seeking to open up the country's market to the world. It is also the world's largest holder of foreign exchange reserves. This makes China a key player in the global finance arena. The country also possesses considerable natural resources. However, China is not immune to hazards which may negatively impact its future economic performance: massive urbanization and overcrowding, environmental disasters, pollution, ethnic and political unrest, and corruption are just a few examples. The country's human rights record is extremely troubling and has attracted wide-ranging criticism. Concerns include the denial of autonomy to Tibet, restrictions on freedom of expression, discrimination against minorities and women, forced abortions, arbitrary detentions, torture, and extensive use of the death penalty. China has an estimated 83 million disabled citizens. Each year, 300,000 people commit suicide. China is officially an atheist country.

Constitutional Provision: Article 36 of the constitution states “(1) Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. (2) No state organ, public organization, or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion. (3) The state protects normal religious activities. No one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the state. (4) Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Part 3 of Article 36 of the constitution provides legal ground for the government to regulate religious activities. However, the

state gives itself wide latitude in interpreting the phrase “normal religious activities.” Consequently, religious groups that are not registered are not allowed the same protection as registered ones. Unfortunately, the state is not always eager to register new congregations and does not seem to have much interest in registering new religions. Only Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant religious bodies are recognized. Falun Gong is still deemed illegal and followers of Tibetan Buddhism are frequently the subjects of discrimination. The president of the Chinese House Church Alliance, Pastor Zhang Mingxuan, commonly known as Pastor “Bike,” has been often arrested and released. A number of other Christian House Church Alliance leaders and pastors have also been detained. Some have been released, but some are still imprisoned. In recent years, the government made an unprecedented decision to meet with some house church leaders and allow greater latitude to some unregistered religious groups, which are seen, as non-threatening. More and more house churches are operating openly. In 2014, local officials in Wenzhou have begun a campaign to remove all crosses from Christian places of worship. Thus far, 15 churches have been stripped of Christian religious symbols. By law, no Communist Party members of government are permitted to participate in any religion and must be atheist.

Private Attitudes and Actions: The state promotes atheism. While recognizing the existence of religions, it is also the major propagator of religious discrimination. There are also various reports of interfaith conflicts. There is continued widespread discrimination against Tibetan Buddhists. Christian and Muslim employees report constant and open discrimination from employers.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are more than 1,265 Seventh-day Adventist congregations. The church does not operate any institutions.

Government Recognition: Seventh-day Adventists do not have their own identity and organization, but are part of the China Christian Council for Protestants. The main Protestant churches in Beijing and Shanghai are used by Adventists every Saturday.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Sabbath-keeping is a problem for many Seventh-day Adventists. Even though China officially adopted a five-day workweek more than a decade ago, many schools and employers have not followed the law and are not willing to let Adventists have the Sabbath off. As a result, many have experienced hardship for being faithful to their beliefs. The situation is expected to improve gradually as most businesses now have both Saturdays and Sundays off.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism may be conducted only in registered religious places. Many Adventists do personal evangelism. Some policies and practices, such as the three-self principles and post-denominationalism, while promoting noble ideals such as social harmony and freedom from foreign domination, can impose restrictions on freedom of religion in general and freedom to evangelize in particular.

COLOMBIA

Population: 46,245,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 313,751

Religious Groups: Catholic 80%, Protestant 14%, agnostic 2%, other 4% (including Muslim and Jewish) (2007 report)

Perspectives on Current Issues

The only country that touches both the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean in South America, Colombia is a unique blend of ethnicities and cultures in the Americas. As a top producer of various minerals and agricultural products, Colombia has led a growing economy and a strong democracy since 2002. Decades of violence at the hand of guerilla movements marked the country as a dangerous haven for drug trafficking. Since 2002, however, the government has

worked to begin negotiations between guerilla groups that once controlled vast stretches of the country. Currently, less than 6% of Colombians live in danger of guerilla violence and officials continue to battle the narcotics industry in concert with the United States.

Constitutional Provision: Title 2, Chapter 1, Articles 18 and 19 of the constitution state: “(18) Freedom of conscience is guaranteed. No one will be importuned on account of his/her convictions or beliefs or compelled to reveal them or obliged to act against his/her conscience. (19) Freedom of religion is guaranteed. Every individual has the right to freely profess his/her religion and to disseminate it individually or collectively. All religious faiths are equally free before the law.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Colombia allows for religious freedom in practice. Most religions enjoy protections and liberties provided by the government. The Colombian constitution does not provide for an official church or religion, but ambiguously states it “is not atheist or agnostic, nor indifferent to Colombians’ religious sentiment.” While mostly unconstitutional, a 1976 concordat with the Vatican provides special status to the Roman Catholic Church. Recognition for religious groups has two separate aspects: first they must receive recognition as a legal entity and then they may get public recognition as a religious body. Some non-Catholic groups have found this to be objectionable, since the process can be lengthy and at times groups do not receive recognition for seemingly trivial reasons. Consequently, some groups opt out of seeking recognition and choose instead to operate as non-government organizations. Only the thirteen religious groups that signed on to a 1997 religious freedom law are permitted to perform legally sanctioned marriages in the country. According to the Colombia Evangelical Council, all non-Catholic religious groups and missionaries are required to pay a 17% tax on all financial support coming from outside of Colombia.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Colombia has been long plagued by terrorists/guerillas responsible for numerous kidnappings, extortion, and killings, including the murder of religious leaders. Six Roman Catholic priests were reported as kidnapped in recent years and Protestant groups claim harassment and even violent attacks against clergy and church property. Attacks on religious leaders in rural areas often go unreported. These attacks have generally been more for political or financial rather than religious reasons. There are also reports of some indigenous leaders not tolerating non-syncretistic worship practices. While the Office of the Prosecutor General continues to investigate these crimes, there continues to be a widespread fear of guerilla groups in rural areas of Colombia.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,469 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, 11 schools, and three clinics. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees. Since legislation was enacted in 1997 to protect religious minorities and their distinctive practices, documented cases of discrimination have been rare. Yet some employers privately seek to coerce Adventist employees into working on the Sabbath.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely. The church's message can regularly be found on cable TV and radio.

COMOROS

Population: 766,800 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: None

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 99%. The several hundred non-Sunni residents include Shia Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Jehovah's Witnesses, Roman Catholics, and Protestants.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Comoros consists of three islands in the Indian Ocean off the eastern coast of Africa. This ethnically diverse nation has faced over 20 coups and attempted coups since being granted independence from France in 1975. One of Africa's poorest countries, Comoros suffers from enduring poverty and relies heavily on foreign aid. Persecution of Christians by the Muslim majority is of great concern to the human rights community. Child labor is a well-documented problem in Comoros. There are restrictions to freedom of speech and of the press and, until recently, journalists were subject to harassment. Fortunately, human rights abuses have diminished under the current administration. A new constitution was enacted in 2001 as an attempt to keep the islands unified under one national government.

Constitutional Provision: The preamble to the constitution states: "The Comorian people . . . proclaim and guarantee the equality of all citizens concerning rights and duties without regard to . . . religion, creed or ideological conviction. . . ."

State Attitudes and Actions: The constitution provides for freedom of religion, but the Penal Code prohibits proselytizing for religions other than Islam. The government continues to restrict this right by banning non-Muslims from proselytizing and prohibiting distribution of religious literature, clothing, and religious symbols. A constitutional referendum passed on May 17, 2009, states that "Islam is the State religion." The law also prohibits citizens from converting from Islam. The study of Islam is not compulsory in public schools, but tenets of Islam are sometimes taught together with the Arabic language at the middle school level. In 2013, 18 Shia Muslims were arrested and fined for disseminating doctrines that contradict majority Sunni Muslim teachings. The

government has also prohibited non-Sunni Muslims from building places of worship.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There is discrimination against non-Muslims, particularly Christians. All citizens face societal pressure to practice elements of Islam, especially during the month of Ramadan. Most non-Muslims do not openly practice their faith for fear of discrimination. Citizens who convert to Christianity are treated more cruelly than foreigners who practice their faith. Discrimination most often takes place at the local level behind closed doors, and there is concern that Islamic fundamentalism is on the rise. Young people returning from Islamic theological studies abroad seek to impose stricter adherence to Islamic religious law. One Protestant NGO, the Volunteer Service Group, has been working in the country for over two decades and is permitted to remain in the country with little interference.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience: There is no reported Seventh-day Adventist presence on the islands of Comoros.

CONGO, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE

Population: 77,400,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 498,421

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 50%, Protestant 35%, Kimbanguist (a Christian Congolese church) 5%, Muslim 5%. Groups with small populations include Jehovah's Witnesses, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Greek Orthodox, Jewish, and indigenous religions.

Perspectives on Current Issues: The then-named Republic of the Congo was granted independence from Belgium in 1960, but after a 1965 coup, the country's name was changed to Zaire. In 1997, a rebellion backed by Uganda and Rwanda toppled the 32-year regime and the country's name became the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The DRC has been deeply affected

by armed conflict, civil war, and crippling poverty to the present. There are an estimated 1.5 million internally displaced people and more than 300,000 live as refugees in neighboring countries. The DRC is one position away from the very bottom of the Human Development Index. Attempts in 2005 to enact a new constitution have not been successful. In the country's most recent elections in 2011, Joseph Kabila was elected president and fresh elections will not be held until 2016.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 22: "Every person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Every person has the right to express their religion or convictions . . . subject to the respect of the law."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. Religious groups are required to register, but this is a simple process and generally not subject to abuse. In practice, unregistered groups operate freely. Benefits granted to religious organizations include exemption from taxation. Public schools allow religious instruction and religious groups are allowed to work in many public schools. Parents are free to send their children to any school of their choice. The government supports interfaith understanding and maintains dialogues with the five major religious groups—Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Islamic, and Kimbanguist. In the eastern regions of the country, armed groups continue to pose a threat to religious and non-religious groups, but it is not evident that religion is a motivating factor in any of the attacks.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious. However, there are reports of individuals who are tortured, killed, or driven from their homes because of suspected witchcraft activities. Some revival churches or small Protestant congregations exploit fear

of witchcraft by encouraging families to drive accused witches from their homes or by performing painful exorcisms.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Churches and Institutions: There are 1,863 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, three literature ministry seminaries, two high schools, one hospital, 32 clinics and dispensaries, and a radio-TV production center. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

CONGO, REPUBLIC OF THE

Population: 4,662,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 774

Religious Groups: Protestant 41%, Roman Catholic 32%, atheist 11%, other Christian (Kimbanguist, Salvationist, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) 7%, other religious groups 7%, Muslim 2%. A significant portion of the population combines traditional beliefs and practices with Christianity or other religious beliefs (2010 report).

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Republic of the Congo was granted independence from France in 1960. Through various civil wars and authoritarian governments, this nation did not hold free elections until 1992. Despite a Marxist past characterized by indoctrination against religion, all restrictions to freedom of religion were officially removed in the same year. The pigmy populations experience discrimination and there are reports of arbitrary detentions and poor prison conditions. The Republic of the Congo is

one of Africa's largest petroleum producers, but poor governance and declining oil reserves has forced the government to diversify its economy.

Constitutional Provision: The 2002 constitution states in Article 26: "Freedom of belief and conscience and the freedom of either a religious or philosophical profession are inviolable. . . . The free exercise of religious sects shall be guaranteed within the limits compatible with public order and good mores. . . . No one shall be relieved from fulfilling a civic duty because of religious opinion."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution. There is no state religion. All organizations, religious or secular, must register and be approved by the government. Though the process is time consuming, there are no reports of discrimination.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious. Religious tolerance is greater in urban areas than in rural areas. In some forest communities where there are pygmy populations, there is some discrimination against them in education and employment as well as intolerance for their cultural practices, including at times their animist religious practices. A joint ecumenical council, which met biweekly in 2013, represents all organized religious groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 15 Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

COOK ISLANDS

Population: 10,134 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 924

Religious Groups: Protestant 62.8% (Cook Islands Christian Church 49.1%, Seventh-day Adventist 7.9%, Assembly of God 3.7%, Apostolic 2.1%), Roman Catholic 17%, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 4.4%, other 8%, no affiliation 5.6%, no response 2.2% (2011 estimate)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Named after the first European explorer who arrived at the islands in the 18th century, the Cook Islands were a protectorate of Britain before coming under New Zealand control in 1900. In 1965, Cook Islanders voted for self-government in compact with New Zealand, under which the islands are administered today. The economy of the fifteen Cook Islands is built mainly on tourism. Emigration to New Zealand, particularly of highly skilled or educated Cook Islanders, is a major block to economic growth for the country.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 64, Section (d): “It is hereby recognized and declared that in the Cook Islands there exist, and shall continue to exist, without discrimination by reason of race, national origin, color, religion, opinion, belief, or sex, the following fundamental human rights and freedoms . . . Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Generally the state protects the religious freedom of its citizens.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most religious organizations have amicable relationships and no hostilities have been reported. There was some animosity aimed at Seventh-day Adventists over the issue of flights on Sundays. The Cook Islands Christian Church saw those flights as a desecration of Sunday

sanctity and believed that Adventists were somewhat to blame. The tension has now abated considerably.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 15 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one high school and one bookstore. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

COSTA RICA

Population: 4,755,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 71,761

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 63%, Protestant 23% (Pentecostal, Baptist, Lutheran, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Lutheran, Jehovah's Witness, Seventh-day Adventist), other 3%, no affiliation 10%.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Since dissolving its armed forces in 1949, Costa Rica has enjoyed economic growth and democratic stability. This Central American nation boasts one of the lowest poverty rates in the Western Hemisphere and subsists on varied agricultural products, microchip production, and ecotourism. This has made Costa Rica a prime candidate for immigration from Nicaragua, which lies to the north. Nearly 9% of the population is foreign born and this has been the source of growing tension in Costa Rican society.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Title VI, Article 75: The Catholic and Apostolic Religion is the religion of the State, which contributes to its maintenance, without preventing the free exercise in the Republic of other

forms of worship that are not opposed to universal morality or good customs.” Title IV, Article 28 also states: “. . . clergymen or secular individuals cannot make political propaganda in any way invoking religious motives or making use of religious beliefs.” Costa Rica enforces a day of rest without explicitly stating which day. Title V, Article 59 states: “All workers shall be entitled to one day of rest after six consecutive days of work and to annual paid vacations.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The state constitutionally and in practice promotes the interests of the Catholic Church. This preferential treatment generally involves, but is not limited to, the granting of land, permitting only Catholic clergy to perform matrimonial rites—non-Catholics must be married by the state—and providing Catholic education in public schools. While the constitution forbids Catholic clergy from holding national political office, this restriction does not apply to non-Catholic clergy. There are no registration requirements for religious groups. However, according to the Law of Associations, in order to have judicial status a group must first have at least 10 members. Religious groups are accorded the same recognition as any other group. Some Protestant religious groups have found this to be objectionable. In 2009, an executive order restricting the location of churches due to noise or other purported health concerns was relaxed to allow religious organizations more freedom in establishing places of worship. A 2010 Supreme Court decision now requires public schools to provide non-Catholic religious education to students who choose to opt out of Catholic-based religious instruction.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There were no official reports of discrimination or abuse among religious groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 231 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, two high schools, and one bookstore. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventists experience regular problems in the schools, including requirements to finish projects late Friday night or attend meetings or classes on Saturday. Some Adventists experience workplace problems on a frequent basis.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

COTE D'IVOIRE

Population: 22,848,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 5,126

Religious Groups: Muslim 35-40% (Sunni, Shia, Ahmadiyya), Christian (Roman Catholic, Jehovah's Witness, Seventh-day Adventist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Harrist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Southern Baptist, Copt, Celestial Church of Christ, Assembly of God), indigenous beliefs 25%. Many Christians and Muslims also adhere to some aspects of indigenous religious beliefs.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Cote d'Ivoire maintained close ties to France, even after being granted independence in 1960. Once quite prosperous and peaceful, Cote d'Ivoire's stable government succumbed to a military coup in 1999. Further conflicts continued through 2003 and ended with a rebel-controlled north and a government-controlled south. Fighting continued in 2011 after attempts at fresh elections to unify the country. UN and French peacekeeping troops stabilized the country and current President Ouattara won the election. Rebel leaders are currently facing trial for crimes against humanity

and President Ouattara seeks to rebuild the country. Life expectancy is 47 years. Violence against women is widespread.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 9: “Freedom of thought and expression, notably freedom of conscience, religious or philosophical opinion, shall be guaranteed to all, subject to respect for the law, the rights of others, national security and public order.” Article 10: “Everyone shall have the right to express and disseminate freely his or her ideas. All propaganda aimed at or having the effect of making one social group superior to another or encouraging racial or religious hatred is forbidden.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government of Cote d'Ivoire generally respects the religious liberty of its citizens. The law requires religious groups to register with the government, and the government oversees all instruction in religious schools. Problems resulting from ethnic discrimination have been the cause of some religious discrimination. Although there is no state religion, the government informally favors Christianity for historical reasons. In the past, the government has favored the Catholic Church and as a result has given it a stronger voice in the government. Past state actions led many Muslims to feel disenfranchised from the political system. Since 2011 elections, the government has sought reconciliation between the Christian and Muslim populations in all regions of the country. The government has generally granted equal airtime on state-run television to all religious groups.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Since the 2011 election, religious leaders have met to discuss tensions, and have held interfaith conferences on tolerance. There still remains tension with traditional indigenous religions, as both Christians and Muslims have been the cause of discrimination. Leaders of traditional religions have been largely neglected at the interfaith meetings.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 60 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a secondary school, a radio-TV production center, and a Bible correspondence school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is officially recognized by the government.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

CROATIA

Population: 4,470,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,779

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 86%, Serbian Orthodox 4%, Muslim 1.5%, other (Jewish, Protestant, other Christians) 5%, nonreligious or atheist 4%.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Croatia once formed part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Yugoslavia. When it split from the former in 1991, violent conflict ensued between ethnic Croats and Serbs. After four years of fighting, peace was brokered, but not before a number of Croatian officials were accused of war crimes. This issue held up the Croatian bid for EU membership. In 2011, Gen. Ante Gotovina was convicted at The Hague, before winning his appeal and overturning his sentence in 2012. Still, Croatia was able to join NATO in 2009 and the EU in 2013. Croatia's economy is heavily dependent on tourism, which was negatively affected by the global financial crisis of 2008. The country maintains discriminatory policies against the Roma community.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 40: “Freedom of conscience and religion and free public profession of religion and other convictions shall be guaranteed.” Article 41: “(1) All religious communities shall be equal before the law and shall be separate from the state. (2) Religious communities shall be free, in conformity with law, publicly to perform religious services, open schools, teaching establishments or other institutions, social and charitable institutions and to manage them, and shall in their activity enjoy the protection and assistance of the state.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Croatia generally allows for the free practice of religion and does not interfere with religious organizations. The only religious organization that receives preferential treatment is the Catholic Church. Through a Concordat with the Vatican, the Catholic Church receives sizable state subsidies. Other recognized denominations (including the Seventh-day Adventist Church) receive much smaller state subsidies. On March 31, 2009, Parliament passed amendments to the Law on Foreigners listing clergy among the favored category, granting them the right of temporary residence and more favorable conditions for renewing permits. Several Jewish groups report that the government continues to ignore claims related to properties seized during the Yugoslav regime, including various synagogues. Muslim groups report that the government has responded to requests for Muslim burial plots in existing cemeteries.

Private Attitudes and Actions: In Croatia, much religious strife hinges upon social and cultural lines. The growth of the Serbian Orthodox Church at times alienates Catholic Croats, resulting in violence and vandalism. These disputes are largely seen as cultural rather than religious and most religions have an attitude of tolerance toward one another. Restitution of property nationalized or confiscated by the Yugoslav Communist regime remains incomplete.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 84 Seventh-day Adventist churches in Croatia. The church also operates one college, one high school, one publishing house, one Bible correspondence school, and one media center. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

CUBA

Population: 11,047,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 34,018

Religious Groups: Catholic 60-70%, Protestant (Baptist, Pentecostal, Jehovah's Witness, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, Anglican, Presbyterian, Quaker, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints) 5%, other (Jewish, Muslim, Greek and Russian Orthodox, Buddhist, Baha'i)

Perspectives on Current Issues:

Over fifty years of economic sanctions and the eventual fall of the country's biggest supporter—the Soviet Union—have crippled the Cuban economy. Since the Cuban Revolution in the 1960s, a one-party government has tightly controlled the island nation. In 2014, the governments of the United States and Cuba announced the normalizing of diplomatic relations for the first time in half a century. While these reforms have helped the country's economy, Cubans living abroad and sending money back home continue to be a major source of sustenance. The Cuban government continues to draw the attention of international human rights agencies due to its incarceration of political dissidents and a general lack of freedom of expression.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter I, Article 8, of the constitution states: “The state recognizes, respects and guarantees freedom of religion. In the Republic of Cuba, religious institutions are separate from the state. The different beliefs and religions enjoy the same consideration.”

State Attitudes and Actions: According to the 1976 constitution (as amended), Cuba is a secular state, which maintains separation of church and state. Religious bodies are required to register with the Office of Religious Affairs in order to be recognized and they must also obtain government approval to construct new places of worship. House churches are allowed but they are subject to numerous government regulations. As a result, most house churches are not registered and are consequently illegal. Registered groups are allowed to import literature, but it is subject to Communist Party review. There has, however, been some marked improvement. While the government exerts control over religious life, most religious groups now report fewer restrictions on the ability to evangelize, travel, and import printed material. In 2014, the Cuban government began easing restrictions on travel for religious workers and returned church properties that were confiscated during the 1961 revolution. Religious groups are still, however, subject to infiltration, harassment, monitoring, threats and, when it comes to unregistered groups, fines. Religious education is not permitted in public schools, and private primary and secondary schools are not allowed to operate.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Private groups continue to have amicable relationships with one another.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 310 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a small junior college.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is allowed to operate in Cuba. However, there are reports of discrimination against members of the church.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventists regularly face harassment for Sabbath observance. Adventist children do not participate in school activities on Saturdays, but there is evidence of the state allowing greater latitude to Adventists who need Saturdays off. Employment is always an issue because of the depressed economy and Sabbath observance can cause additional hardships.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

CYPRUS

Population: 1,172,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 89

Religious Groups: Greek Orthodox 95%, other 5% (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Maronite Catholic Armenian Orthodox, Jewish, Jehovah's Witness, Baha'i, Buddhist) (2001 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: This divided nation encompasses a Mediterranean island to the south of Turkey. Once under British control, Cyprus achieved independence in 1960. Tensions between the ethnic Greek majority and the ethnic Turkish minority erupted into civil unrest in 1963 that ended with an island divided by a UN buffer zone. At present, the international community recognizes the Republic of Cyprus that controls the southern two-thirds of the island; only Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which occupies the northern third of the island. While ethnicity is at issue, religion also deeply divides Cypriots. The Republic of Cyprus is predominantly Greek Orthodox, while the Cypriots in the northern third are predominantly Muslim. Talks to broker a peace agreement for the island have not been successful. The Cypriot economy has taken a blow in recent years due

to the global financial slump and the residual effects of the Greek debt crisis. Cyprus is a member of the European Union and has adopted the Euro currency.

Constitutional Provision: The 1960 constitution continues to serve as the framework for the Republic of Cyprus. It states in Article 18: “(1) Every person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. (2) All religions whose doctrines or rites are not secret are free. (3) All religions are equal before the law. Without prejudice to the competence of the Communal Chambers under this Constitution, no legislative, executive or administrative act of the Republic shall discriminate against any religious institution or religion. (4) Every person is free and has the right to profess his faith and to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice or observance, either individually or collectively, in private or in public, and to change his religion or belief...”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice. The government officially recognizes only three religious groups: Maronite Catholics, Armenian Orthodoxy, and Cypriote Roman Catholics. All other religious groups must register as non-profit organizations in order to own property or engage in other financial transactions. Unlike officially recognized religious groups, non-profits are not eligible for state subsidies. Greek Orthodox religious instruction is provided in public schools, but parents may seek an exemption for their children. Conscientious objections to military service are granted. Prisoners have complained that they have not been granted access to chaplains of their own faiths. The government ombudsmen stated that prison regulations would be amended to admit chaplains of any faith.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relations between the Church of Cyprus and other religious communities are cordial. Missionaries have the legal right to proselytize. In 2013, vandals tore down a wall that was part of a mosque being restored by a government agency. Religious and political leaders alike

condemned the attacks and the mosque was fully restored months later. Religious leaders have agreed to allow worshippers to access churches and mosques on either side of the UN buffer zone.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are two Seventh-day Adventist churches in Cyprus. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The church is not recognized as a religious entity and has had difficulty obtaining permission to build a new sanctuary. There are no reports of persecution.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventists are a religious minority in a nation dominated by Greek Orthodox and Muslim traditions, so the Sabbath is a continual hindrance in obtaining work or attending school.

Freedom to Evangelize: Adventist evangelism is opposed by traditional religious communities and a suspicious government, which frowns on proselytizing.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Population: 10,627,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 7,525

Religious Groups: Unspecified 45%, no affiliation 35%, Roman Catholic 11%, no specific religion 7%, other (Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist) 3% (2011 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Czechoslovakia emerged after World War I, as a united state comprised of the Czech and Slovak peoples. The country became strongly aligned with the Soviet Union, but the 1989 Velvet Revolution ended communist rule and opened the Czechoslovak economy. In 1993, a nonviolent uprising divided Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic was born, separate from Slovakia. The country's longest economic recession ended in 2013 and the country has started to experience growth. The Czech Republic has

an unfortunate history of discrimination against the Roma people, including the alleged forced sterilization of Roma women. The Czech Republic is now a member of both NATO and the EU.

Constitutional Provision: Article 10 of the constitution essentially commits the nation to international accords on human rights and fundamental freedoms, which are superior to their laws.

State Attitudes and Actions: The 2002 Law on Religious Freedom and the Position of Churches and Religious Associations created a two-tiered system of registration for religious organizations. To register at the first (lower) tier, a religious group must have at least 300 adult members permanently residing in the country. First-tier registration confers limited tax benefits; in addition, it imposes annual reporting requirements as well as a 10-year waiting period before an organization may apply for full second-tier registration. To register at the second tier, which entitles an organization to a share of state funding, a religious group must have membership, with the requisite signatures, equal to at least 0.1 percent of the country's population. Many smaller and less established religions are unable to obtain the signatures necessary for second-tier registration. Only 36 religious groups are registered in the first tier and are permitted to perform marriages and serve as military or prison chaplains. The state generally promotes and protects the free exercise of religion. In 2013, the government began implementing the Church Restitution Act that seeks to return church-owned properties previously seized by the government during the 40-year communist regime.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are some reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice reflecting residual anti-Semitism. However, prominent societal leaders have taken positive steps to promote religious freedom. Muslim groups have reported

improved relations with local authorities and increased cooperation when seeking to expand or build new mosques.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 143 Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are few problems with Adventists in the workplace, but students are often required to take tests on Saturday.

Freedom to Evangelize: Due to the two-tiered system of religious freedom in the Czech Republic and the success of Adventist evangelism, the Seventh-day Adventist Church enjoys full rights of religious freedom. In addition to freedom to evangelize, the church is given special rights to teach religion in the state schools, engage in chaplaincy ministry in the armed forces and prisons, receive state subsidies, conduct marriage ceremonies, found schools, and maintain confessional secrecy.

DENMARK

Population: 5,569,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,457

Religious Groups: Evangelical Lutheran 80%, Muslim 4%, other (Roman Catholic, Jehovah's Witness, Serbian Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Baptist, Buddhist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Pentecostal, other non-denominational Christians) 1%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Denmark's history is rooted in an ancient Viking heritage that grew to head a unified Scandinavian kingdom in the Middle Ages. At present, Denmark boasts a vibrant economy and one of the highest standards of living in the world. According to Transparency

International, Denmark has the least corrupt government in the world. The major criticism leveled against Denmark is that asylum seekers are held in poor conditions for long periods of time. The Kingdom of Denmark is a member-state of the European Union, but has not adopted the Euro currency.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution, in Part I, Section 4, provides for the establishment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which is supported by the state. Part VII, Sections 67 to 70, states: “(67) The citizens shall be entitled to form congregations for the worship of God in a manner consistent with their convictions, provided that nothing at variance with good morals or public order shall be taught or done. (68) No one shall be liable to make personal contributions to any denomination other than the one to which he adheres. (69) Rules for religious bodies dissenting from the Established Church shall be laid down by Statute. (70) No person shall for reasons of his creed or descent be deprived of access to complete enjoyment of his civic and political rights, nor shall he for such reasons evade compliance with any common civic duty.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Law stipulates that the reigning monarch must be a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Though the state supports the Evangelical Lutheran Church, it allows for the free exercise of non-Lutheran faiths. Since 1970, the Danish government has recognized and officially registered 141 religious groups. Private religious schools receive state subsidies and students may be exempted from mandatory religious instruction in public schools.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are some reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, such as occasional reports of anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic insults, harassment, and vandalism, which reflect increasing tensions between young Muslims and other young Danes. The country, nevertheless, has a long history of welcoming religious minorities and affording them equal treatment. Government officials

have collaborated with Danish religious organizations to combat hate crimes and promote tolerance.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 44 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a junior college, a publishing house, a radio-TV center, and two retirement homes. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Evangelical Lutheran Church is the state church and enjoys some privileges not available to other faiths. The government gives official status to religions in two ways: by royal decree and under the 1969 Marriage Act. As of April 2005, 12 religious organizations were recognized by royal decree, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

DJIBOUTI

Population: 810,100 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: Unknown

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 94%, others (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Copt, Ethiopian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Jehovah's Witness, Hindu, Jewish, Baha'i) 6%. Individuals of these groups are generally foreign-born citizens and expatriates. Citizens are officially considered Muslims if they do not specifically identify with another religious group.

Perspectives on Current Issues: France controlled this region, encompassing the Afar and Issa people, until independence was obtained in 1977, creating the Republic of Djibouti. Tensions between these two ethnic groups sparked a civil war in the 1990s that ended in 2001. The country's first multi-party elections

were held in 2005, and this nation has remained relatively stable. Djibouti is the third smallest country in Africa. It experiences the hottest average temperature on Earth, making water a particularly precious commodity. Because most of the country is quite arid, Djibouti's economy is sustained by serving as the major shipping port for Ethiopia and other landlocked countries in central Africa. The unemployment rate is estimated to be 50-80% and poverty is accompanied by a plethora of human rights concerns. Human trafficking, prostitution, and drug abuse are reported. There is a significant American and French military presence in this strategic location as Djibouti strategically controls access to the Red Sea.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 11: "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, worship and opinion in conformity with the order established by law and the regulations."

State Attitudes and Actions: Proselytizing is discouraged but not illegal. Islam is the state religion, but the government does not sanction those who do not practice Islam or who follow other faiths. The Family Court enforces elements of civil and Shari'a law known as the Family Code and rules on matters related to the family such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance. These courts are only for Muslims; non-Muslims are directed to civil courts. Foreign missionaries engage in humanitarian work related to education and health services. They are generally allowed to do charitable work and sell religious books without interference. A recent law now places the government as direct overseer of the country's mosques in an effort to thwart political movement among congregants.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Representatives of the Catholic, Protestant, and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches note an increase in hostility towards non-Muslims in recent years. There are reports of school children throwing rocks at churches. Moderate Muslims attribute this rising tension to media coverage and

the increase in the number of students returning from fundamentalist Islamic schools in Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Church leaders differentiate between the government's generally tolerant attitude and a growing public animosity towards Christians.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: The Seventh-day Adventist Church operates a health center. Adventists run both an eye clinic and a dental clinic.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: Seventh-day Adventists are not allowed to evangelize freely.

DOMINICA

Population: 73,400 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 6,758

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 61%, Seventh-day Adventist 6%, Pentecostal 6%, no affiliation 6%, Baptist 4%, Methodist 4%, other (Baha'i, Christian Brethren, Jehovah's Witness, Muslim, Nazarene, Rastafarian, Church of Christ) (2001 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: The last of the Caribbean islands to be colonized by European forces, Dominica is the only country in the region with a remaining native Caribe population. Once completely reliant on banana crops for sustenance, Dominica's economy has diversified in recent years to include ecotourism and a budding financial industry.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter 1, Section 9 of the Dominican constitution states: "(1) Except with his own consent, a person shall not be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience, including freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or

in community with others, and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Even though the government maintains a close relationship with Christian churches, it allows for free exercise of religious beliefs. Religious organizations are required to register with the government when seeking non-profit status. The government subsidizes the salaries of teachers at various Christian schools including Seventh-day Adventist institutions. Rastafarians complain about being unable to use marijuana within the context of their religious practices.

Private Attitudes and Actions: As of 2014, there were no reports of religious discrimination among the various religious groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 23 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a bookstore. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Population: 12,957,000 (2015 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 294,814

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 69%, Evangelical Protestant (Assembly of God, Church of God, Baptist, Pentecostal) 18%, other (Seventh-day Adventist,

Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu) 2%, no affiliation 11%

Perspectives on Current Issues

The Dominican Republic shares the Caribbean island of Hispaniola with its French-speaking neighbor, Haiti. After a decades-long dictatorship in the 20th century, the nation's economy enjoyed strong growth into the new millennium. There is, however, a large and widening wealth gap: 10% of the population owns over 40% of the nation's wealth. This has contributed to widespread poverty. Race-related conflicts continue to dominate the Dominican Republic's social ailments including broad discrimination against Haitian immigrants and their descendants.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Title II, Section 1, Article 8: "It is recognized as the main purpose of the state, the effective protection of the rights of individuals, and the maintenance of those rights . . . [including] freedom of conscience and worship, with subjection to public ordinances and respect for good customs."

State Attitudes and Actions: Although the constitution denies the existence of a state religion, the Dominican Republic signed a concordat with the Vatican in 1954, enabling the Catholic Church to receive special privileges not granted to other religious groups. In 2011, however, the government removed restrictions that granted the Catholic Church sole authority to conduct marriage ceremonies. The first non-Catholic wedding was conducted by the Dominican Society of Jehovah's Witnesses, and a number of other churches have already completed the procedural requirements necessary for conducting marriage ceremonies. All religious organizations are required to register with the government. Non-Catholic faiths may request tax-free status from the Ministry of Finance, which promises to review applications within fifteen days.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Amicable relationships exist among different religious groups, with no reports of violence or strife. The International Religious Liberty Association convened the 7th World Congress for Religious Freedom in Punta Cana in April 2012.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 720 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, 13 schools, one children's home, and one radio station. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: It has become increasingly difficult for Adventists to find employment in the Dominican Republic. Often employers will not even consider hiring a Seventh-day Adventist if the employment application indicates church affiliation.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

ECUADOR

Population: 15,476,000 (2015 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 58,297

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 80%, Evangelical Christian 11%, other (Islam, Hindu, indigenous and African faiths) 6%, other (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witness, Buddhist, Jewish, spiritualist, Anglican, Episcopalian, Baha'i, Lutheran, Eastern Orthodox, Presbyterian, Unification Church, and followers of Inti [the traditional Inca sun god]). Hundreds of evangelical churches exist, many of which are not affiliated with a particular denomination.

Perspectives on Current Issues: A relatively small country, Ecuador boasts Andean peaks, Pacific shores, the Amazon rainforest and the ecologically vibrant Galapagos Islands. While Ecuador celebrates over thirty years of democratic governance, the last decade has seen political instability. Three of

the last four democratically elected presidents have been ousted by street protests and unrest in Quito, the capital city. In 2008, however, the South American nation approved a new constitution and the current president was just reelected to a second full term. Political and social stability seem to be improving in Ecuador.

Constitutional Provision: Title II, Chapter VI, Article 66 (8) of the constitution states: “The right to practice, keep, change, profess in public or private one’s religion or beliefs and to disseminate them individually or collectively, with the constraints imposed by respect for the rights of others. The State shall protect voluntary religious practice, as well the expression of those who profess no religion whatsoever, and shall favor an environment of plurality and tolerance.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The state provides for and protects religious freedom. Registration creates a legal identity, which is advantageous when conducting business, owning property, and building schools. To register or have nonprofit status with the Ministry of the Interior, religious organizations must possess a charter, which includes all names used by the group, and provide signatures of at least 15 members. Also, they must file a petition with the government using a licensed attorney and pay a \$100 registration fee. Public school are not permitted to provide religious instruction.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most religious groups have amicable relationships. However, there have been some reports of discrimination aimed at members of Muslim and Jewish groups when applying for housing or work. Some reports indicate that children in these groups have also been unfairly treated in schools. Muslim groups have responded by disseminating informational pamphlets on Islam to the public.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 232 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a technical institute, three schools, two radio stations, and two clinics. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Seventh-day Adventists have been experiencing increasing problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for students and employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

EGYPT

Population: 88,471,000 (2015 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 734

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 90%, Coptic Orthodox 8%, other Christian 1%, Shia Muslim less than 1%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Traces of Egypt's ancient empire have influenced cultures around the world. The land of the Great Pyramids of Giza and the Nile River, Egypt adopted Islam and the Arabic language in the 7th century. The 2010 start of the Arab Spring in neighboring Tunisia sparked massive protests in Egypt that led to the fall of its longtime leader, Hosni Mubarak. Violence continued, however, through to 2014 when voters approved a new constitution and elected current president, Abdul Fattah al-Sisi. While his administration has worked to outlaw the Muslim Brotherhood in hopes of establishing a secular state, many fear that a new military dictatorship may be taking root in Egypt. The economic situation in Egypt has been steadily deteriorating. Officially, the unemployment rate reached 13.4% in 2014. More than half the population lives below the poverty level, earning barely \$2 a day. The so-called Arab Spring has turned into a nightmare for many religious

minorities. Discrimination against Coptic Christians is a well-known phenomenon. Many Christians have left the country for safe havens overseas due to targeting by extremists who, according to human rights defenders, are involved in religious cleansing. Activists criticize the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces for its use of repressive means to maintain order in the post-revolutionary era. An estimated 18,000 people have been detained with no legal redress. Allegations of torture are widespread. Violence against women has reached epidemic proportions. Asylum seekers and migrants—an estimated three million people, mainly from Sudan and sub-Saharan Africa—face an uncertain future in Egypt.

Constitutional Provision: The 2014 Constitution states in Part III, Article 64: “Freedom of belief is absolute. The freedom of practicing religious rituals and establishing worship places for the followers of Abrahamic religions is a right regulated by Law.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government restricts the practice of religious rights. Islam is the official state religion and Shari’a is the principal source of legislation. Respect for religious freedom by the government declined during the reporting period, as evidenced by failure to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of sectarian violence. Government authorities detained and harassed some converts from Islam to Christianity and pressured them to revert to Islam.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Violent sectarian attacks on Copts, Baha’is and other religious minorities increased during the reporting period.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are two Seventh-day Adventist churches in Egypt. The church operates one high school, two educational facilities, one evangelistic center, and one food factory.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is recognized in Egypt.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Sabbath-keeping presents a challenge for Adventists seeking employment.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism is prohibited.

EL SALVADOR

Population: 6,401,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 210,996

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 51%, Protestant 33%, no affiliation 14%, other (Jehovah's Witness, Hare Krishna, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) less than 2%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Currently the most densely populated country on the American continent, El Salvador is a highly industrialized nation that continues to struggle to rebuild after a bloody civil war. The war, which cost \$2 billion and the lives of 75,000 Salvadorans, ended in 1992 and was followed by a series of natural disasters that only deepened the country's social and economic problems. Money sent back to El Salvador from nationals living abroad continues to be a major source of revenue for the country. Along with its Central American neighbors, El Salvador is a major contributor to, particularly, juvenile immigrants entering the United States seeking refuge from powerful street gangs and urban violence.

Constitutional Provision: Title II, Articles 25 and 26 of the constitution states: “(25) The free exercise of every religion is guaranteed, without any limit except [that it infringes] upon morality and the public order. . . . The legal entity of the Catholic Church is recognized. Other churches are able to obtain, according to the law, the recognition of their entity.”

State Attitudes and Actions: El Salvador allows for the free exercise of religion and protects the rights of individual conscience. The Catholic Church is specifically recognized in the constitution. All recognized religious groups may receive tax-exempt status and donations made to religious organizations are tax-deductible. Criminal penalties, from six months to two years, are imposed upon those who publicly offend or insult the religious beliefs of others, or who damage or destroy religious objects. Though severe cases or repeat offenders may be given a six- to eight-year prison sentence, there have been no prosecutions under this law to date. In 2013, no registration requests for religious organizations were denied.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There is generally an amicable relationship among various religious groups with no strife or violence reported. In 2013, various religious organizations participated in the country's Council of Religions for Peace that included a special recognition of El Salvador's small indigenous population.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 700 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one training school, one high school, and one bookstore. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Population: 722,254 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,749

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 87%, Protestant 6%, indigenous beliefs 5%, other (Muslim, Baha'i, other groups) each less than 1%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Equatorial Guinea, once a Spanish colony for over 190 years, achieved independence in 1968. As such, it is the only Spanish-speaking country on the African continent. From 1968 to 1979, Equatorial Guineans suffered through a dictatorship that shut down churches, engaged in genocide, and brought about economic collapse. The coup that brought down one dictatorship brought about the authoritarian rule of President Obiang, who continues to be the president to the present day. President Obiang has held on to power for over thirty years by, according to UN observers, rigging multi-party elections. This nation has become Sub-Saharan Africa's biggest oil producer, but conditions for average Equatoguineans continue to be deplorable. According to Transparency International, Equatorial Guinea's government is among the most corrupt in the world. There are also reports of restrictions of freedom of expression and arbitrary detentions and torture.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Part 1, item 13f: "Every citizen shall enjoy the following rights and freedoms: freedom of religion and worship."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution. However, religious leaders avoid criticism of the government and government officials reportedly monitor some religious services. Any group wishing to hold events outside of its house of worship must secure government permission. In practice, however, this restriction does not seem to interfere with holding other services. A 1992 presidential decree that regulates religious freedom states an official preference for the Catholic Church and the Reform Church of Equatorial Guinea. The decree's effect is seen throughout the country in areas such as Catholic masses that are part of all major holidays and ceremonies. Catholic and Reform Church

officials are exempt from airport entry and exit taxes. The decree mandates registration of religious groups, and the approval process may take several years. There doesn't seem to be discrimination in this process, except that the application is not required for Catholic and Reform Churches. It is also reported that Catholic missionaries receive their residence permits shortly after their arrival, while others receive permits after a two- to twelve-month delay. There is no reported workplace discrimination against particular faith groups. Some non-Catholic pastors who work for the government as civil servants report that supervisors require them to participate in religious activities, including Catholic masses, at government functions. While the law states that each person is free to study his or her religion, in practice it is generally not possible for non-Catholics to study their own faith in schools where Catholicism is taught. Some Protestant denominations have schools, which are all allowed to operate freely.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious and there are no reports of significant tensions.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 18 Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely. While there were no specific reports of incidents involving Seventh-day Adventists, it is clear that the tension other Protestant churches feel is also felt in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

ERITREA

Population: 6,380,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 526

Religious Groups: Orthodox Christian 57%, Muslim 36%, Roman Catholic 4%, other Protestant (Evangelical Lutheran, Baptist, Presbyterian, Jehovah's Witness, Pentecostal) 1%, indigenous beliefs 2%, Baha'i less than 1%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Eritrea is considered one of the world's most isolated countries. In 1962, after hundreds of years of foreign rule by the Ottoman Empire, Italy, Great Britain, and Ethiopia, Eritrean guerilla groups began a violent campaign for independence. In 1991, the UN sanctioned a provisional government for the Eritrean people, who in 1993 voted nearly unanimously for independence. Border conflicts between Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Yemen claimed the lives of over 70,000 people through 2001. Continued disputes led Eritrean officials to expel UN staff and the eventual exit of UN peacekeeping troops. Eritrea has since become increasingly isolated as UN agencies and foreign NGOs have withdrawn from the country completely. This action has exacerbated the region's worst drought in over fifty years, as necessary aid cannot reach those in the most need. Human Rights Watch has reported the country has become a "giant prison." All media outlets are now under government control and there are increasing reports of the imprisonment, kidnapping, and torturing of political dissidents and religious minorities.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 19, Section 1: "Every person shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and belief."

State Attitudes and Actions: While the Eritrean constitution protects religious freedom, recent government policies have severely limited citizens' rights. On May 28, 2002, the Eritrean government closed all houses of worship in the country except those belonging to the four main religious groups—Eritrean Orthodox Church, the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church of Eritrea, Islam, and the Catholic Church—until they registered and received approval by the state. An ever-increasing number of Eritrean citizens, mostly Christian, are currently

jailed for their religious beliefs, though the exact number is unknown. In the past the government reportedly built a camp in the desert town of Meiter, specifically for religious detainees. The prison is isolated and does not allow visitors. The prison reportedly houses 150 to 200 prisoners, all held either for belonging to an unapproved religious group or for not belonging to a specific religious group. There are numerous reports of government officials breaking into the homes of Evangelicals and confiscating valuables. In May 2009, the government transferred dozens of prisoners, including Jehovah's Witnesses and members of Evangelical religious groups, from police stations in Asmara to the Meiter detention center. Various Meiter prisoners are reported to have died within the prison. The government continues to single out Jehovah's Witnesses for harsher treatment than that received by followers of other faiths since they are not willing to comply with compulsory military service requirements. The government has not registered any religious groups since the last report. In 2002, the Meherte Yesus Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Faith Mission Church, and the Baha'i fully complied with registration requirements; however, to date they have not been registered. Seventh-day Adventist churches and places of worship owned by other unregistered groups that were seized by the government continue to be shuttered.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Citizens are generally tolerant towards those who are members of the four officially recognized religious groups. Mosques and Christian churches coexist relatively peacefully throughout the country. However, there is clear social prejudice against unregistered religious groups and private citizens have reportedly cooperated with government authorities in harassing members of those faiths. Jehovah's Witnesses are generally disliked and face strong discrimination due to their refusal to vote in national elections and participate in military service.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are three Seventh-day Adventist churches, but the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not officially recognized and is not allowed to operate legally. In the past, authorities have shut down at least one Seventh-day Adventist church in Asmara.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: No reports are available regarding Sabbath keeping for students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: Seventh-day Adventists are not allowed to evangelize.

ESTONIA

Population: 1,257,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,584

Religious Groups: No affiliation 54%, Estonian Orthodox or Estonian Apostolic Orthodox 13.7%, Lutheran 8.4%, other Christian (including Baptist, Roman Catholic, Jehovah's Witness, Christian Free Congregations, Pentecostal) 1.2%, other (including Russian Old Believers, Jewish, Muslim) 5.7% (2011 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Estonia is the northern-most Baltic republic. A former Soviet Republic, Estonia has one of the healthiest public finance systems in Europe. Estonia's economy has grown in the past few years and the unemployment rate has dropped to about 6.3%. One of the major human rights issues is the lack of adequate opportunities for linguistic minorities, which represent 30% of the population. The Council of Europe has expressed deep concerns regarding inhumane prison conditions. Estonia is a member of the European Union and NATO, and has adopted the Euro currency.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Articles 40, "Everyone has freedom of conscience, religion and thought. Everyone may freely belong to churches and religious societies. There is no state church. Everyone has the freedom to exercise his or her religion, both alone and in community with

others, in public or in private, unless this is detrimental to public order, health or morals.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The state generally allows free exercise of religion. There are some requirements for becoming a registered religious organization; however, these are minimal standards that most organizations can attain with little difficulty. Since the fall of Communism, most Estonians are secular in their beliefs and, though they associate with the Evangelical Lutheran Church, many are nominal in their adherence. The state freely allows missionaries to enter the country and work among the people, and there are few reported problems.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There were no reports of religious discrimination, vandalism, or intolerance among the various religious groups in Estonia.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 20 Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

ETHIOPIA

Population: 96,633,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 144,132

Religious Groups: Ethiopian Orthodox 44%, Sunni Muslim 34%, Christian (Evangelical & Pentecostal) 19%, other (Eastern Rite, Roman Catholic, Jehovah’s Witness, Jewish, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, indigenous religions) 3% (2007 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Ethiopia is unique among African nations in that, other than brief Italian occupation during World War II, Ethiopians were never colonized. In 1974, a military coup toppled its ancient monarchy and established an authoritarian government that was, itself, toppled by revolutionary forces in 1991. A democratic constitution was enacted in 1994 and the country's first multi-party elections were held. Ethiopians have suffered greatly in the years since. A border dispute with neighboring Eritrea has claimed the lives of over 70,000 people in the region. The 1970s and 80s saw severe drought and famine that affected millions of Ethiopians. Some 790,000 Ethiopians are currently living with HIV/AIDS and there are nearly 1 million orphans in the country as a direct result of the disease. Still, Ethiopia's economy is strengthening as Africa's fastest-growing non-oil-producing economy. Ethiopia was a founding member of the United Nations and a key provider of troops in eradicating Islamist extremists in southern Somalia. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is considered one of the oldest continuous Christian communities in the world.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 27: "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching."

State Attitudes and Actions: When Communism ended in 1991, Christians were officially freed from religious persecution. However, local authorities occasionally infringe on the rights enshrined in the constitution. Some Protestant and Muslim groups complain that local officials discriminate against them when they seek land for churches, mosques, or cemeteries. In the northern town of Axum, a holy city for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, authorities

continue to deny the repeated requests of Muslim leaders for an allocation of land for the construction of a mosque, even though the constitution provides for freedom to establish institutions of religious education. Religious groups are required to register with the Ministry of Justice every three years. The Ethiopian Human Rights Council noted that this requirement indicates a lack of progress by the government in treating newer religions—specifically Protestant denominations—on the same basis as others. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which comprises over 45 percent of the country’s population, has never registered and has not faced any problems. Protests from other religious groups over exceptions like this have not resulted in equal treatment. The government provides free land for religious schools and hospitals, but regardless of length of operation, these institutions are subject to government closure and land forfeiture at any time. The government has increasingly searched the homes of Muslim leaders under suspicion of terrorist activity. In 2013, 29 Muslim clerics were tried and all were either acquitted or received convictions for lesser charges. The constitutional provision on separation of church and state is interpreted to mean that religious instruction is not allowed in schools, public or private. Accordingly, any school operated by a religious group is not allowed to teach religion as a course of study. The government continues to support the Interfaith Peace-Building Initiative, an NGO dedicated to promoting interfaith cooperation with the aim of ending religiously motivated violence.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Tensions between Muslim and Christian communities continue to lead to violence in some areas. The government has officially condemned these acts of violence. Tensions also exist between Orthodox and Protestant groups due to Protestant and Evangelical attempts at proselytizing members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 828 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college, two high schools, one hospital, 15 clinics and

dispensaries, one mobile clinic, one publishing house, and a Bible correspondence school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has not been able to regain two hospitals that were among other property confiscated by the government under the Derg regime.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

FALKLAND ISLANDS

Population: 3,361 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: unknown

Religious Groups: Christian (Anglican, Catholic, United Free Church, Evangelist Church, Jehovah's Witness, Lutheran) 66%, none 32%, other 2% (2012 estimate)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Since 1592, these islands off the Atlantic coast of South America have been the center of contention for a number of countries. England, France, and Spain claimed control over the islands at one point or another in its history. Argentina briefly laid claim to the islands after independence from Spain in the 19th century, only to be driven out by the British soon after. In 1982, Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands and began a short war with Britain that took the lives of hundreds of soldiers. The islands remain a British overseas territory and residents voted in a 2013 referendum to affirm their loyalty to Britain by 99.8%. Falkland Islanders are economically self-sufficient in all areas except for military defense. Oil production in the islands' coastal waters is expected to commence in 2016.

Constitutional Provision: The Falkland Islands, being an overseas territory of the United Kingdom, follows United Kingdom law and protects religious freedom.

State Attitudes and Actions: Inhabitants of the Falkland Islands enjoy the free exercise of religion. There are no reports of discrimination.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of strife among the various religious groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not have an organized presence in the Falkland Islands.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reported problems regarding Sabbath-keeping.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

FIJI

Population: 903,207 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 23,973

Religious Groups: Christian (largely Methodist and Roman Catholic) 64%, Hindu 28%, Muslim 6%, other or unspecified 9.6%, no affiliation 0.3%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Achieving its independence in 1970 after almost a century of British rule, Fiji has since suffered political and military instability. Military and civilian coups in 1997, 2000, and 2006 have led to the dismantling of Fiji's attempt at establishing a prosperous democracy. Racial unrest between native groups and descendants of Indian laborers brought to the islands under British rule continue to be the fuel for unrest. Fiji was suspended from the Commonwealth of Nations for its lack of democracy. After holding

free and democratic elections in 2014, Fiji's membership in the Commonwealth was reinstated and diplomatic relations with Australia and New Zealand resumed. One third of the population lives in poverty and rising inflation has led to worsening living conditions. Decline in the production of sugar cane and dependence on imported food and oil are also factors. Religious affiliation in Fiji runs generally along ethnic lines. Most native Fijians are Christian while most Indo-Fijians are Hindus or Muslims.

Constitutional Provision: In the process of returning to democracy, Fiji adopted a new constitution in 2013. Chapter 2, Section 22 (1-5) states: “(1) Every person has the right to freedom of religion, conscience and belief. (2) Every person has the right, either individually or in community with others, in private or in public, to manifest and practise their religion or belief in worship, observance, practice or teaching. (3) Every person has the right not to be compelled to— (a) act in any manner that is contrary to the person's religion or belief; or (b) take an oath, or take an oath in a manner, that— (i) is contrary to the person's religion or belief; or (ii) requires the person to express a belief that the person does not hold. (4) Every religious community or denomination, and every cultural or social community, has the right to establish, maintain and manage places of education whether or not it receives financial assistance from the State, provided that the educational institution maintains any standard prescribed by law. (5) In exercising its rights under subsection (4), a religious community or denomination has the right to provide religious instruction as part of any education that it provides, whether or not it receives financial assistance from the State for the provision of that education.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Generally, Fiji allows for the free exercise of religion, but there has been a general trend towards state interference in religious activities. Prior to the new constitution being adopted, government officials in Fiji have limited the United Methodist Church's annual conference from seven days to four days. With the new constitution in place, churches, generally, believe there will be improvement in government relations.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are a few reports of abuse based on religion. In past years, a number of Hindu temples were desecrated, and arsonists destroyed one. There is also intolerance directed towards some non-mainstream religious groups, especially in some of the outer islands, as the major religions tend to oppose proselytizing by minority religious groups or setting up places of worship. The government has been taking steps towards eliminating discrimination aimed at Indo-Fijians.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 154 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates two secondary schools and a college. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized religion.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

FINLAND

Population: 5,268,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 4,867

Religious Groups: Evangelical Lutheran 76%, no affiliation 20%, Orthodox Church 1%, other (Jehovah's Witness, Roman Catholic, Muslim, Pentecostal, Seventh-day Adventist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jewish, Free Church of Finland) less than 1% each

Perspectives on Current Issues: For hundreds of years, Finland was tied to Sweden and then Russia through to independence in 1917. Finland has been considerably impacted by the global economic crisis. The aging population and

a large number of citizens retiring from employment present special challenges. Per capita income, however, continues to be the highest in Western Europe. Concerns have been raised about domestic violence, imprisonment of conscientious objectors, and discriminatory treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. Finland is a member of the European Union and has adopted the Euro currency.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Section 11, Freedom of religion and conscience, “(1) Everyone has the freedom of religion and conscience. (2) Freedom of religion and conscience entails the right to profess and practice a religion, the right to express one’s convictions and the right to be a member of or decline to be a member of a religious community. No one is under the obligation, against his or her conscience, to participate in the practice of a religion.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Finland generally respects religious freedom in practice. Though the majority of citizens are Lutheran, non-Lutheran religious groups are allowed to operate freely. In 2008, registered religious communities other than the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church became eligible to apply for state funds. Legislation passed in late 2007 provides that communities with 200 or more members may receive a statutory subsidy from the annual government budget. Only Jehovah’s Witnesses are fully exempt from military service; other conscientious objectors must complete community service in lieu of military service.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Non-traditional religious groups generally are not subject to discrimination, despite the intolerant attitudes of some members of society. Some citizens are not receptive to proselytizing by adherents of non-traditional religious groups, in part because they regard religion as a private matter.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 69 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college, a nursing home, and a publishing house. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely. The church has cultivated good relations with other churches.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is allowed to evangelize freely.

FRANCE

Population: 66,259,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 13,332

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 43%, Muslim 8%, Protestant 2%, other (Orthodox, Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, and others) 2%, no affiliation 45% (2008 survey of 18-50 year olds)

Perspectives on Current Issues: The French Revolution gave birth to what many consider the world's first modern republic. Due, in part, to a history of bloody religious conflicts, the French have adopted a generally secular attitude, believing this is preferable to previous philosophies. However, religion has not disappeared from the public square. A product of France's vast colonial past, minority immigrants, who are often slow to assimilate and frequently become part of the underclass in urban areas, have brought their Islamic faith with them. This has prompted fierce ideological clashes, and occasional violence, over such matters as the wearing of headscarves. An official position of secularism does not equate to the absence of religion, as evidenced by the fact that there are more people earning a living in occult practices than there are

registered doctors and ten times more than evangelical pastors and missionaries.

Constitutional Provision: The preamble of the constitution states in Article 1, “France shall be an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic. It shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of origin, race or religion. It shall respect all beliefs.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice, but there are continuing concerns about the treatment of some minority religious groups. Discrimination against Jehovah’s Witnesses, Scientologists, and other groups considered dangerous sects or cults remains a concern and may have contributed to acts of vandalism against these groups.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Although there have been anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic incidents, prominent social leaders have taken positive steps to promote religious freedom and maintain open lines of communication among different faith communities. The 2014 attack of a satirical newspaper’s offices in Paris have sparked anti-Islamic rhetoric and isolated incidents of violence.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 122 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one school, one college, a nursing home, and five radio stations. These institutions generally operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized denomination. The church is a member of the French Protestant Federation, which represents the majority of the Protestants before the government. Evangelicals are affected by the regulations on building new churches.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: The 2004 law banning the wearing of religious articles at school also applies to Sabbath observance for

Seventh-day Adventists. This makes it difficult for students who are required to attend class or take exams on Saturday.

Freedom to Evangelize: While Seventh-day Adventists are free to hold public worship services and evangelize, conditions in France make evangelism difficult. One problem is the inability of the church to acquire new buildings in which to hold services. Some towns use the legal doctrine of preemption to prevent the acquisition of real property. This doctrine allows a local to forbid the ownership of real property based on local government planning. In many cases, few plans exist and preemption is used as a ploy to forbid Adventists from purchasing property. Additionally, the laws regulating cults forbid Adventists from providing medical services that they would normally provide through the church.

FRENCH GUIANA

Population: 239,600 (2012 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,482

Religious Groups: Catholic 99%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once claimed by various European settlers, French Guiana is, currently, a fully integrated department (province) of France. It is the largest section of the European Union outside of the European subcontinent as well as the only section of the European Union in South America. The residents of the department are full voting citizens of France and the official currency is the Euro. French Guianese enjoy a high standard of living as French social security programs apply. French Guiana is a very ethnically diverse department; most residents are of mixed French and African descent, while a minority are of Amerindian or other Caribbean ancestry.

Constitutional Provision: French Guiana follows the French constitution. Article 1 provides: “France shall be an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic. It shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law,

without distinction of origin, race or religion. It shall respect all beliefs. It shall be organized on a decentralized basis.”

State Attitudes and Actions: French Guiana, consistent with French policy, affords religious freedom to its citizens.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of strife among the various religious groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 11 Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

FRENCH POLYNESIA

Population: 280,026 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 4,706

Religious Groups: Protestant 54%, Catholic 30%, other 10%, no affiliation 6%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Five island chains make up this French possession in the Pacific, the most populated island being Tahiti. France has held on to these territories since the late 19th century due to the islands’ strategic military position. France has held numerous nuclear tests in the region that have allowed its government to remain a leading military power. Many French Polynesians continue to seek independence, even as France has granted the islands increasing autonomy since the 1990s. While French Polynesians

enjoy a high standard of living, unemployment is high and wealth distribution is uneven.

Constitutional Provision: French Polynesia is governed by French law, which allows for free exercise of religion. The French constitution states: “France shall be an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic. It shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law without distinction of origin, race or religion. It shall respect all beliefs.” French Polynesia is given considerable autonomy, allowing for greater religious freedom than granted by laws in France.

State Attitudes and Actions: Although France has recently enacted some very anti-religious laws that curb the rights of smaller faith communities, citizens in French Polynesia generally enjoy the free exercise of religion.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most faiths have an amicable relationship with one another.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 38 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college, one radio station, and one bookstore. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: Churches do not need to be recognized by the government to practice their faith.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventists have experienced some employment problems. Students attending public schools were required to take tests on Saturday and it was also common for high schools to have classes on Saturdays. However, the local church has been effective in resolving these problems by maintaining a congenial relationship with the government and other churches.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

GABON

Population: 1,672,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,653

Religious Groups: Christian (Catholic 2/3, Protestant 1/3) 70-80%, Muslim 5-10%, Animism 10%, no affiliation 5%. Many persons practice a syncretic faith that combines elements of Christianity, traditional mystical faiths, Voodoo, or animism.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Since gaining independence from France in 1960, Gabon has had only two presidents, El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba and his son, who won the 2009 election after his father's death. Though international observers question whether past elections have been fraudulent, abundant natural resources and relative peace have made Gabon one of the most stable countries in the region. Though Gabon is an oil-producing country, there are significant disparities of wealth between the rich and poor. Freedom of expression may be limited since television, radio, and newspapers are state-controlled.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 1: "The freedom of conscience, thought, opinion, expression . . . and the free practice of religion are guaranteed to all."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution. A 1970 decree banning Jehovah's Witnesses remains in effect; however, the government does not enforce the ban and Jehovah's Witnesses continue to assemble, practice, and proselytize. The Ministry of the Interior maintains an official registry of religious groups and it appears that it does not grant registration to all small, indigenous religions. The

government promotes interfaith relations by facilitating meetings of leaders of major religious groups. Such meetings are rare, but informal discussions among religious leaders are routine. Catholic, Muslim, and Protestant organizations operate primary and secondary schools throughout Gabon.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious. Several mutilated corpses and body parts, apparently used in ritual killings by practitioners of traditional indigenous religions, were found during the reporting period. No information was made public on the investigation of these crimes.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 15 Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

GAMBIA

Population: 1,925,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 294

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 90%, Christian (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Evangelical groups) 9%, indigenous animist beliefs 1%. Many maintain some traditional practices while adhering to their Muslim or Christian beliefs.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Gambia won independence from Britain in 1965 and briefly joined Senegal as a unitary state, Senegambia, through the 1980s. A 1994 military coup led by Yahya Jammeh initiated an authoritarian government era. This continued when Jammeh won the country's presidency in

free elections in 1997. Jammeh has continued to win elections through 2011 and remains Gambia's president at present. Politically, this has made Gambia a stable nation, but this has not improved the country's economic situation. Most of Gambia's land is arid and though the government continues to search for oil wells, none have been struck to date. There are also reports of restrictions to freedom of expression, intimidation, harassment, and the arbitrary detention of political opponents of the government. In 2013, Gambia pulled out of the Commonwealth of Nations, a move many international agencies believe was made to avoid further criticism about the country's human rights record.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution protects religious liberty in Chapter IV, Article 17.2 and guarantees "freedom to practice any religion and to manifest such practice" in Chapter IV, Article 25.

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. The government does not require registration of religious groups. Public and private schools provide biblical and Qur'an studies without government restriction or interference. Government meetings typically begin with two prayers—one Islamic and one Christian. In recent years, the President asked the Supreme Islamic Council to put its house in order and regulate activities in the mosques. In these settings, the Supreme Islamic Council denounced extremist violence, which it linked to Shiite beliefs, as contrary to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. The Council directed all print and electronic media, Islamic/Arabic schools, cultural institutions, and individuals to cease all programs and activities that propagate what it called radical Shiite beliefs. Reports indicate that police have targeted minority Muslim groups such as the Ndigal community for preaching doctrines contrary to the Supreme Islamic Council. Ten members of this community were arrested in 2013 and were later released without charges.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious. An Inter-Faith Group for Dialogue and Peace, comprised of representatives of the Christian, Muslim, and Baha'i communities, continues to meet regularly to discuss matters of mutual concern such as religious freedom, tolerance, and the need for people of different religious groups to live together in harmony. Some groups such as Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, and Church of Christ the Redeemer are not part of the Inter-Faith Group.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are five Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

GEORGIA

Population: 4,935,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 369

Religious Groups: Orthodox Christian 83.9%, Muslim 9.9%, Armenian Apostolic 3.9%, Catholic 0.8%, other 0.8%, none 0.7% (2002 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Georgia sits at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, along the Black Sea. After being annexed by Russia in the 19th century, Georgia did not achieve independence until 1991 at the collapse of the Soviet Union. The United States has invested heavily in the Georgian energy industry, which has created tensions with Russia. Since gaining independence, Georgia has suffered civil war sparked by two breakaway regions in the north that benefit from Russian support. Georgia's economy dipped during a 2006 energy

crisis, but the country has since been able to diversify its oil and gas sources, stabilizing the economy. Georgia has been criticized for its detention of political opponents and for inhumane conditions in its detention facilities.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter 1, Article 19, of the constitution states: “(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of speech, thought, conscience, religion and belief. (2) The persecution of a person on the account of his/her speech, thought, religion or belief as well as the compulsion to express his/her opinion about them shall be impermissible. (3) The restriction of the freedom enumerated in the present Article shall be impermissible unless their manifestation infringes upon the rights of others.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government’s respect for religious freedom continues to improve and religion may be freely practiced in most cases. Groups other than the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) complain that they do not have equal legal status, are not officially recognized as religions, and do not enjoy the same privileges as the GOC. Many cases of religious discrimination or vandalism have gone uninvestigated by police. In 2013, a government agency acted on behalf of a Seventh-day Adventist student that was denied a Sabbath exemption for an exam.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There appears to be a general tolerance toward minority religious groups traditional to the country, including Catholics, Armenian Apostolic Christians, Jews, and Muslims. However, some members of the GOC and the public remain apprehensive regarding nontraditional religious minorities, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses and Baptists. Some people view minority religious groups as a threat to the national church and the country’s cultural values. Attacks were reported against some minority groups, including defamatory articles in local newspapers about Seventh-day Adventists.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are eight Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church operates as a non-profit organization.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are regular reports of problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students and employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is permitted to conduct public worship. The media has published unreliable information about the Adventist Church, thus causing people to sometimes be unfriendly towards the church and its houses of prayer. Intolerance by some citizens has manifested itself in graffiti and vandalism of church property. Officially, the church is allowed to evangelize. In practice, local authorities have often impeded church efforts.

GERMANY

Population: 80,996,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 34,901

Religious Groups: Catholic 30%, Protestant 29%, Muslim 5%, no affiliation or other 36%

Perspectives on Current Issues: The birthplace of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation, Germany did not unify as one nation until the late 19th century. The dark era in this country's history that comprised both World Wars ended in a divided Germany that did not reunify until 1990. At present, Germany is considered the economic engine of the euro zone. German industry is robust and it boasts the largest economy in Europe. The current government strongly supports a federal Europe and advocates for the establishment of a European organization mandated to oversee national budgets and penalize recalcitrant countries. The country has been accused of participating in extraordinary rendition.

Constitutional Provision: Basic Law, Part 1, Article 4, of the constitution states: “1. Freedom of faith and of conscience, and freedom of creed religious or ideological, are inviolable. 2. The undisturbed practice of religion is guaranteed. 3. No one may be compelled against his conscience to render war service as an armed combatant. Details will be regulated by a Federal law.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The law protects religious rights against abuse, either by governmental or private actors; however, discrimination against, and unequal treatment of, some minority religious groups remains a problem at the local level. The government has made positive efforts to improve the integration of Muslims and other minorities into society, investigate and prosecute criminal behavior by extremists directed at religious groups, and promote tolerance education. There continue to be concerns about governmental (federal and state) treatment of certain religious minorities, notably Scientologists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Muslims.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There were reports of anti-Semitic vandalism and rhetoric from far right-wing groups. The government continues to condemn these isolated incidents and engages with communities on this issue regularly. The rise of a substantial Muslim minority has contributed to social conflict with religious, ethnic, and cultural overtones. Despite these reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, and practice, most religious organizations have amicable relationships.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 560 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college, one hospital, eight nursing homes, one media center, one institute for Bible study, and a health food factory. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Church members still have workplace problems concerning Sabbath observance. German law generally favors the right of the employer to manage his business over individual religious freedom. However, individual cases are judged differently each time.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is allowed to evangelize freely. The church is an associate member of the Council of Christian Churches in Germany.

GHANA

Population: 25,758,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 408,844

Religious Groups: Christian (Roman Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Mennonite, Evangelical Presbyterian, African Methodist Episcopal Zionist, Christian Methodist, Evangelical Lutheran, F'eden, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Baptist, African independent churches, Society of Friends, numerous charismatic religious groups) 71%, Muslim 18%, no affiliation or other (Baha'i, Buddhist, Jewish, Hindu, Shinto, Eckankar, Rastafarian) 6%. Many who self-identify as Christian or Muslim also adhere to some aspects of traditional beliefs.

Perspectives on Current Issues: In 1957, Ghana became the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain its independence. A long history of military coups marred Ghana's attempts at democracy until a new constitution was enacted in 1991. The new constitution has guaranteed democratic elections and peaceful transitions of power since enactment. Ghana is not only one of the most stable countries in its region, it is also one of Africa's fastest growing economies. Ghana also sets a positive example in Africa with its establishment of a national human rights commission and a committee for national reconciliation. Violence against women and female genital mutilation, however, are widely reported.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 21: “(1) All persons shall have the right to . . . (c) practice any religion and manifest such practice.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious liberty at all levels and in all affairs, public or private. Religious institutions must register with the Registrar General’s department to receive formal government recognition. The government often takes steps to promote inter-faith understanding. At government meetings and receptions, there is usually a multi-denominational invocation led by leaders from various religious groups. The President and Vice-President made public remarks about the importance of peaceful religious co-existence.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Public discussion continued over religious worship versus traditional indigenous practices and respect for the rights and customs of others in a diverse society. Some religious leaders actively advocate tolerance towards other religious groups and discourage religiously motivated violence, discrimination, and harassment. Others, particularly laypersons associated with Evangelical groups, continue to preach intolerance for other groups such as Muslims and traditional indigenous religious groups. Some Muslims continue to feel a sense of political and social exclusion as Christianity influences many aspects of society. Muslims cite token representation of Muslims in national leadership positions, the deferral to only Christian-oriented prayers in public settings, and the ubiquity of Christian slogans as contributing to this perception of marginalization and discrimination within the Muslim community.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,281 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates eight hospitals, nine health clinics, one university, four

secondary schools, one radio-TV production center, and one teacher training college. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

Government Recognition: Ghana's President, John Evans Atta Mills, praised the Seventh-day Adventist Church for its contribution to education and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) at a prayer service he attended on January 31, 2009 held at the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Accra. He stated, "We will provide more avenues of enabling churches and other non-governmental organizations to complement government efforts in meeting the needs of our people."

GREECE

Population: 10,775,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 409

Religious Groups: Greek Orthodox 95%, Muslim 1.1%, other (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Old Calendarist Orthodox, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Scientologist, Baha'i, Hare Krishna, atheist, agnostic, polytheistic Hellenic religions) 5.9%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Greek culture and philosophy dating back to the ancient Greek Empire continue to influence all Western culture today. From the 19th to the 20th centuries, Greece was able to shed the shackles of the Ottoman Empire, as well as the Italian and German invasions of World War II. A military coup that took over the country and suspended most civil liberties for seven years ended in 1974 with open democratic elections. Greece is a member of both the European Union and NATO. Recession and economic depression, however, have affected Greece for the past few years. Successive austerity measures have generated social uprisings. Unemployment reached

17.5% in September 2011. The situation has deteriorated since. A newly formed government is seeking ways to solve the ongoing crisis. There are reports of discrimination against the Roma people, poor detention conditions, mistreatment of asylum seekers and refugees, and human trafficking.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Part 2, Article 13, “1. Freedom of religious conscience is inviolable. The enjoyment of civil rights and liberties does not depend on the individual's religious beliefs.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice; however, non-Orthodox groups sometimes face administrative obstacles or encounter legal restrictions on religious practices. The constitution and law prohibit proselytizing and stipulate that no rite of worship may disturb public order or offend moral principles. In 2013, the government amended laws that permitted only Orthodox religious instruction in public schools, and now permits Islamic instruction to Muslim students.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are some reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. The Orthodox Church maintains an official web site listing 74 religious practices and groups that it considers sacrilegious, including the Jehovah's Witnesses, Evangelical Christians, Scientologists, Mormons, and members of the Baha'i faith. Discrimination and even violent acts were committed against refugees, most of whom are Muslim.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 10 Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is recognized as a religious organization, but this does not grant it freedom from taxation.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: As a religious minority in an intolerant society, those who choose to keep Sabbath are continually hindered in obtaining work or attending school.

Freedom to Evangelize: The law forbids proselytizing.

GRENADA

Population: 110,100 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 13,668

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 44%, Anglican 12%, Pentecostal 11%, Seventh-day Adventist 11%, other groups (Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Church of God, Evangelical) at least 2% each, smaller groups (Jehovah's Witness, Brethren, Baha'i, Hindu, Moravian, Muslim, Rastafarian, Mennonite, The Salvation Army, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jewish), non-believers 4%.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Through the 17th and 18th centuries, Grenada came under French control before settling under British rule through to its independence in 1974. A politically rocky period in the 1980s ended in the return of fully democratic elections, which continue through the present. Grenada's economy is mainly reliant on tourism and the cultivation of nutmeg. However, the effects of the devastating hurricanes of 2005-2006, which nearly obliterated the island's infrastructure and agriculture, are still being felt. The economy is growing, but poverty remains widespread. Nearly half of all households are female-headed.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 1 (1b): "Whereas every person in Grenada is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms, that is to say, the right, whatever his race, place of origin, political opinions, color, creed or sex, but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for the public interest, to each and all of the following, namely . . . freedom of conscience, of expression and of assembly and association."

State Attitudes and Actions: The Grenadian government views itself as secular and does not interfere with religious worship. It respects freedom of religious practice. The government funds public schools administered by various Christian denominations, but student participation in religious instruction is not obligatory.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There is an amicable relationship among the various religious groups. The Conference of Churches in Grenada has contributed to an added sense of harmony among Christian denominations.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 45 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one school and one bookstore. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

GUADELOUPE

Population: 405,700 (2012 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 12,073

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 86%, Protestant 5%, Hindu and native African 4%, Jehovah's Witness 2%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Christopher Columbus named these islands after the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe in 1493. Columbus is credited with discovering the pineapple in Guadeloupe and spreading it through the rest of

the Caribbean. The islands were annexed to France in 1674 and became an overseas region in 1946. Tourism is Guadeloupe's major industry, but the economy relies heavily on subsidies from the French national government.

Constitutional Provision: Guadeloupe follows the French constitution. Article 1 states: "France shall be an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic. It shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of origin, race or religion. It shall respect all beliefs. It shall be organized on a decentralized basis."

State Attitudes and Actions: Guadeloupe is a French overseas territory and as such allows religious freedom to its citizens.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of animosity or violence among differing religious groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 64 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one radio station and one school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

GUATEMALA

Population: 14,647,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 248,228

Religious Groups: Christian (Roman Catholic 59%, Protestant [Full Gospel, Assembly of God, Central American, Prince of Peace, Baptist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Episcopalian, Jehovah's Witness, Lutheran,

Presbyterian, Russian Orthodox, Seventh-day Adventist]) 36%, no affiliation 4%, other (Buddhist, Hindu, Islam, Jewish, indigenous Mayan beliefs) 1%.

Many indigenous Catholics and some indigenous Protestants also practice some form of indigenous spiritual rituals. (2010 survey)

Perspectives on Current Issues: The most populous country in Central America, Guatemala is a land rich in natural beauty and an ancient culture steeped in Mayan heritage. Guatemalan history has not been so prosperous. A 36-year internal guerilla conflict ended in 1996 after claiming an estimated 200,000 lives. The country's native community (estimated at over half of the total population) suffers particularly from challenges arising from Guatemala's position as one of the Western Hemisphere's poorest countries. Infant mortality, malnutrition, and literacy are key issues for Guatemala.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 36: "The exercise of all religions is free. Every person has the right to practice his/her religion or belief in both public and private, through education, as well as worship and observance without limit; other than respect for public order and dignity of the hierarchy of the faithful of other creeds."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government protects religious freedom, but extends special recognition and privileges to the Roman Catholic Church. The government does not impose registration requirements for religious recognition, but, in order to conduct business, organizations are to register as legal entities. There is no fee for registration. According to Guatemala's constitution, no member of the clergy of any religion may be president of the country. While the constitution permits religious instruction in public schools, this is not required and, in fact, most public schools do not offer it. In 2013, a local NGO organized the country's first national prayer breakfast that was attended by the Guatemala's president and sought to promote religious tolerance among various groups.

Private Attitudes and Actions: While Christian groups generally have amicable relationships with one another, some reports indicate discriminatory treatment of indigenous religious groups. In 2013, Guatemala's Constitutional Court heard a case brought against the Roman Catholic Church by an indigenous group alleging that, after years of being able to do so, they were no longer allowed to hold indigenous ceremonies in a local parish. Reports also indicate that private owners of lands containing certain natural sites considered holy by indigenous groups are not allowing these groups to hold ceremonial activities on their property. These cases are still pending in court.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 824 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a high school, two orphanages, and two radio stations. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventist job applicants commonly face discrimination because of their beliefs. Employers in Guatemala are allowed to inquire about an applicant's religion and, upon discovering that an applicant is a Seventh-day Adventist, he or she is dismissed from consideration. The workweek is traditionally from Monday through the first half of Saturday.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church has had some problems with freedom to evangelize.

GUINEA

Population: 11,474,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,597

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 85%, Christian (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Jehovah's Witness, Seventh-day Adventist, several Evangelical groups) 8%, indigenous beliefs 7%. Much of the population incorporates some indigenous rituals into its religious practices.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Guinea was granted independence from France in 1958. Because of military coups, brutal oppression of political dissidents and assassinations, Guinea did not hold free multi-party elections until 2010. This country is rich in natural resources (bauxite, iron ore, diamonds, gold, salt, hydropower, uranium), but there is significant economic disparity between the elite and the masses. Moreover, the mining techniques used by the very poor result in frequent exposure to toxic substances—a particularly troubling problem for children. Political instability, social upheaval, and violence have plagued this nation since the end of Communism. Following the 2013 elections, however, the EU resumed cooperation for the development of Guinea.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Articles 7 and 14: “(7) He shall be free to believe, to think and to profess his religious faith . . . (14) The free exercise of religious sects shall be guaranteed.”

State Attitudes and Actions: In a change from previous years, the coalition government includes a Secretariat General of Religious Affairs, which aims to incorporate Muslim and Christian religious groups into national affairs. This change took place in March 2007, replacing the former government entity specific to Islamic affairs, the Secretariat General of the Islamic League. All religious groups newly operating in the country must register with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Political Affairs. Registration entitles religious organizations to value-added tax (VAT) exemptions on incoming shipments and some energy subsidies. Unregistered religious groups continue to operate; however, they are not entitled to VAT exemptions and other benefits available to registered groups. Unregistered religious groups are subject to expulsion, a penalty with limited opportunity for legal appeal. The government did not expel any religious group.

Private Attitudes and Actions: In some areas Islamic dominance results in strong social pressure that discourages conversion from Islam. This pressure sometimes makes it difficult to obtain land for religious use. There are no reports of recent violence between religious groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are two Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

GUINEA-BISSAU

Population: 1,693,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,679

Religious Groups: Indigenous religions 50%, Muslim (Sunni) 40%, Catholic 8%, Protestant 2%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Guinea-Bissau achieved independence from Portugal in 1974, but has not yet enjoyed a stable, democratic government. Multiple military coups, political assassinations and violent uprisings have toppled nearly every government in place since independence. Restrictions on freedom of expression, and imprisonment of journalists, tarnish the human rights record of this country. Also troubling is the phenomenon of child trafficking; this is a major issue, which reportedly is not addressed by the government. It is reported that prison conditions have considerably worsened. Guinea-Bissau is also a major port for the trafficking of narcotics on their way to Europe. In 2014, this nation held free elections under a transitional government and with the help of the Economic Community of West African States. Jose Mario Vaz is the current president of Guinea-Bissau.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution guarantees separation between the state and religious institutions, and in Section 1, Article 6, protects the right of religious institutions to operate freely under the law.

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution. There is no state religion, and members of the country's major religious groups have representation in the national assembly.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups and society are generally harmonious, and there are no reports of significant tensions. The country's low literacy rate leaves many citizens open to misinformation and coercion by local leaders and others.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are four Seventh-day Adventist churches, one radio-TV production center, and one Bible correspondence school. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

GUYANA

Population: 735,500 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 60,301

Religious Groups: Christian (Pentecostal 17%, Roman Catholic 8%, Anglican 7%, Seventh-day Adventist 5%, Methodist 2%, other Christian 18%) 57%, Hindu 28%, Sunni Muslim 7%, no affiliation 4%, other 2% (2002 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Guyana is the only English-speaking country in South America and boasts ecologically diverse rain forests and animal life. Guyana is rich in a number of natural resources, but subsists largely on the production of sugar for mostly European markets. Social instability and fluctuating international markets have contributed to making Guyana one of the poorest nations in the Western Hemisphere. Two-thirds of the population claim either African or Indian ancestry as both groups were brought to Guyana as slaves or indentured laborers. Guyanese society is harshly divided between these two ethnicities; even political partisan lines are drawn on race. This divide has not served to improve standard-of-living issues like education or infrastructure in the country. Over 55% of Guyanese citizens currently live abroad.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter III, Article 40, (1) (a) and (b) of the constitution states: “Every person in Guyana is entitled to the basic right to a happy, creative and productive life, free from hunger, disease, ignorance and want. That right includes the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, that is to say, the right, whatever his race, place of origin, political opinions, color, creed or sex, but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for the public interest, to each and all of the following, namely (a) life, liberty, security of the person and the protection of the law, (b) freedom of conscience, of expression and of assembly and association.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government allows for and protects the religious freedom of all its citizens. There is no official state religion and both public and private schools operate freely in Guyana. Religious organizations must register with the deeds registry in order to receive tax-exempt status and to be able to buy property or engage in other financial activity. Various religious groups have reported that since a government takeover of more than 600 religious schools and hospitals in 1976, it has been very difficult to regain

control of these properties. Only recently have some religious groups reported the ability to negotiate for the complete control of a number of these properties.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of animosity or violence among different religious groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 149 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one clinic and hospital and one radio station. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is recognized by the state.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

HAITI

Population: 9,996,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 407,349

Religious Groups: Catholic 80%, Protestant (Baptist 10%, Pentecostal 4%, Seventh-day Adventist 1%, other 1%) 16%, other (Episcopalian, Jehovah's Witness, Methodist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Muslim, Rastafarian, Scientologist, Voodoo) 3%, no affiliation 1%. Most people practice some form of Voodoo, often blended with elements of other religions, usually Catholicism.

Perspectives on Current Issues

Sharing the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean with its neighbor, the Dominican Republic, Haiti became the world's first black-led republic and independent Caribbean state in the late 19th century. Throughout the 20th

century, Haiti has suffered crippling national debt related to its independence from France, various natural disasters and brutal dictatorships that have contributed to making Haiti the poorest nation in the Americas. After a 2010 earthquake that killed over 250,000 people, the international community pledged billions of dollars in aid that has yet to flow into the country for fear of government corruption and instability. Haiti has begun the process of rebuilding its agriculture and tourism industries, but continues to meet roadblocks due to its lack of infrastructure and serious environmental degradation.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution in Section D, Articles 30 and 30.1 states: “(30) All religions and faiths shall be freely exercised. Everyone is entitled to profess his religion and faith, provided that the exercise of that right does not disturb law and order. (30.1) No one may be compelled to belong to a religious organization or to follow a religious teaching contrary to his convictions.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The state generally allows for religious freedom. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religious Denominations administers the registration and recognition process for all religious organizations operating in the country. Historically, Catholicism was the official state religion, but the 1987 constitution eliminated the status of “state religion” altogether. Nevertheless, the Concordat between the Vatican and the Haitian government still exists. The Catholic Church holds an elevated place in the religious realm, though the government has been giving an increased role to Protestants in official state functions. While the government has not taken any steps to officially recognize the religions of Islam or Voodoo, reports state that these groups continue to operate in the country freely.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most private religious groups have amicable relationships, but Protestants and Voodoo practitioners are often in conflict.

Protestants adamantly oppose any form of Voodoo. There has also been an expressed concern among Christian leaders about the growing influence of Islam in Haiti.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 539 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, two academies, one hospital, and one radio station. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

HONDURAS

Population: 8,598,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 265,373

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 47%, Protestant (Episcopal, Lutheran, Jehovah's Witness, Mennonite, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Evangelical Protestant) 36%, other 14% (2007 survey)

Perspectives on Current Issues

Decades of military dictatorship came to an end in 1982, but the democratic governments in place since have continued to be unstable in Honduras. Corruption is rampant in this Central American nation, as various police and military officials have been tried for human rights abuses. Thousands of Hondurans leave the country each year in search of employment and refuge from the powerful "mara" street gangs. The local economy is, however, showing signs of improvement; Honduras is now the second largest producer of coffee in the region and a major producer of textiles.

Constitutional Provision: Article 77 of the constitution states: “The free exercise of all the religions and worship is guaranteed without preeminence; as long as they do not contravene the laws and the public order. The ministers of the different religions are not allowed to exert public positions nor produce, in any form, political propaganda.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Hondurans are free to practice religion as they see fit and the government respects this right. However, only the Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelical Association of Honduras are officially recognized by the government. While no religious group is required to register with the government, those that do are seen as “religious associations” and are afforded certain privileges such as tax-exempt status. In 2012, the Supreme Court of Justice decided that a 2010 law granting official recognition only to certain religious groups was unconstitutional. The law will, however, remain in effect until an act of congress repeals it officially. Both the Catholic and Evangelical communities exert considerable influence on the government. The state generally allows foreign missionaries, but has a law that prohibits missionaries from entering the country to teach “witchcraft” or “satanic rituals.” Foreign missionaries can be deported for these offenses. In April 2009 the Ministry of Justice officially banned the Creciendo en Garcia, the group founded by the self-proclaimed Antichrist, Jose Luis Miranda, on the basis that it has been profiting from “bogus religious activities” and creating political disturbances. All foreigners associated with the group are also banned from the country.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Members from varying religious communities have amicable relationships with one another. In 2013, the Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, the nation’s capital city, called for ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue among the country’s religious groups. There are limited reports of swastikas and other anti-Semitic displays in Tegucigalpa.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 446 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one school, one hospital, one bookstore, and one radio station. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: In 2013, the Secretary of Education issued a mandate requiring schools to operate on certain Saturdays throughout the academic year. The Seventh-day Adventist Church challenged this mandate.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely. Seventh-day Adventist missionaries, however, have not been granted residence permits usually afforded to missionaries of other faiths. While Adventist missionaries are still permitted to evangelize, this requires that missionaries renew their visas much more often.

HONG KONG

Population: 7,112,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 4,794

Religious Groups: Indigenous beliefs 90%, Christian 10%

Perspectives on Current Issues: A series of islands just off of the coast of mainland China together comprise the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of Hong Kong. British forces took control of Hong Kong in 1841, but created the SAR and ceded the region back to China in 1997. However, China has agreed to not interfere with Hong Kong's free market policies for fifty years and allow local officials to fully administer the islands with the exception of foreign affairs and defense. Political authorities in Hong Kong have succeeded in maintaining economic stability despite the economic crisis affecting Europe and other parts of the world. Unemployment is at a historic low of 3.1%. Of concern, though, are social inequality and air pollution.

Constitutional Provision: Hong Kong has different laws than mainland China, and these laws allow it to provide religious freedom. Article 32, paragraphs 1 and 2, state: “Hong Kong residents shall have freedom of conscience . . . residents shall have freedom of religious belief and freedom to preach and to conduct and participate in religious activities in public.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Hong Kong allows freedom of conscience. The law mandates that the major faiths select representatives who in turn elect certain government officials. Religious organizations are able to receive special accommodation when purchasing land to construct places of worship. However, groups designated as “spiritual exercise” groups are not seen as religious and must register under the Societies Ordinance. They are not accorded the same privileges as recognized religious groups. As such, the Falun Gong movement, even though it is deemed legal in Hong Kong, has experienced some difficulty.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most faiths have amicable relationships and there are no reports of societal religious abuses.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 17 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates two schools, one college, two hospitals, one publishing house, and one food factory. These institutions are allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: Denominations do not have to be recognized by the government to practice their faith in Hong Kong.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are some reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students and employees. The government has been enacting laws to allow for greater religious freedom.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

HUNGARY

Population: 9,919,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 4,683

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 37%, Hungarian Reformed (Calvinist) 11%, Lutheran 2%, Jewish 1%, other (includes Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Unitarian) 3%, no affiliation 17%, atheist 1%, no response 27%, other (Greek Orthodox, Faith Congregation, Orthodox, other Christians, Buddhist, Muslim) less than 5% (2011 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Hungary's religious roots date back to 1000 A.D. when it became a Christian kingdom. Once part of the Ottoman and then Austro-Hungarian Empires, Hungary became an independent state following World War I. Throughout much of the 20th century, Hungarians lived under communist rule backed by the Soviet Union. In 1990, Hungary held its first fully democratic elections and liberalized its economy. Currently, Hungary is a republic and a member-state of NATO and the EU. In 2010 and 2014, a nationalist party, known for its anti-Gypsy and anti-Semitic rhetoric, came to power with enough votes in Parliament to completely re-write the country's constitution. Critics have pointed out that the new constitution merely works to enhance the ruling party's power and eradicates the checks-and-balances system in place with the previous constitution. Hungary has, generally, been criticized for discrimination against the Roma people. The 2011 "de-registration" of all but 14 churches stirred the international community and even the recent action to increase the number of approved religious groups to 32 has not quieted the criticism.

Constitutional Provision: The 2011 Constitution of Hungary states in Article VII, Sections 1 and 2: "(1) Every person shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include the freedom to choose or change religion or any other persuasion, and the freedom for every person to proclaim, refrain from proclaiming, profess or teach his or her religion or any

other persuasion by performing religious acts, ceremonies or in any other way, whether individually or jointly with others, in the public domain or in his or her private life. (2) The State and Churches shall be separate. Churches shall be autonomous. The State shall cooperate with the Churches for community goals.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The state generally allows for the practice of religious freedom. All recognized religious organizations receive some subsidy from the government. Signed concordats regulate the relationship between the Catholic Church and Hungary. Inequities still exist between traditional Hungarian religions and perceived upstarts. This is usually in the form of taxation. Yet, for the most part all religious are free to operate. Amendments to the constitution adopted by the Hungarian Parliament in 2013 seek to remedy the relationship between the state and religious groups that were no longer recognized by the new constitution. The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe has reviewed Hungary’s registration restrictions on minority religions and has published a report criticizing even recent attempts to remedy the problem.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most religious organizations have amicable relationships with each other. However, there are increased reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, suggesting an increase of anti-Semitic rhetoric in a climate of political friction and economic uncertainty. Extremist groups have grown in size and number, frequently staging anti-Roma and anti-Semitic public events. The far right-wing political party, Jobbik, grew in popularity and, as of 2010, currently controls the government.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 105 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates two nursing homes, a publishing house, and a theological seminary. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been an officially recognized denomination. This position was reaffirmed on February 27, 2012, when the Seventh-day Adventist Church, along with 31 other denominations, was officially recognized by the Hungarian parliament.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

ICELAND

Population: 317,300 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 482

Religious Groups: Evangelical Lutheran 76%, Lutheran Free Church 5.8%, other (unspecified religious and secular humanist groups—including Roman Catholic, Jewish, Muslim) 5.9%, no affiliation 5.2%

Perspective on Issues: Iceland is a sparsely populated country in the North Atlantic, but it has been inhabited for over a thousand years. This country came under Norwegian and, subsequently, Danish rule, and Iceland was not fully independent until 1944. Iceland's economy grew astronomically in the 20th century due mainly to a robust fishing industry and heavy dependence on international banking. The global economic crisis in 2008 led to the country's need for international aid. Still, Icelanders refuse to join the European Union. Unemployment rates have once again stabilized, and Iceland boasts exceptional longevity, and other quality of life factors. Iceland's official state religion is Lutheranism.

Constitutional Provision: Section VI, Articles 62-64, of the constitution state: "62. The Evangelical Lutheran Church shall be the State Church in Iceland and, as such, it shall be supported and protected by the State. This may be amended by law. 63. All persons have the right to form religious associations and to

practice their religion in conformity with their individual convictions. Nothing may however be preached or practiced which is prejudicial to good morals or public order. 64. No one may lose any of his civil or national rights on account of his religion, nor may anyone refuse to perform any generally applicable civil duty on religious grounds. Everyone shall be free to remain outside religious associations. No one shall be obliged to pay any personal dues to any religious association of which he is not a member. A person who is not a member of any religious association shall pay to the University of Iceland the dues that he would have had to pay to such an association, if he had been a member.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice; however, the state financially supports and promotes Lutheranism as the country’s official religion. The Evangelical Lutheran Church enjoys some advantages not available to other religious groups. The church provides social services regardless of creed. The Icelandic government also provides subsidies to all registered religious organizations operating within the country.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There have been a few incidents of religious bias or discrimination. Because Iceland is a small country with closely-knit communities and Lutheranism is so closely associated with Icelandic culture, other religions are deemed strange and viewed with suspicion. Isolated protests against the construction of a Mosque in the country escalated to include some acts of vandalism. The Forum for Interfaith Dialogue & Cooperation is a private entity consisting of leaders from various religious and humanist organizations. The government has had amicable relations with this organization.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are six Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a publishing house. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: As a religious minority in a culturally Lutheran society, Adventists frequently find Sabbath-keeping to be a point of friction in obtaining work or attending school.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

INDIA

Population: 1,236,000,000 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,500,830

Religious Groups: Hindu 80.5%, Muslim 13.4%, Christian 2.3%, Sikh 1.9%, other 1.8%, unspecified 0.1% (2001 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Indian sub-continent is home to an ancient civilization that has made its mark on human history with contributions in art, science, and religion. Controlled by Britain throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the Republic of India was established in 1947 through the non-violent protest leadership of Indians like Mohandas Gandhi. The birthplace of the world's two largest religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, and others such as Jainism, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism, India is probably the most religiously diverse country in the world. This diversity is both a strength and a challenge. Inflation and a lack of foreign investors have put India in a precarious economic situation and it currently imports 80% of its energy supply. Though it is referred to as the largest democracy in the world, corruption scandals have rocked the nation to the point that some of its leaders talk about a "deficit of general governance." Hundreds of millions live in abject poverty and inequality

remains ingrained in the very hierarchical structure of Indian society. Discrimination against marginalized communities of Dalit mars its human rights record. Violence against women is widespread. Allegations of police brutality are all too common. The unstable political situation in Kashmir and terrorist activities inside the country's borders are added challenges for India.

Constitutional Provision: The preamble of the constitution reads: “We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic and to secure to all its citizens: justice, social, economic and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and of opportunity. . .” Article 25 (1) states: “Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The national government generally respects freedom of religion. However, at the local government level there are policies and laws restricting religious freedom. Anti-conversion laws, passed in some states, are an example of such restrictions. Local law enforcement officers have at times been slow to act against perpetrators of religiously motivated violence. “Hindutva,” the ideology that Hinduism is superior to all other religious and cultural traditions, has been rejected by the national government. However, it is still espoused by some local government bodies and, as a result, influences the formation of laws. In 2013, over 150 people in Gujarat were convicted of violent acts connected to religious intolerance. Courts continue to investigate allegations that a former Congress Party leader made comments instigating violence against followers of the Sikh religion. Jehovah's Witnesses continue to challenge a 2000 determination that marked the organization as a “serious threat to public peace.”

Private Attitudes and Actions: Christians in various regions of India continue face harassment, discrimination, and even violence. Uttar Pradesh, the nation's largest state, continues to experience violence between Muslim and Hindus. In 2013 alone, 65 people were killed during religiously motivated uprisings. The marriage of lower-caste Hindus to higher-caste Christians remains a social taboo and led to the arrest of various Christians accused of "preying" on the weak for conversion purposes.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 4,316 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, five colleges, 101 schools, 12 hospitals, three orphanages, one media center, and one publishing house.

Government Recognition: Adventists have been able to obtain minority status through a government agency that protects the rights of religious minorities. According to internal sources, between 11 and 15 Seventh-day Adventists were killed in August 2008 in the state of Orissa. Hindu fanatics burned churches and houses of members. Thousands of Adventists had to flee to the forest to save their lives.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventists have problems maintaining employment in India because many businesses operate on a six-day workweek. Students often face a challenge in regard to Sabbath observance since exams on Saturdays are quite common. Often Adventists have been able to take the same exam at another time at a different school or university.

Freedom to Evangelize: Seventh-day Adventists have been able to evangelize with a relative degree of freedom.

INDONESIA

Population: 253,609,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 191,919

Religious Groups: Muslim (Sunni) 87%, Protestant 7%, Roman Catholic 3%, Hindu 1.5%, other (Buddhist, traditional indigenous religions, Confucianism, other Christian denominations) 1.5%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Spread over thousands of islands, Indonesia is a Southeast Asian nation located to the north of Australia. In 1968, General Suharto won control over the government in a military coup and held onto power until massive riots toppled his government in 1998. Indonesians voted in the country's first presidential election in 2004 and has since followed the road to democratic stability and economic growth. Indonesia is the fourth most populated country, the third-largest democracy, and the most populous Muslim nation in the world. Human rights organizations consider Indonesia's record poor. The fight against Islamist terrorist organizations has led to an increase in the number of political prisoners, arbitrary detentions, torture, and abuse of detainees. Gender-based discrimination, violence against women, and sex trafficking are widespread. Indonesia has the highest rate of maternal mortality in the world. Mass relocation programs implemented in response to overpopulation have led to abuses.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter XI, Article 29: "(1) The State shall be based upon the belief in the One and Only God. (2) The State guarantees all persons the freedom of worship, each according to his/her own religion or belief."

State Attitudes and Actions: Although the constitution guarantees religious freedom, the government does not do much to protect individuals who have been victims of religious discrimination and it has not used its power to reverse local laws that permit religious discrimination. The government itself has been a perpetrator of religious discrimination. All public servants must swear allegiance to the government and Pancasila ideology. Only six religions: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism have

official status. The government issued a decree that resulted in the freezing of activities by the Ahmadiyya community and has also banned them from proselytizing. However, they are still free to worship within their community. The province of Aceh is the only one officially allowed to practice Shari'a law, but many local government bodies in other provinces practice it as well.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Discrimination and harassment against religious minorities in Indonesia have generally been isolated to sectors of the country with discriminatory policies. Generally, members of the various religious groups recognized by the government live amicably together.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,615 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, two colleges, 18 academies, one publishing house, one radio station, one air base, three hospitals, and 19 clinics. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church falls into the Protestant category and is officially recognized.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventist students and employees generally have few problems with regard to Sabbath observance.

Freedom to Evangelize: There are serious limits to freedom to evangelize. Two Adventist churches were temporarily closed for holding evangelistic meetings in their buildings. Another church has been threatened with closure because it held evangelistic meetings in its building. Even family worship and mid-week prayer meetings in homes sometime face opposition.

IRAN

Population: 80,840,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 87

Religious Groups: Muslim 99% (Shi'a 90%, Sunni 9%), other (includes Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian, and Baha'i) 1%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once known as Persia, Iran became an Islamic republic in 1979 after a religiously conservative revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini toppled the government. Iran's government has exercised tight control over nearly every aspect of its citizens' lives. The announcement that Iran's government began processes to develop nuclear power caused the international community to issue sanctions. It is hoped that a US-Iran nuclear deal may improve relations between Iran and the West. Still, Iran holds one of the world's worst human rights records. International sanctions against the Iranian regime have affected the economy. Even though Iran is the second largest producer of oil, several western companies have withdrawn from the market and Russian and Chinese demands have not compensated for this loss. Economic problems and regional tensions, especially the threat of an Israeli military intervention to dismantle Iran's nuclear program, are having a destabilizing effect on the Iranian leadership. Widespread human rights abuses are reported. Freedom of religion, especially freedom to change one's religion, is officially denied to Iranians. Violations of women's rights are widespread. Discrimination, persecution, torture, and forced disappearances of minorities, such as members of the Baha'i faith, are known to occur.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution provides no religious freedom. However, Chapter I, Articles 12 to 14, sets up the framework for the treatment of religious minorities. "Article 12: The official religion of Iran is Islam and the Twelver Ja'fari school, and this principle will remain eternally immutable. Other Islamic schools are to be accorded full respect, and their followers are free to act in accordance with their own jurisprudence in performing their religious rites. These schools enjoy official status in matters pertaining to religious education, affairs of personal status (marriage, divorce, inheritance, and wills) and related litigation in courts of law. In regions of the country

where Muslims following any one of these schools constitute the majority, local regulations, within the bounds of the jurisdiction of local councils, are to be in accordance with the respective school, without infringing upon the rights of the followers of other schools. Article 13: Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities, who, within the limits of the law, are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education. Article 14: In accordance with the sacred verse, ‘God does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with those who have not fought against you because of your religion and who have not expelled you from your homes’ [60:8], the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and all Muslims are duty-bound to treat non-Muslims in conformity with ethical norms and the principles of Islamic justice and equity and to respect their human rights. This principle applies to all who refrain from engaging in conspiracy or activity against Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Respect for religious freedom in the country continues to deteriorate. Reports of government imprisonment, harassment, intimidation, and discrimination based on religious beliefs continue. Proselytizing of Muslims by non-Muslims is illegal. The government has also continued the practice of charging non-Muslims as *moharebeh*, or “enemies of God.”

Private Attitudes and Actions: Although the constitution gives Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians the status of “protected” religious minorities, in practice non-Shi’a Muslims face substantial societal discrimination and government actions continue to support elements of society that create a threatening atmosphere for some religious minorities. Members of the Baha’i faith face government-sanctioned discrimination in the workplace. Baha’i graveyards in Abadeh and other cities have been desecrated, but the government did not seek to identify or punish the perpetrators. Reports indicate that government

agencies have arrested Christian groups disproportionately, routinely on false criminal charges.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There is one Seventh-day Adventist church. Institutions and buildings previously owned have been nationalized.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: As a religious minority in a Muslim nation, Adventists who wish to keep Sabbath find it a continual hindrance in obtaining work and attending school.

Freedom to Evangelize: Non-Muslims are forbidden to evangelize Muslims. However, they are free to evangelize other non-Muslims. Pastors caught evangelizing Muslims have been hanged.

IRAQ

Population: 32,585,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 96

Religious Groups: Muslim 97% (Shi'a 60%-65%, Sunni 32%-37%), Christian or other 3% (2010 statistics)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Iraq has been the cradle of ancient civilizations, including the Babylonian Empire. Iraq was granted independence from British rule in 1932, but became a republic in 1958. A series of authoritarian governments controlled the country, of which Saddam Hussein's government was the last. In 2003, a US-led military campaign toppled Hussein's government. The power vacuum that ensued caused continual sectarian violence, particularly among Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. In 2014, Iraqi forces began a campaign to regain territory lost to the so-called Islamic State—an extremist military organization. According to the NGO, Transparency International, Iraq ranks 170th of 183 countries in terms of corruption. The lack of security is most likely the major challenge of the country, but there are

others. Following the Iraq war and American occupation, ideological conflicts between Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds continue to create social and religious tensions. An estimated two million refugees have fled from Iraq to neighboring countries and another 2.2 million people are internally displaced. The death penalty has been used widely. Violence against women is also common.

Constitutional Provision: The 2005 Iraqi Constitution states in Chapter II, Article 41: “The followers of all religions and sects are free in the: (A) Practice of religious rites, including the Hussein ceremonies (Shiite religious ceremonies) (B) Management of the endowments, its affairs and its religious institutions. The law shall regulate this . . . The state guarantees freedom of worship and the protection of the places of worship.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The constitution recognizes Islam as the official religion. Though the government generally protects the rights and freedoms stipulated in the constitution, the country’s vulnerable religious minorities are threatened by violence conducted by terrorists, radical Islamic extremists, and criminal gangs. Sectarian violence, including attacks on religious leaders and religious places of worship, hampers the ability of minority faith groups to practice religion freely. Police have reportedly used ambiguous language in some laws to justify profiling based on religious affiliation. Though not official state holidays, the government recognized Easter and Christmas as Christian holidays in efforts to bridge relations with Iraq’s Christian minority.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Conservative and extremist Islamic elements continue to exert pressure on society to conform to their interpretations of Islam’s precepts. Although these efforts affect all citizens, non-Muslims are especially vulnerable to this pressure and violence because of their minority status and their lack of protection provided by a tribal structure. In general, minorities are underrepresented, especially at the provincial level. They lack full representation in the provincial councils, limiting their access to

government-provided security and economic development. The Islamic State-controlled regions of Iraq are particularly dangerous for religious minorities as the brutal practices of this extremist group extend to any dissidents under their control.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are three Seventh-day Adventist churches in Iraq. The church building in Baghdad has been damaged by car bombs several times. Because of sectarian violence and general threats to non-Muslims, a large number of Adventist church members have fled the country. The current circumstances make ministry exceedingly difficult.

IRELAND

Population: 4,832,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 436

Religious Groups: Catholic 84%, Church of Ireland 3%, Muslim 1%, Orthodox 1%, other Christian 1%, no affiliation 6% (2011 census)

Perspectives on Issues: One of Europe's Celtic tribe-nations, Ireland boasts an ancient history. Saint Patrick is credited with having brought Christianity to the island in the 5th century. As such, Ireland's culture and history have been linked to a strong Roman Catholic identity. British rule over Ireland extended from the 12th century through 1800 when Ireland was fully annexed to the United Kingdom. Separatist movements continued, however, and Ireland split from the UK in 1922. Full independence was not granted until 1948 when Ireland established its republican government. The six predominantly Protestant northern counties of Ireland are still part of the United Kingdom as Northern Ireland. As a member state of the European Union, Ireland has enjoyed booming economic success. Even through the global economic crisis, Ireland has been able to bounce back and remain an economic powerhouse. Consequences of economic downturns from 2008-2012 persist: tens of

thousands of Irish citizens emigrated during this period and ninety percent of population growth came from immigration. The sexual abuse scandal involving Catholic clergy continues to have a negative impact on the perception of religion within Irish society.

Constitutional Provision: Ireland, though a secular state, overtly mingles Christian beliefs into its laws. The preamble of the constitution gives praise to God for the country's national identity, affirms the trinity, and recognizes the Lordship of Jesus. Article 44 says: "(1) The State acknowledges that the homage of public worship is due to Almighty God. It shall hold His Name in reverence, and shall respect and honor religion. (2.1) Freedom of conscience and the free profession and practice of religion are, subject to public order and morality, guaranteed to every citizen. (2.2) The State guarantees not to endow any religion. (2.3) The State shall not impose any disabilities or make any discrimination on the ground of religious profession, belief or status."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government allows for the free practice of any faith without restriction. Though the majority of Irish citizens are Catholics, the government does not favor Catholicism officially, except that major Catholic holidays are national holidays with the most significant being St. Patrick's Day. The government has worked to enforce religious anti-discrimination laws as applied to minority groups.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most faiths have amicable relationships. Interfaith dialogues have been supported and promoted by government officials and religious leaders. Catholics and Protestants, who were at one time violently opposed to each other, continue to some degree to work regularly together to discuss issues of tolerance and peace. A few isolated reports of anti-Semitic vandalism and discrimination against Muslim communities have been reported. Government officials responded promptly to each of these.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are four Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

ISRAEL

Population: 7,821,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 795

Religious Groups: Jewish 75%, Muslim 17%, other (Baha'i, Samaritan, Karaite, Jehovah's Witness, non-Orthodox Jewish) 4%, Christian 2%, Druze 1.6%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Following the end of World War II, the victorious nations responded to calls from the Zionist Movement to create a Jewish homeland, particularly for survivors of the Holocaust. The state of Israel was established in 1948 along the Mediterranean in lands previously occupied by Palestine under British rule. It is the only majority-Jewish country in the world. Tensions persist between the majority Muslim Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government over land rights and the coexistence of the two nations. Israel is an industrially advanced state. Its high-tech, bio-tech, and chemical industries give it an edge compared to its neighbors. However, 19% of Israel's population lives below the poverty line. The discovery of large gas and oil deposits under the Mediterranean may provide new opportunities for the state. It experiences a perennial lack of water, despite extensive desalination. On the political and military fronts, the threat of war with Iran and the ongoing danger posed by terrorist organizations present formidable challenges to this country.

One of the major human rights issues Israel faces is in relation to the Palestinian people of Gaza and the West Bank.

Constitutional Provision: There is no provision in the constitution or Basic Law that grants religious freedom. The only provisions granting human rights are under the “Human Dignity and Liberty” section of Basic Law. The preface of that section states: “The purpose of this Basic Law is to protect human dignity and liberty, in order to establish in a Basic Law the values of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Government allocations of state resources favor Orthodox (including Modern and National Religious streams of Orthodoxy) and ultra-Orthodox (sometimes referred to as “Haredi”) Jewish religious groups and institutions, discriminating against non-Jews and non-Orthodox streams of Judaism. The High Court ruled on May 18, 2009, that the government must cease discriminating against non-Orthodox conversion institutes. Proselytizing is legal in the country and missionaries of all religious groups are theoretically allowed to proselytize all citizens. While military service is compulsory for Jews, Christians and Arab Muslims are exempt.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Jewish-Arab tensions remain at approximately the same level as in recent years. However, tensions between some Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities and evangelical Christians and Messianic Jewish communities have grown significantly. Animosity between secular and religious Jews continues. Members of Orthodox Jewish groups treat non-Orthodox Jews with discrimination and intolerance. This intolerance, however, has not developed into violent confrontation.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 11 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a publishing house, two English language schools, a Bible

correspondence school, a guesthouse, and a community service center. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Sabbath-keeping is not a hindrance in a nation which respects the Sabbath hours.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism is strictly regulated.

ITALY

Population: 61,680,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 9,540

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 87%, other (Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Baha'i, Buddhist, Orthodox, Jehovah's Witness, Assembly of God, Confederation of Methodist and Waldensian Churches, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, smaller Protestant groups) 5%

Perspectives on Current Issues: The nation-state known as Italy today is the product of a history steeped in the Roman Empire era. Not formally united until 1861, the Italian peninsula was comprised of many independent states. The early 20th century brought military rule and World War to Italy. This nation has since established a republican form of government that continues today. Italy has a deep-rooted relationship with the Roman Catholic Church; in 1929, via the Lateran Treaties, Italy created the sovereign state of the Holy See (Vatican City) and granted the church special status with the Italian government. Much of Western art and culture owes a debt to this nation. Some of the world's most famous painters, sculptors, musical composers, and architects have hailed from Italy. Italy is a member of NATO and the EU, and has adopted the Euro currency. Italy continues to face a number of social and political issues. The Roma community experiences discrimination. Legislation prompted by the "war on terror" has raised tensions between Italian citizens and recent immigrants. Some people are reportedly detained without legal hearings and

abuses and mistreatment by police are alleged to occur. Inquiries over the last two decades have uncovered deep political scandals involving organized crime. While Italy is Europe's third-largest economy, it is burdened by Europe's second-highest debt.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 7, “(1) The State and the Catholic Church shall be, each within its own order, independent and sovereign. (2) Their relations shall be regulated by the Lateran Pacts. Such amendments to these pacts as are accepted by both parties shall not require the procedure for Constitutional amendment.” Article 8 states: “(1) All religious denominations shall be equally free before the law. (2) Religious denominations other than Catholic shall have the right to organize themselves according to their own by-laws provided that they are not in conflict with the Italian legal system. (3) Their relations with the State shall be regulated by law on the basis of agreements with their respective representatives.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The Italian government has been tolerant of other faiths. However, due to its sovereign status and historical political authority, the Catholic Church enjoys some privileges not available to other religious groups. Other religious groups are not compelled to register with the government, but registry affords clergy the right to enter hospitals and prisons as well as the ability to perform government-sanctioned marriages. Local governments continue to encumber processes necessary for Islamic communities to build mosques.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are occasional reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Anti-Semitic vandalism continues sporadically in various parts of Italy. The government has taken steps through education and outreach to hamper these attacks. Discrimination against Muslims also continues throughout Italy. National-level politicians have stepped in to facilitate processes for the building of new

mosques and to promote tolerance in various regions of the country. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has good relations with other religious groups and cooperates closely with other Protestants.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 109 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college, nine radio stations, one nursing home, and a publishing house. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath keeping for Students and Employees: Sabbath-observing employees sometimes have difficulty being exempted from working on Saturday. Students in particular have a hard time because certain required classes are only held on Saturday.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

JAMAICA

Population: 2,930,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 278,213

Religious Groups: Church of God 26%, Seventh-day Adventist 12%, Pentecostal 11%, Baptist 7%, Anglican 3%, Roman Catholic 2%, United Church 2%, Methodist 2%, Jehovah's Witness 2%, Moravian 1%, Brethren 1%, no affiliation 21%, unspecified 2%

Perspective on Current Issues: This Western Caribbean island-nation sits just to the south of Cuba. Jamaica is known for its rich musical and culinary traditions, which have become known around the world. Rastafarianism, a religion developed in the 1930s, also has its roots in Jamaica. While enjoying a very stable democracy since its independence in 1962, Jamaica has not experienced stable growth in its economy. Organized crime and brutal violence, sometimes linked to certain political factions and police, continue to plague the

nation. The exportation of bauxite and sugar drive Jamaica's economy, along with a healthy tourism industry.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter III, Sections 13 and 13(b) of the constitution state: "(13) Whereas every person in Jamaica is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, that is to say, has the right, whatever his race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex, but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for the public interest, to each and all of the following, namely... (b) freedom of conscience, of expression and of peaceful assembly and association..."

State Attitudes and Actions: The Jamaican government allows and protects religious freedom. Registration is not mandatory for religious groups. However, in order to receive tax-exempt status and such privileges as clergy visiting prisons, a religious group must be registered. In 2013, after fifteen years of being denied official recognition, a Rastafarian group was granted official status by government officials. Notwithstanding, Rastafarians have reported being unfairly targeted by police due to their use of marijuana, a narcotic currently banned by Jamaican law.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Though Rastafarian leaders have reported widespread discrimination of their followers by the Christian majority—particularly when seeking employment—these same leaders have stated that they are noticing a dramatic improvement in this area in recent years.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 665 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, five schools, three clinics, three bookstores, and one hospital. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a recognized denomination. In February 2009, Dr. Patrick Allen, a Seventh-day Adventist, was appointed to the post of Governor General.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

JAPAN

Population: 127,100,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 15,255

Religious Groups: Shinto 79%, Buddhist 66%, Christian 1.5%, other (Islam, Baha'i, Hindu, Jewish) 0.7%. Percentages totaling substantially more than the country's population reflect many citizens' affiliation with multiple religions.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Japan boasts an ancient culture centered on its national territory: an archipelago to the east of the Korean peninsula. Traditionally a very isolated country, Japan first opened its ports to trade with the West in 1854. Following World War II's devastation for the Japanese people, this nation embarked on a course of rapid modernization. Japan is now the world's third largest economy and is considered a major source for technological advances. A 2011 earthquake and tsunami took the lives of more than 20,000 people. In addition, the central Fukushima-Dalichi nuclear plant was heavily damaged, producing the worst disaster of its kind since the Chernobyl catastrophe in 1986. Full recovery will be an arduous and costly endeavor. Another challenge the government faces is the presence of an estimated one million illegal immigrants from Pakistan, Iran, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, and other countries.

Constitutional Provision: Article 20 states: "(1) Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all." Article 28 continues: "Japanese subjects shall, within limits

not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The state allows religious freedom. 182,000 individual religious groups are registered with the government. However, since the subway gassing by the Aum Shinrikyo cult in 1995, the government has decided to monitor the financial and commercial assets of religious organizations. The government reserves the right to suspend a religious organization’s for-profit activities if they are in violation of government regulations.

Private Attitudes and Actions: The two main religions in Japan are Buddhism and Shintoism, but they are not exclusive. Many people practice more than one religion. Most religions have a congenial relationship with each other. The Chinese Embassy in Tokyo reportedly attempted to stir ill feelings against Falun Gong refugees living in Japan. This has largely proven to be unsuccessful. The Japanese Association of Religious Organizations continued to hold national events, bringing together leaders from over 100 religious organizations.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 107 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college, one high school, one publishing house, two bookstores, three food factories, three hospitals, three clinics, one dental clinic, and 24 nursing homes and retirement centers. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: No government recognition is necessary for a denomination to practice its faith, but it is necessary if the organization wants tax-exempt status. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: The government has instituted new regulations governing schools. These regulations have restricted free choice for some students regarding attendance at school on Saturday.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

JORDAN

Population: 7,930,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 179

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 98%, other (Christian, Shi'a Muslim, Baha'i, Druze) 2%

Perspectives on Current Issues: The League of Nations granted Britain control over this region following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the end of World War I. In 1946, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was established and ruled by King Hussein through most of the 20th century. Under King Hussein's rule, Jordan was generally able to maintain peaceful relations with Israel, neighboring Middle Eastern nations and the United States. His son, King Abdallah II, assumed leadership of the country upon his father's death in 1999. In spite of the king's efforts to contain the popular protest movement, the so-called "Arab Spring" has also affected Jordan and the number of tourists has diminished. Human rights defenders report that anti-terror legislation has been used to justify the arrest and detention of people who do not have the opportunity for a fair trial. Freedoms of expression, assembly, and association have been restricted. The country's energy bill has increased as it is heavily dependent on Egyptian gas, which supplies 80% of the needs of the Hashemite Kingdom for the production of electricity. Jordan ranks 77th out of 187 countries according to the Index of the United Nations Human Development Program. The country houses 1.9 million Palestinian refugees and 500,000 refugees from Iraq. Discrimination against migrant workers has been reported. Violence against women is widespread and there are numerous reported cases

of “honor killings.” Defamation laws make Christians and converts from Islam vulnerable to harassment and murder. Jordan gained a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2014-15 term.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution, Articles 6 and 15, states: “Article 6: (i) Jordanians shall be equal before the law. There shall be no discrimination between them as regards to their rights and duties on grounds of race, language or religion. (ii) The Government shall ensure work and education within the limits of its possibilities, and it shall ensure a state of tranquility and equal opportunities to all Jordanians. Article 14: “The State shall safeguard the free exercise of all forms of worship and religious rites in accordance with the customs observed in the Kingdom, unless such is inconsistent with public order or morality.”

State Attitudes and Actions: According to Jordanian law, religious freedom is protected with exceptions. The official religion of the Kingdom is Islam and by law, the monarch must always be a Muslim. Shari’a (Islamic) Law continues to govern matters of marriage and family law in this country’s legal system. The government has played a prominent role in promoting interfaith dialogue and harmony. However, it also harasses some citizens suspected of proselytizing Muslims and a few individuals who have converted to Christianity, whom it attempts to induce to revert to Islam. Converts from Islam risk the loss of civil rights. The Shari’a court, which has family law jurisdiction for Muslims, continued proceedings against a convert from Islam. As of 2013, seven Christians were serving in the upper house of Jordan’s national parliament.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Some religious groups face societal discrimination. Some Muslims who convert to other religions report facing social ostracism, threats, and physical and verbal abuse from their families and Muslim religious leaders. Citizens report that interfaith romantic relationships have led to ostracism and, in some cases, feuds between members of the

couple's families. Anti-Semitism is present in the media and editorial cartoons, articles, and opinion pieces sometimes depict negative images of Jews.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are two Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church also operates one high school.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: As a religious minority in a Muslim nation, Adventists who wish to keep Sabbath find it a continual hindrance in obtaining work and attending school.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism of Muslims is forbidden.

KAZAKHSTAN

Population: 17,948,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,787

Religious Groups: Muslim (Sunni Hanafi) 65%, Russian Orthodox 25%, other (Jewish, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Seventh-day Adventist, Methodist, Mennonite, Pentecostal, Baptist, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Christian Scientist, Buddhist, Hare Krishna, Baha'i, Scientologist, Unification Church) less than 5%, other Muslim less than 1%.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Kazakhstan is called the engine of central Asia. It is an affluent country rich in natural gas and petroleum deposits. It ranks second only to Russia as an exporter of crude oil. This country's economy has boomed since the early 1990s. Once a Soviet republic, Kazakhstan has been independent since 1991. After independence, the government sought to repatriate Kazakhs that left the country during Soviet rule to counterbalance the large number of ethnic-Russians who migrated to

Kazakhstan during the same period. Because the program has been so successful, this once very ethnically and religiously diverse country has become overwhelmingly Kazakh and Muslim. The current regime maintains tight control on the judiciary and the electoral system has been criticized worldwide. The country's human rights record is very poor. Kazakhstan is among the world's most corrupt countries; according to Transparency International, Kazakhstan is the 126th least corrupt country, out of 176.

Constitutional Provision: Article 22 of the constitution states: “(1) Everyone shall have the right to freedom of conscience. (2) The right to freedom of conscience must not specify or limit universal human and civil rights and responsibilities before the State.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The constitution allows for religious freedom, but local governments and communities sometimes work to inhibit the establishment and expansion of non-traditional (non-Russian Orthodox and Muslim) religious groups. Missionary activity is greatly restricted and missionaries may not distribute materials that are not first approved by officials. A national law states that religious instruction may not harm a child's overall development. This law allows the state to monitor religious instruction and determine if it is harmful. It is government policy to root out extremism and this policy has sometimes been interpreted as allowing the government to crack down on non-violent religious minorities. All religious communities are under surveillance by the local police and the KNB secret police. In order to function as a religious community, a group must register with the government; failure to register can lead to punishment. However, groups that are disliked may find their applications rejected. Attacks upon religious freedom are widespread and emanate from the President to local officials. Based upon its Administrative Code, there are punishments attached to the exercise of freedom of religion. In 2013, local police raided a peaceful meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses in Karabalyk and confiscated several Bibles and other pieces of

literature. The government justified the raid on grounds of combatting religious extremism. Various Protestant groups were fined for operating while not registering with the government.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Differing faiths generally tolerate one another. However, the public is constantly warned that minority religious groups are violent and subversive. This has led to bigotry and misunderstanding of non-traditional religious minorities. There has been an increase in reported incidents of religious discrimination or violence.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 43 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a media center.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: No information is available.

Freedom to Evangelize: The majority religious groups have been able to impose restrictions on Adventists' freedom to evangelize.

KENYA

Population: 45,010,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 795,161

Religious Groups: Christian (Protestant 57%, Catholic 29%, other Christian 14%) 80%, Muslim 10%, other (Hindu, Sikh, Baha'i) less than 1%, traditional beliefs 9%

Perspectives on Current Issues: After achieving independence from Britain in 1963, Kenya became a de-facto one-party state through to 1991. Over the next twenty years, various political parties struggled for power and reform. Not until 2010 did Kenyans overwhelmingly vote to enact a new constitution. The new constitution adds more checks to the presidential power and the transition of power to the country's current president in 2013 was peaceful. Kenya is a land

of many tribes and ethnicities. Tribal rivalries, armed conflicts, and open wars tend to unleash a plethora of human rights violations and abuses of all kinds. Several prominent Kenyans have been indicted for war crimes during ethnic strife that erupted into violence in 2007.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 78, paragraph 1: “No person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience . . . That freedom includes freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others, and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. Religious groups are required to register with the government to receive tax and other financial benefits. Groups are required to prove that their beliefs are distinct from those of other religions in order to be able to register. The law forbids some indigenous religious practices such as witchcraft, though participation in these practices is generally only prosecuted in connection with some other offense, such as murder. The government of Eritrea maintains close financial ties with the Eritrean Orthodox Church in Kenya, which reported that planted agents stole church funds. Various Seventh-day Adventist students filed suit against government-run schools that required Saturday examination. The cases reached the High Court of Kenya, which ruled in favor of the students. Various Seventh-day Adventists who served in the Kenyan military force sued the government over violations of their religious convictions while in service. The cases are still being processed.

Private Attitudes and Actions: During the reporting period there have been problems related to the practice of witchcraft or people being accused of practicing witchcraft. Various acts of violence against Christians, including

murder, have been reported in different regions of Kenya. In Mombasa, an Evangelical pastor was murdered in his own church. Some have reported that the murder was perpetrated in retaliation for the previous drive-by shooting of three Muslim girls. The terrorist attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi and the 2015 attack on students at a Christian university were perpetrated by the Islamist extremist organization Al-Shabaab. According to Open Doors, Kenya is now 19th on a list of the worst countries for the persecution of Christians.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 4,776 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, eight high schools, a Bible correspondence school, one hospital, 38 clinics and dispensaries, and one publishing house. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: The majority of Seventh-day Adventists are able to honor their religious convictions in the workplace and in school. However, it has been reported that some students have been refused privileges of Sabbath worship and that some employees have been denied the right to maintain their jobs while keeping Saturday as their day of worship.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

KIRIBATI

Population: 104,400 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,450

Religious Groups: Catholic 56%, Kiribati Protestant 34%, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 5%, Baha'i 2%, Seventh-day Adventist 2%, no affiliation less than 1%, other (Jehovah's Witness, Assembly of God, Muslim) less than 1% (2010 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Thirty-three islands spread over 2,500 miles and just north of the equator comprise the nation of Kiribati. Once a British possession, the islands achieved full independence in 1979. The nation's economy is highly susceptible to world demand for coconut products, as its mineral deposits were depleted by 1980. Kiribati is a leading voice on climate change as its islands are at sea level and the government has already begun making preparations for the possibility of having to evacuate its citizens due to rising sea levels.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution of Kiribati states in Chapter II, Section 11: “(1) Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience, and for the purposes of this section the said freedom includes freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others, and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance . . . (3) No religious community shall be prevented from providing religious instruction for persons of that community . . .”

State Attitudes and Actions: There is no official state religion in Kiribati. Churches are allowed to operate without encumbrance and religions are allowed to proselytize freely. At the constitutional level, religious organizations have the right to operate schools freely.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There is generally great harmony among the various religious groups. With the exception of some non-mainstream religious groups facing opposition in establishing themselves on outlying islands, no serious problems of religious violence or discrimination have been reported.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 14 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one high school, one clinic, and one bookstore. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely. In some areas, local leaders have been influenced by other religious groups to impede the efforts of Adventists to evangelize.

KOREA, DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF

Population: 24,851,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 866

Religious Groups: In a 2002 report to the UN Human Rights Committee, the government reported 12,000 Protestants, 10,000 Buddhists, 800 Roman Catholics, and 15,000 members of Cheondogyo Young Friends Party, a government-approved group based on a traditional religious movement. There continue to be credible reports of private Christian religious activity in the country, although the existence of underground churches and the scope of underground religious activity remain difficult to verify. While some NGOs and academics estimate there may be up to several hundred thousand Christians practicing their faith underground, others question the existence of a large-scale underground church or conclude that it is impossible to estimate accurately the number of underground religious believers. Individual underground congregations are reportedly very small and typically confined to private homes.

Perspectives on Current Issues: North Korea has one the worst human rights records in the world. Dissidents report restrictions not only of religious freedom, but also freedom of expression, speech, assembly, and association.

Arbitrary detentions, forced disappearances, and use of the death penalty continue. Forced labor is still regularly practiced, according to many eyewitnesses. Following World War II, the northern part of Korea was placed under Soviet control, while the south remained under Allied control. This split, along with rising Cold War tensions, helped spark the Korean War. The country continues to be ruled by an extremely authoritarian dynasty; its current leader is Kim Jong-un. North Korea has become increasingly isolated as the United States and its allies condemn its attempts to develop nuclear weapons.

Constitutional Provision: Article 68 of the constitution states: “Citizens have freedom of religious beliefs. This right is granted by approving the construction of religious buildings and the holding of religious ceremonies. No one may use religion as a pretext for drawing in foreign forces or for harming the State and social order.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Religious freedom does not exist in North Korea. The state tightly regulates religious activities. There is a strict ban on foreign missionaries and all forms of proselytizing. The state does not allow its citizens to possess religious literature; individuals found in possession of such could face imprisonment or even execution. Individuals who are imprisoned because of their religious convictions have been reported to be the recipients of more severe treatment than political prisoners. There has been a marked increase in the number of Christians executed by the authorities. Although little information is available concerning religious affairs, evidence indicates that many of the religious institutions in North Korea are organs of the state and they are monitored closely. Because of government regulations, it is not possible for independent organizations to investigate reports of religious abuse. The government does allow some foreign faith-based humanitarian institutions to operate within the country. Those groups are not permitted to proselytize and their every action is closely monitored. It is reported that in November 2013 80 Christians were executed for crimes including the possession of Bibles. This is

not believed to be an isolated occurrence. In 2014, Australian John Short was arrested in Pyongyang and accused of trying to distribute Christian materials. He was released after he apologized.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Little is known about the attitudes of individual religions toward one another since state control of religion is so strong. Some defectors have reported that believers of various faiths attempt to conceal their beliefs and practices from neighbors in fear of being reported to authorities.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 26 Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventist students and employees are not free to observe Sabbath because their religious freedom is severely restricted.

Freedom to Evangelize: There is no freedom to evangelize for any religious group, except perhaps for the cult of the supreme leader, which amounts to state-sponsored religion.

KOREA, REPUBLIC OF (SOUTH KOREA)

Population: 49,039,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 236,345

Religious Groups: Buddhist 23%, Protestant 18%, Catholic 11%, other/no affiliation 47% (2005 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Republic of Korea, or South Korea, was established as a democratic government for the Korean Peninsula following World War II. A communist-led government controlled the northern portion of the peninsula and the two halves remain separate sovereign entities since the end of the Korean War in 1953. Since the war, South Korea has maintained

close economic and military ties to the United States. Unlike its northern neighbor, South Korea enjoys a vibrant economy, ranking 13th in the world and fourth in Asia. However, ongoing tensions and threats from North Korea foster an atmosphere that is not conducive to freedom of religion and expression. Compulsory military service and imprisonment of conscientious objectors continue to blemish its record and have attracted criticism from human rights organizations.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 19: “All citizens enjoy the freedom of conscience.” Article 20 continues: “(1) All citizens enjoy the freedom of religion. (2) No state religion may be recognized, and church and state are to be separated.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The Republic of Korea, known as South Korea, follows its constitutional provision of religious freedom for all. Korea has no state church and does not support a particular faith. In keeping with Article 9 of the constitution (“The State tries to sustain and develop the cultural heritage and to enhance national culture”) the Korean government has provided funds to restore ancient Buddhist temples. The government requires military service for all men living in Korea, and it does not allow for conscientious objector status or provide for alternative service for its citizens. In recent years, there were at least 583 Jehovah’s Witnesses serving prison sentences for refusing military service. One encouraging sign is the increase in sympathy the courts have been extending towards individuals wishing to be conscientious objectors. However, the Ministry of National Defense has reversed its position regarding the introduction of an alternative form of service for conscientious objectors. It claims a lack of public support as the reason for that decision. Currently, the Conscription Law has been referred to the Constitutional Court in an effort to determine its constitutionality. On two prior occasions the Constitutional Court ruled that it is indeed constitutional. The Court will be hearing at least 28 other cases filed for its review.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Communities of different faiths have congenial relationships with each other. Every year religious leaders assemble to share an open dialogue and promote tolerance.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 688 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, one college, seven high schools, six hospitals, one sanitarium, two food factories and one publishing house. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Employers generally desire a six-day work week. This can pose a problem for Adventists, but some have been able to negotiate with their employers for a solution. Adventists have experienced problems in keeping the Sabbath during compulsory military service. This continues to be a struggle, but some progress has been made. Students are required to attend classes on Sabbath. There is currently a movement towards a five-day week, but it is not yet a reality.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

KOSOVO

Population: 1,859,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: unknown

Religious Groups: Muslim 95.6%, Roman Catholic 2.2%, Serbian Orthodox 1.4%, other/no affiliation/no response less than 1% each

Perspectives on Current Issues: The international community continues to be split on the status of Kosovo. Most member states of the European Union, the United States, and the United Nations officially recognize Kosovo's independence. Serbia and its allies, namely Russia, do not. Kosovars suffered war and ethnic cleansing in the 1990s, which led to the region coming under

UN control. In 2008, mostly ethnic-Albanian Kosovars declared independence from Serbia, but conflict continues with dissenting ethnic Serbians living in the region. Kosovo has one of the highest unemployment rates in Europe, at 30%, but this is a marked improvement from the previous year. Aid from other European countries helps to keep the economy afloat.

Constitutional Provision: The 2008 Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo states in Article 38: “(1) Freedom of belief, conscience and religion is guaranteed. (2) Freedom of belief, conscience and religion includes the right to accept and manifest religion, the right to express personal beliefs and the right to accept or refuse membership in a religious community or group. (3) No one shall be required to practice or be prevented from practicing religion nor shall anyone be required to make his/her opinions and beliefs public. (4) Freedom of manifesting religion, beliefs and conscience may be limited by law if it is necessary to protect public safety and order or the health or rights of other persons.” Article 39 states that various religious denominations have the right to internal governance as well as to the establishment of parochial schools.

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice. While no official registration process exists for religious organizations in Kosovo, the government does provide an ombudsman who monitors religious liberty issues. Protestant groups, particularly, report discrimination by local political authorities when seeking permits for church or cemetery construction.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Societal violence has marginally decreased, but tensions between communities remain high. Discrimination and violence generally appear to be ethnically motivated, but the close relationship between ethnicity and religion make it difficult to determine what motivates specific incidents of animosity. There are reports of assaults directed against the Serbian Orthodox community and property, including threats, thefts, and vandalism.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: The number of Seventh-day Adventist churches is unknown.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely, though Adventists experience the same difficulties with societal discrimination as do other Protestants and minority religious groups.

KUWAIT

Population: 2,742,000 (1,200,000 citizens; 2,600,000 non-citizens) (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 191

Religious Groups: Among citizens: Muslim (Sunni 70%, Shi'a 30%) nearly 100%, a few Christians and Baha'is. Among non-citizens: Shi'a Muslim 150,000, Hindu 600,000, Christian 450,000, Buddhist 100,000, Sikh 10,000, Baha'i 400.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Companies have been extracting oil from this region since the 1930s, but the Kingdom of Kuwait was not granted independence until 1961. Kuwait has been the center of various US-led military campaigns, including Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. In 2005, the kingdom adopted sweeping reforms, including a fully representative parliament and granting full political rights to women. While many countries are struggling to reverse the impact of the latest recession, Kuwait enjoys a fiscal surplus of 19.5 billion dollars. It ranks 46th on the Index of Human Development. The Arab Spring prompted Kuwaitis to participate in demonstrations demanding a constitutional monarchy. As a result of these demonstrations, the prime minister was dismissed. One of the major

human rights issues is the mistreatment of migrant workers through discrimination and physical abuse. According to many reports, female workers are particularly vulnerable. Sexual assault and enslavement are regional problems. Lack of freedom of expression is also reported.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Part I, Articles 2 and 29: “Article 2: The religion of the State is Islam, and the Islamic Shari’a shall be a main source of legislation.” “Article 29 (1): All people are equal in human dignity and in public rights and duties before the law, without distinction to race, origin, language, or religion. (2) Personal liberty is guaranteed.”

State Attitudes and Actions: As an Islamic monarchy, the government highly regulates all religious activity. The government generally respects religious freedom in practice; however, religious minorities experience some discrimination as a result of governmental policies and non-Sunni Muslims continue to find it difficult or impossible to obtain legal permission to establish new places of worship.

Private Attitudes and Actions: In general, citizens are open and tolerant of other religious groups. However, there is a minority that opposes the presence of non-Muslim groups in the country and rejects the legitimacy of Muslims of sects other than their own. Sectarian fighting in neighboring Syria has sparked some incidents of violence between Sunni and Shi’a Muslims in Kuwait.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There is one Seventh-day Adventist church.

Government Recognition: Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not an officially recognized religious group, Adventists have been able to hold meetings in private homes without harassment.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: No information available.

Freedom to Evangelize: Proselytizing is illegal for any non-Sunni Muslim religion.

KYRGYZSTAN

Population: 5,600,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 760

Religious Groups: Muslim (Sunni) 75%, Russian Orthodox 20%, other (Baptist, Pentecostal, Charismatic, Jehovah's Witness, Presbyterian, Seventh-day Adventist, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Buddhist, Baha'i) 5%

Perspectives on Current Issues: This Central Asian nation was once a Soviet Republic. Through various decades of political turmoil, Kyrgyzstan witnessed its first peaceful transfer of power in 2011. Kyrgyzstan is one of the poorest countries in the former Soviet Union. It ranks 125th according to the Human Development Index. From an economic perspective there are encouraging signs. Mining of the country's rich gold resources helped the economy grow at a rate of 4% in 2011. The government's restrictions of civil liberties, as a response to social protests, have drawn international criticism. Ethnic conflicts and clashes have also weakened respect for human rights. The treatment of refugees from Uzbekistan, many of whom were forcibly returned, has also been of great concern. The current political leaders are trying to move the country forward. They intend to integrate the customs union proposed by Russia that would include Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter II, Section 2, Article 16 of the constitution states: "(1) In the Kyrgyz Republic the basic human rights and freedoms shall be recognized and guaranteed in accordance with universally accepted norms and principles of international law, international treaties and agreements on the issues of human rights which have been ratified by the Kyrgyz Republic. (2) Every person in the Kyrgyz Republic shall enjoy the right: To life, physical and

moral immunity; personal freedom and security; personal development; to freedom of conscience, spirit and worship.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Though the constitution provides for religious freedom, there are other laws and policies that limit that freedom. In 2009, the “Law on Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations” was passed. This law has placed further restrictions on religious groups. Both Islamic and Christian groups are faced with restrictions from the state. The government has particularly harassed religious groups thought to be associated with extremist ideologies.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Religion is a regular source of tension in Kyrgyzstan. Society typically frowns upon conversion, especially from Islam. The media has fanned the flames of bigotry by airing false reports or portraying certain religions as evil or satanic. This has caused mob violence and vandalism against religious minorities. Muslims who convert to other religions are met with harsh societal penalties. In some cases converts from Islam are refused burial services, which causes great stress to family members. In 2013, a mob of 40 people attacked and burned down a Kingdom Hall of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Five people were convicted of perpetrating these violent acts.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 13 Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventists, as members of a religious minority in a Muslim and Russian Orthodox nation, experience continual difficulties in obtaining work or attending school due to their Sabbath observance.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism is exceptionally difficult. With the passage of the “Law on Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations,” converting from one religion to another has become illegal. Public distribution of religious literature is also illegal.

LAOS

Population: 6,803,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,139

Religious Groups: Theravada Buddhist 40-50%, animist and ancestor worship 47-57%, other (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Baha'i, Mahayana Buddhist, Confucianism) less than 3%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Laos is a communist state nestled between Vietnam and Thailand. A communist coup overthrew the country's monarchy in 1975. Severe isolation and failed government policies have worked to sink the Laotian economy. Since 2005, the government has implemented capitalist reforms, but the country remains heavily dependent on foreign aid. Sixty percent of the Laotian people are peasants, of whom 40% live on less than \$1.25 a day. The World Health Organization reports that over half of the children in rural areas suffer from malnutrition. Human rights agencies report that ethnic minorities face severe discrimination and government forces respond severely to any political dissidence.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 9: "The state respects and protects all lawful activities of the Buddhists and of other religious followers [and] mobilizes and encourages the Buddhist monks and novices as well as the priests of other religions to participate in the activities which are beneficial to the country and people. All acts of creating division of religions and classes of people are prohibited." Article 30 states: "Lao citizens have the right and freedom to believe or not to believe in religions."

State Attitudes and Actions: Laos reserves the right to regulate religion and it does this regularly. It recognizes only a few non-Buddhist religious organizations and those which are not recognized by the government are subject to repressive measures. The government of Laos attempts to control

religious practice and belief by restricting speech and travel and by using coercion, though there has been some movement toward greater religious freedom. According to Decree 92, the government is the final arbiter in religious matters. Unfortunately, local provincial and district leaders tend to disallow full religious freedom. Religious tolerance is greater in urban areas than in rural areas. Non-Buddhist and minority religions, especially Protestants, generally experience less religious freedom and fewer privileges than Buddhists, and the government provides financial and other support to Buddhism. Laos tries to promote a sense of religious harmony, so the state avoids things that can be seen as disrupting this harmony. Unfortunately, this attempt at harmony often results in official religious intolerance. Persons charged with religion-based offences are often tried, convicted, and sentenced with little recourse. Though Protestant Christians may hold religious celebrations at their places of worship, provincial authorities usually do not allow individuals to hold religious celebrations at their homes. The government continues to severely restrict the activities of Catholics in the northern part of the country. There are numerous reports of Christians being arrested and imprisoned for religious reasons and there are also numerous reports of Christians being forced to renounce their faith.

Private Attitudes and Actions: For the most part, religious organizations coexist amicably, fearing government control rather than each other. Buddhism, the majority religion, generally promotes harmony and tolerance. Some conflicts have arisen among certain faith communities, but most of these incidents have other attendant circumstances. Some tension has resulted from Protestants refusing to participate in Animist or Buddhist religious ceremonies.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are four Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates no institutions. The church constructed a new building in the southern part of the country, but was barred from using the building because of

the supposed lack of a building permit. There are also challenges faced by members in the northern part of the country. Church officials must request permission to visit members there and, when they get permission, a government official accompanies them.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of the very few recognized Protestant denominations in Laos.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: Proselytizing is illegal, foreign missionaries are seldom permitted access to the nation, and the distribution of religious literature that has not been approved by the government is forbidden.

LATVIA

Population: 2,165,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 4,030

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 22.7%, Lutheran 19.6%, Orthodox Christian 15.3%, other (Baptist, Pentecostal, Evangelical Protestant, Muslim, Jehovah's Witness, Methodist, Hare Krishna, Buddhist)

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Latvian people lived under the control of other major European powers for many centuries. After finally declaring an independent Latvian republic following World War I, this country was annexed by the Soviet Union and did not achieve independence again until 1991. During Soviet occupation, many ethnic Russians moved to the Baltic states and many Latvians believe this was deliberately done to eliminate the Baltic cultural and linguistic heritage. This belief has led Latvian authorities to enact strict citizenship and anti-Russian language laws. These laws make it nearly impossible for the ethnic Russian minority, one-quarter of the country's residents, to be even eligible for citizenship. This makes ethnic Russians particularly vulnerable to a number of abuses, including human trafficking.

Latvia is a member of NATO and the EU, and has also adopted the Euro currency.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states, in Chapter VIII, Article 99, “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The church shall be separate from the State.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally adheres to the constitution, which allows the free exercise of religion. At times, bureaucratic regulations levied upon minority religions have been an impediment to religious freedom. There is no state religion; however, the government distinguishes between traditional (Lutheran, Catholic, Orthodox, Old Believers, Baptists, and Jewish) and new religions. Parliament has adopted laws that regulate relations between the state and the Lutheran and Russian Orthodox Churches. Laws had already been established for Baptist, Old Believer, Orthodox, Jewish, Methodist, and Seventh-day Adventist organizations. Religious instruction is part of the public school curriculum, and established churches (such as the Seventh-day Adventist Church) are allowed to provide religious instruction. Latvia is a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

Private Attitudes and Actions: In general, amicable relations exist among various religious groups, though traditional faiths tend to be somewhat suspicious of new faiths coming into Latvia. There were various reports of societal abuse or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. These were generally targeted at Muslim and Jewish groups. Neo-Nazi demonstrators displayed swastikas and other anti-Semitic paraphernalia during Holocaust remembrance events. Anti-Semitic speech was also broadcast on various radio stations in Latvia. The government has condemned these displays.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 52 Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: Suspicious local leaders and intolerant members of the established faiths sometimes hinder evangelism, and missionary laws restrict the ability of missionaries to enter the country and hold evangelistic meetings.

LEBANON

Population: 5,882,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 282

Religious Groups: Muslim (Shi'a, Sunni, Druze, Isma'elite, Alawite or Nusayri) 59.7%, Christian (Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Assyrian, Chaldean, Copt, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Roman Catholic) 39%, and other 1.3%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Lebanon is a small nation along the eastern banks of the Mediterranean Sea. This region was controlled by the Ottoman Empire until the French seized it shortly after World War I. Independence was granted and Lebanon was born in 1943. From 1975 to 1990, Lebanon was the battleground for a bloody civil war that involved neighboring Israel and Syria. It is estimated that 120,000 people died during this period as a result of violent conflict. Lebanon has, however, been able to develop a very successful economy and a stable democracy. Sectarian lines that intersect with religious groups divide the country's parliament. The allocation of seats in parliament was designed to ensure that president would always be a Maronite Catholic, the prime minister would be Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of parliament would be a Shi'a Muslim. No census has been taken in Lebanon since 1932, which has

sparked recent controversy because Muslim groups argue that a fresh census would prove that Muslims were now a majority in the country. One of the most challenging situations in Lebanon is its public debt, which is equal to 142% of its GDP. The current situation in Syria is also not conducive to economic development in Lebanon; tourism numbers have plummeted in Lebanon since the strife in Syria began in 2010. Syria is both a market partner and a transit territory toward the Arab world. Israel's conflict with Hezbollah has contributed to political instability in Lebanon and created a human rights quagmire. Allegations of torture are prevalent according to human rights advocates. Moreover, there are reports of wide-ranging discrimination against women. The situation of Palestinian refugees has not yet found a satisfactory resolution.

Constitutional Provision: Part A, Article 9 of the constitution states: "There shall be absolute freedom of conscience. The state in rendering homage to the Most High shall respect all religions and creeds, and guarantees, under its protection, the free exercise of all religious rites provided that public order is not disturbed. It also guarantees that the personal status and religious interests of the population, to whatever religious sect they belong, is respected."

State Attitudes and Actions: Government policy contributes to the generally free practice of religion. The government has taken some steps to improve religious freedom, including the Ministry of Interior's 2009 circular allowing citizens to remove the religious affiliations encoded on their national identity cards. The government officially recognizes 18 religious groups, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Thousands of Christians from other nations in the region have sought refuge in Lebanon throughout this reporting period. Because government positions are allocated according to religious affiliation, citizens who choose not to include this information on identity cards run the risk of not being eligible for public office. In 2013, the first secular civil marriage was recorded without reference to the couple's religious affiliation.

This couple's first-born child's birth certificate was also recorded without reference to religious affiliation.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are periodic reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. There is tension among religious groups, which is attributable to competition for political power, and citizens continue to struggle along sectarian lines, a legacy of the 15-year civil war. Anti-Semitic or anti-Israel comments are common. Despite these challenges, places of worship of every confession continue to exist side by side, extending a centuries-long tradition of Lebanon being a place of refuge for those fleeing religious intolerance.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are five Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university and two high schools.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is among the 18 officially recognized religious groups in the country.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: As a religious minority in a Muslim nation, Adventists who wish to keep Sabbath find it a continual hindrance in obtaining work and attending school.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism aimed at Muslims is highly discouraged by government and society.

LESOTHO

Population: 1,942,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 7,674

Religious Groups: Christian 90%, other (Muslim, Hindu, Baha'i, indigenous or other religious groups) 10%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Formerly named Basutoland, the Kingdom of Lesotho was granted independence from Britain in 1966. Lesotho is landlocked

and completely surrounded by South Africa. Tensions grew between Lesotho and the South African government when Lesotho welcomed apartheid dissidents seeking shelter. In 1990, a military coup forced King Moshoeshoe II into exile until democracy was restored and the King reinstated in 1995. Lesotho has operated as a constitutional monarchy with relative peace in transitions of power and clean elections. In 2012, Lesotho faced its worst drought and famine in recent history, according to the World Food Programme.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution regards freedom of expression and conscience as a fundamental human right in Chapter 2, Article 4, and further guarantees religious liberty and freedom of conscience in Articles 13 to 16.

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. There is no state religion and the government has no requirements for registration of religious groups. Churches own and operate about 80% of all primary and secondary schools in the country.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious and there are no reports of significant tensions. One local, privately owned radio station made various calls for the government to make Christianity the official state religion; the government has not yet responded.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 39 Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

LIBERIA

Population: 4,092,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 15,457

Religious Groups: Christian (Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Seventh-day Adventist, Jehovah's Witness, United Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal, AME Zion, Pentecostal) 86.5%, Muslim 12.2%, no affiliation 1.5%, other (Baha'i, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist) less than 1%, indigenous beliefs 0.6%. Many members of religious groups incorporate elements of indigenous beliefs into their religious practices.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Liberia was established in 1822 as a settlement for freed slaves from the United States, but the Republic of Liberia was not declared until 1847. Liberians lived in relative peace and prosperity during the nation's first century. Following two civil wars in 1980 and 2000—for which the former president was tried by the International Criminal Court and found guilty of aiding and abetting war crimes—a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established to help the country heal and move forward. Africa's first female head of state, current President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, was honored as a co-winner of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize for her "non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work." Liberia's economy has suffered not only from decades of violence, but also by the Ebola epidemics of 2014 and 2015 that effectively shut down the government.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 14: "All persons shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment thereof. . . . All persons who, in the practice of their religion, conduct themselves peaceably, not obstructing others and conforming to the standards set out herein, shall be entitled to the protection of the law. No religious denomination or sect shall have any exclusive privilege or

preference over any other, but all shall be treated alike. . . . Consistent with the principle of separation of religion and State, the Republic shall establish no State religion.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The constitution and laws of Liberia protect religious freedom and, in general practice, the government does also. There were reports of ritualistic killings—the act of killing for body parts for use in traditional rituals—from all parts of the country. The government treats ritualistic killing cases as homicides and investigates and prosecutes them accordingly. The government encourages businesses to remain closed on Sundays with no legal justification. Muslim shops are permitted to remain open for limited hours on Sundays.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Some tensions persist between religious groups in spite of frequent interaction. There are reports of discrimination based on religious belief or practice. Tensions exist in some areas between Christians and Muslims. The Christian Heritage Committee brought a petition signed by 700,000 Liberians requesting that Congress designate Liberia as a “Christian nation.” Congress has not acted upon the petition. The Minister of Internal Affairs has visited areas of highest tension between Christians and traditionalists to call for tolerance.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 69 Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

LIBYA

Population: 6,244,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 121

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 97%, other (Christian, Hindu, Baha'i, Ahmadi Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish) 3%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Civil war broke out in Libya in early 2011. In October, the Gaddafi regime was finally terminated when the dictator was captured and killed, leading the National Transitional Council to declare the liberation of the country and an official end to the conflict. The challenge of repairing the war-ravaged state is substantial. The new president has declared the implementation of Shari'a law, and hopes that the Arab Spring revolution would lead to an era of democracy appear unlikely to come to fruition. Libya is rich in natural resources. Oil represents 90% of exports and 95% of budgetary revenues. At the same time, 75% of consumed products are imported. According to economists, diversification of the economy is essential for the future of the country. As in Tunisia, the wealth of the former ruling families is estimated to be billions of dollars—in the case of Libya specifically, 140 billion dollars. Rivalry and conflict among tribes and warlords may provide a breeding ground for human rights violations if national reconciliation does not take place promptly.

Constitutional Provision: In 2011, the National Transitional Council approved an interim Constitutional Declaration derived mainly from Shari'a law, which in theory still governs Libyan law. National elections were held in 2014 for a Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution. However, the country has since been plunged into civil conflict. The lack of a central government or a working constitution makes it difficult to predict the legal state of religious or any other liberty in this country's near future.

State Attitudes and Actions: Under the former regime, religious practices that conflicted with the government's interpretation of Shari'a were prohibited. Only the future will tell if and how human rights are integrated within the legal framework of the new Libya.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are already reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Amidst the political conflict raging through Libya currently, there are periodic reports of attacks on Christian homes and places of worship. Shi'a and Sufi minorities have also faced violent attacks since the 2011 uprising that toppled the Gaddafi regime.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There is one Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism of Muslims is illegal.

LIECHTENSTEIN

Population: 37,300 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 8

Religious Groups: Catholic 76%, Protestant 7.6%, Muslim 5.4%, religious but no formal group 2.8%, Christian Orthodox 1.1%, other 1.7%, no affiliation 5.4%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Located between Austria and Switzerland, along the Rhine River, lies the tiny Principality of Liechtenstein. Established by the Holy Roman Empire in the 18th century, Liechtenstein became an independent state in 1806. Neutral through both World Wars, the country was able to grow economically through monetary agreements with both Austria and Switzerland. Liechtenstein's low tax rate has made it a haven for international investment. Though citizens elect a representative government,

Liechtensteiners voted in 2003 to grant the reigning Prince full authority—making Liechtenstein Europe’s last remaining absolute monarchy.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter IV, Articles 37 and 39 of the constitution states: “Article 37. (1) Freedom of belief and conscience are guaranteed for all persons. (2) The Catholic Church is the State Church and as such enjoys the full protection of the State; other confessions shall be entitled to practice their creeds and to hold religious services to the extent consistent with morality and public order. . . . Article 39. The enjoyment of civil and political rights shall not be dependent on religious belief nor may the latter constitute a ground for any dereliction of civil obligations.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice. To receive a religious worker visa, an applicant must demonstrate that the host organization in Liechtenstein is important for the entire country. An applicant must complete theological studies and be accredited by an acknowledged religious group.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are isolated reports of societal abuse or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. However, Catholics, Protestants, and members of other religious groups work well together on an ecumenical basis.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no Seventh-day Adventist churches in Liechtenstein.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

Freedom to Evangelize: Laws regarding foreign missionaries present challenges to Adventists seeking to evangelize in Liechtenstein.

LITHUANIA

Population: 3,505,000 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 879

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 77.3%, Russian Orthodox 4.1%, Protestant (including Lutheran and Evangelical Christian Baptist) 1.9%, unspecified 6.1%, other (Russian Orthodox, Old Believers, Lutheran, Reformed Evangelical, Jewish, Muslim, Greek Catholic, Karaite) less than 5%, non-traditional religions (Jehovah's Witness, Full Gospel Word of Faith Movement, Pentecostal/Charismatic, Old Baltic, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Methodist, New Apostolic, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) less than 0.5% (data from 2011 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Lithuania is the largest of the three Baltic countries in Eastern Europe. Much of Lithuania's history was tied to Poland until Lithuania was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940. In 1990, Lithuania won its independence by being the first Soviet Republic to split from the union. This country has since integrated itself into the Western world. Lithuania is a member of NATO and the European Union. It adopted the Euro currency in January 2015 and gained a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2014-2015 term. Lithuania's current president, Dalia Grybauskaitė, is the country's first female head of state.

Constitutional Provision: Article 26 of the constitution states: "(1) Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion shall not be restricted. (2) Every person shall have the right to freely choose any religion or faith and, either individually or with others, in public or in private, to manifest his or her religion or faith in worship, observance, practice or teaching."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice. Certain privileges are reserved for traditional religions in Lithuania, such as performing marriages, providing religious instruction in

public schools, and diplomatic status. Minority religious groups do not enjoy these privileges. The Evangelical Baptist Union of Lithuania and the Seventh-day Adventist Church are the only two non-traditional churches recognized by the government. These two groups may perform marriages, but are not entitled to tax-exempt status or exemption from military duty. In 2013, the government held a conference on combatting hate crimes.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Isolated incidents of anti-Semitism and vandalism were reported. These were immediately condemned by government officials.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 17 Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: Freedom to evangelize exists, but it can be tenuous and it is dependent on local leaders and the degree of tolerance extended by the predominant religious groups.

LUXEMBOURG

Population: 520,600 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 103

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic more than 70%, Protestant (Lutheran, Calvinist, Anglican) 2%, Muslim 2%, Christian Orthodox (Greek, Serbian, Russian, Romanian) 1%, Jewish 0.3%, (2011 study)

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg dates back to the 10th century A.D. One of the world's smallest countries, Luxembourg is landlocked by Belgium, France, and Germany. Because of its geographical location, most Luxembourgers are fluent in French, German, and

Luxembourgish (a dialect of German). Though Luxembourg attempted to be neutral through both World Wars, its invasion in both conflicts led the country to embrace international cooperation. It became a founding member of a precursor organization to the European Union in 1948. In 2008, the country's parliament reformed its constitution, reducing the role of the monarch (Grand Duke) to largely ceremonial matters. Luxembourg is considered Europe's most powerful investing banking economy and is the 9th least-corrupt country in the world, according to Transparency International.

Constitutional Provision: Articles 19 and 22 of the constitution state: "Article 19. Freedom of religion and of public worship as well as freedom to express one's religious opinions are guaranteed, subject to the repression of offenses committed in the exercise of such freedoms." "Article 22. The State's intervention in the appointment and installation of heads of religions, the mode of appointing and dismissing other ministers of religion, the right of any of them to correspond with their superiors and to publish their acts and decisions, as well as the Church's relations with the State shall be made the subject of conventions to be submitted to the Chamber of Deputies for the provisions governing its intervention."

State Attitudes and Actions: Religious freedom is generally promoted and protected by the state. Luxembourg subsidizes Catholic seminaries, but also supports nonsectarian schools. Muslim groups have reported systematic discrimination by the government. There were extensive talks between the state and Muslim officials with the goal of producing a convention, but no such convention was ever approved. As such, Muslim groups are not eligible for state subsidies.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Catholic,

Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim groups coexist amicably. Differences among religious groups are not a significant source of tension in society.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are two Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

MACEDONIA

Population: 2,091,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 553

Religious Groups: Orthodox 65%, Muslim 33%, other (Catholic, Protestant, Sufi Muslim, Jewish) 2% (2002 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (as it is still referred to at the United Nations) achieved its independence peacefully when it split from Yugoslavia in 1990. International recognition of Macedonia's independence was delayed due to Greece's protest over the implications of the name "Macedonia"—also the name of a northern province of Greece. In 2001, civil war was narrowly avoided when members of the ethnic-Albanian minority staged an uprising fueled by decades of mistreatment. A peace pact was reached, which gave ethnic Albanians constitutionally protected rights in Macedonia. While Macedonia continues to be one of the poorest countries in Europe, it continues to fight corruption and has maintained economic growth over the past few years. In 2005, Macedonia became an official candidate for EU membership, but Greece continues to slow the process over the name dispute. Various international agencies continue to

criticize the Macedonian government for its failure to address widespread discrimination against ethnic minorities and women.

Constitutional Provision: Part II, Article 16, of the constitution states: “The freedom of personal conviction, conscience, thought and public expression of thought is guaranteed. The freedom of speech, public address, public information and the establishment of institutions for public information is guaranteed. Free access to information and the freedom of reception and transmission of information are guaranteed.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice; however, the lack of effective implementation of the registration portion of the 2007 legal status law severely hinders new registrants’ ability to acquire legal standing. Many minority religious groups in the country have reported that the government gives preferential treatment to the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Religious private schools are only permitted to function at the secondary level and higher. The problem of restitution of religious properties expropriated by the former Yugoslav government has not been fully resolved.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are few reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Ethnic conflicts, in some cases, have affected religious freedom as most ethnic Albanians in Macedonia practice Islam.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 15 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a publishing house and a Bible correspondence school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

MADAGASCAR

Population: 23,200,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 124,200

Religious Groups: Protestant (Lutheran, Anglican, Presbyterian, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witness, Seventh-day Adventist) 32%, Roman Catholic 23%, Muslim 10-15%, independent 6%. Indigenous religions have significant membership, but specific number is not known.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Madagascar, just off the eastern coast of Africa, comprises the world's 4th largest island. Due to its isolation, most of the animal and plant life on the island cannot be found anywhere else on the globe. Once a French colony, Madagascar achieved independence in 1960. Malagasies have spent most of their independence between military dictatorships. The most recent coup was in 2009, which politically and economically isolated the country. Madagascar returned to constitutional rule in January 2014 when the people democratically elected current president Hery Rajaonarimampianina. Consequences of Madagascar's unstable past remain. Poverty and the need for sustainable development characterize Madagascar, along with a fragmented and fragile political landscape. Veneration of ancestral spirits and witchcraft intermingle with other world religions, including Christianity. Previously suspended due to the 2009 coup, Madagascar was welcomed back to the African Union in 2014.

Constitutional Provision: The 2010 Constitution of Madagascar's Fourth Republic explicitly states in Title I, Article 2, that Madagascar "affirms its neutrality concerning the different religions." Title II, Article 10, states: "The freedoms of... conscience and of religion are guaranteed to all and may only be limited by the respect for the freedoms and rights of others, and by the

imperative of safeguarding the public order, the national dignity and the security of the State.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution. The law mandates that religious organizations register with the Ministry of Interior. By registering, religious organizations acquire the legal status necessary to receive direct bequests and other gifts. The state officially recognizes nine houses of worship and 109 religious organizations. The constitution states that no member of the government may be directly involved in the leadership of any religious institution. The international community is hopeful that Madagascar is entering a new period of peace and tolerance.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious. There are a few reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. In most cases, it is difficult to distinguish between acts motivated by religious affiliation or ethnicity, as these are often mixed concepts in Madagascar. The government has opened dialogue with the Muslim community.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 786 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, one college, two high schools, one hospital, five health clinics, two dental clinics, nine dispensaries, one nursing home, one publishing house, and four media centers. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

MALAWI

Population: 17,377,000 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 429,292

Religious Groups: Christian (Roman Catholic, Central Africa Presbyterian, Anglican, Baptist, Evangelical, Seventh-day Adventists) 83%, Sunni Muslim 13%, other (Hindu, Baha'i, Rastafarian, Jewish) 2% (2008 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Formerly a British protectorate, the Republic of Malawi was established in 1964. Malawi did not hold free, multiparty elections until 1994, but has continued to hold relatively clean elections since. Life expectancy is among the lowest in the world. One of the greatest challenges in Malawi is the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, the leading cause of death. An estimated one million children are orphans because of this disease. Corruption stalls general improvement for Malawi; out of 176 countries, this nation's government is considered the 110th least corrupt government in the world, according to Transparency International.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter IV, Article 33: "Every person has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, belief and thought, and to academic freedom."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution. Religious groups must register with the government by submitting documentation to the Ministry of Justice detailing the structure and mission of the organization along with a nominal fee. Once approved, a religious group registers formally with the Registrar General's office. The Ministry of Education requires that all schools observe the right of the student or his/her parents to choose religious instruction according to their beliefs. The President, Peter Mutharika, is Presbyterian, and the Vice President is Roman Catholic. President Mutharika regularly sends official regards to members of all faiths in the country on appropriate religious

holidays. The Registrar General's office reported that in 2013, 63 religious groups registered with the government.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of societal abuse or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice; however, there are occasional tensions between Christians and Muslims that appear to be fueled largely by politics—particularly the debate over the legality of the candidacy of the former president Bakili Muluzi, a Muslim, in the 2009 presidential election. Christians, Muslims, and Hindus regularly take part in business and other civic organizations together.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,365 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one seminary and training center, three high schools, three hospitals, two health clinics, 15 dispensaries, one publishing house, one radio station, and a Bible correspondence school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

MALAYSIA

Population: 30,073,000 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 53,707

Religious Groups: Muslim 61.3%, Buddhist 19.8%, Christian 9.2%, Hindu 6.3%, Confucianism, Taoism, or other traditional Chinese philosophies and religions 1.3%, other/none 3.4%

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Federation of Malaya was granted independent from British rule in 1957 and in 1963 became Malaysia. This

country's first few years were marked by instability, confrontations with Indonesia and the Philippines, as well as Singapore's separation from Malaysia and declaration of independence. Over the last 30 years, Malaysia has been wildly successful at developing a diverse economy. Malaysia has an export-based economy and produces rubber, palm oil, petroleum, and forest and agricultural products. In spite of the world economic and financial crises, this nation has been creative in boosting major sectors of its economy, including hi-tech manufacturing. Large-scale industrialization has also provided opportunities for a substantial segment of the population. This prosperity has attracted a significant number of migrants from poorer Asian countries. Ethnic Indians, migrant workers, asylum seekers, and refugees are subject to discrimination and mass arrest. The adoption of the Internal Security Act has resulted in an increase in arbitrary detentions and state censorship. There are reports of numerous deaths while in custody. Restrictions are imposed on various religious groups and, in all but one state, conversion from Islam is illegal. Malaysia gained a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2015-16 term.

Constitutional Provision: Article 3, paragraph 1, of the constitution states, "Islam is the religion of the Federation; but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation."

State Attitudes and Actions: The state supports, promotes, and protects Islam. Therefore, Shari'a law operates alongside civil law and is supposed to address matters concerning religion and family. There is an increasing tendency for civil courts to give way to Shari'a courts in matters normally considered outside the purview of Shari'a law. Non-Muslims are particularly uncomfortable with Shari'a courts adjudicating in disputes, especially family disputes, between Muslims and non-Muslims. Shari'a courts are also responsible for dealing with issues concerning Muslims converting to other religions and they are seldom sympathetic. Government funding is provided for

Muslim as well as non-Muslim institutions with a clear bias towards Muslim institutions. Religious groups must register in order to be recognized by the government. Some groups, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, have not been able to secure registration. Such groups have registered under the Companies Act, which provides protections for religious freedom, in order to exist legally. The government has officially banned 56 so-called deviant Muslim groups on the grounds that they are a threat to national security and they could also serve to divide the Muslim community. Religious materials considered offensive or deviant are strictly outlawed and there is a list of words that can be used in Muslim publications alone. There were numerous cases of religious discrimination against non-Muslims.

Private Attitudes and Actions: The main source of religious tension is conversion from Islam. Individuals who convert to other religions face serious social stigmatization. In an effort to counter such discrimination, many converts prefer to function as co-religionists. The practice of child marriages continues as part of an interpretation of Islam.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 266 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates three schools, one hospital, and one publishing house. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventist students and employees experience some difficulties regarding Sabbath observance.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize as long as it does not involve itself in proselytizing Muslims and its activities are done within its own community.

MALDIVES

Population: 393,500 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: None

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 100%, other religions may only practice in private.

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Maldives is an Islamic nation consisting of 1200 islands off the coast of India, many of which are inhabited. Once a British protectorate, the Maldives became independent in 1968 and formed a republic. After years of political turmoil and authoritarian rule, this island-nation held its first free elections in 2008. Fears continue to grow, however, as extremist Islamist groups begin to take hold of smaller outlying islands. The Maldives ranks 103rd on the Human Development Index, which places it in the Middle Development category. The economy is heavily sustained by tourism, which accounts for 30% of the GDP.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter 1, Article II: “The Maldives is a sovereign, independent, democratic Republic based on the principles of Islam. . .” Article X states: “(a) The religion of the State of the Maldives is Islam. Islam shall be . . . the basis of all the laws of the Maldives (b) No law contrary to any tenet of Islam shall be enacted in the Maldives.” Article XVII, which covers the rights and freedoms of citizens, does not have any provision for religious freedom. It states: “Everyone is entitled to the rights and freedoms included in this Chapter without discrimination of any kind, including race, national origin, color, sex, age, mental or physical disability, political or other opinion, property, birth or other status, or native island.” Both Shari’a and civil law are practiced with the former holding precedence over the latter.

State Attitudes and Actions: The state greatly restricts religious freedom. All citizens of the Maldives must be Muslim and the majority is Sunni Muslim. The constitution bars non-Muslims from obtaining citizenship. The government monitors Muslim activity closely, even reviewing the sermons and prayers of

clerics. All citizens are required to raise their children according to fundamental Islamic tenets. In 2014, the Maldives enacted a penal code based on Sharia law. This has already created human rights atrocities, including the recent execution of a 10-year-old boy. The government does not act in accordance with United Nations and International Labor Organization recommendations regarding religious freedom for migrant workers. Foreigners who want to practice their religions find it nearly impossible to do so due to the almost complete lack of privacy. The government exerts strict controls on the media in efforts to thwart Islamic radicalization.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Migrant non-Muslim workers, most of whom work in the construction and domestic industries, are often restricted by their employers from practicing their faiths. It is almost impossible to hold public non-Muslim worship. Citizens desiring to convert from Islam face tremendous societal pressure and conversion will almost certainly result in punishment and loss of citizenship. Hateful rhetoric against Christians and Jews has increased from a number of the country's groups, which are calling for greater restrictions on non-Muslims.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Government Recognition: Islam is the only recognized faith.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Societal and state restrictions make Sabbath accommodations for students and employees very difficult.

Freedom to Evangelize: Proselytizing is illegal.

MALI

Population: 16,455,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,606

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 95%, indigenous beliefs or no affiliation

3%, Christian 2%. Many Muslims and Christians also adhere to some aspects of indigenous beliefs.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Mali was once a great medieval empire (1230-1400 CE) with prestigious centers of learning and commerce in Timbuktu and Gao, but today Malian literacy is low and secondary school enrollment is under 20 percent. Once a French colony, Mali attempted a brief phase of unification with Senegal before declaring independence in 1960. Twenty percent of children do not survive to the age of five. The economy is imperiled by the constant threat of desertification. Ongoing conflict between government forces and militias in the northern part of the country threaten political stability. Freedom of expression has been jeopardized as evidenced by the prosecution of editors of newspapers critical of the government. In 2012, a coup brought down the government and French military intervention attempted to stall the spread of Islamist extremist groups. Civilian government was briefly restored in 2013 only to succumb to continued armed conflict with Tuareg separatists in 2014. Mali's future remains uncertain.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution, in Title 1, Article 2, prohibits any type of religious discrimination. Article 4 states that: "Every person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, worship, opinion, expression, and creation in respect to the law."

State Attitudes and Actions: All public associations, including religious groups, are required to register with the government, although registration confers no tax preference or other legal benefits. Foreign missionary groups are allowed to proselytize freely. Before any potentially controversial national issues are decided, the government meets with a Committee of Wise Men that includes Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant leaders. Tuareg separatists had been briefly stalled in 2013 from continuing their human rights abuses based on extremist religious views in the northern region of Mali. Control over the

northern region is currently in limbo as the separatist groups continue their violent struggle for control. The recent political upheavals threaten the stability of this country.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious and there are no reports of significant tensions. However, Mali exists in a region where Islamic heritage is extremely important and citizens take great pride in their Islamic past. For many Muslims it is difficult to convert out of Islam without incurring social condemnation and discrimination.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are four Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a radio-TV production center. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

MALTA

Population: 412,655 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 31

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 91%, other (Coptic Christian, Greek Orthodox, Baptist, Evangelical, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Seventh-day Adventist, Jewish, Unification Church, Zen Buddhist, Baha'i, Muslim, indigenous African forms of worship) less than 5%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Under British control since 1814, Maltese military personnel played a key role for the Allied Forces in World War II. Granted independence in 1964, Malta became a republic in 1974. The country's economy is largely based on banking services, international shipping, and the

mechanical and pharmaceutical industries. Malta is a member of the European Union and has adopted the Euro currency. Malta is a major destination for refugees, particularly from the African continent. Some reports indicate that Maltese officials keep some of these immigrants detained for over 18 months. The UN Refugee Agency continues to criticize Malta for its detention and mistreatment of asylum seekers and migrants.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter I, Section 2, “(1) The religion of Malta is the Catholic Apostolic Religion. (2) The authorities of the Catholic Apostolic Church have the duty and the right to teach which principles are right and which are wrong. (3) Religious teaching of the Catholic Apostolic Faith shall be provided in all State schools as part of compulsory education.” Chapter IV, Section 32 continues: “Whereas every person in Malta is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, that is to say, the right, whatever his race, place of origin, political opinions, color, creed or sex, but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for the public interest, to each and all of the following, namely— . . . b) freedom of conscience, of expression and of peaceful assembly and association.” Other constitutional provisions allow students to object to, and opt-out of, the religion courses in state schools.

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution. The constitution establishes Catholicism as the state religion and states that the Catholic Church has “the duty and the right to teach which principles are right and wrong.” Vilification of the Catholic Church can carry a prison sentence of up to six months. Other religious groups are not required to register, and all have similar legal rights. The government and the Catholic Church participate in a foundation that finances Catholic schools and provides free tuition in those schools.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There is one Seventh-day Adventist church. It is generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Population: 70,900 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 748

Religious Groups: United Church of Christ 52%, Assembly of God 24%, Roman Catholic 9%, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 8%, other (Assembly of God Part Two, Full Gospel, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Baha'i, Jehovah's Witness, Jewish, Ahmadi Muslim) less than 7%

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Marshall Islands is a nation consisting of two main chains of coral atolls spread throughout the North Pacific Ocean. This nation was granted independence after 40 years under United States administration. Under a Compact of Free Association with the US, the Marshall Islands hosts US military exercises in exchange for defense. The government's biggest challenge is moving from dependence on US aid monies.

Constitutional Provision: The Constitution of the Republic of the Marshall Islands states in Article II, Section 1: "(1) Every person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and belief; to freedom of speech and of the press; to the free exercise of religion; to freedom of peaceful assembly and association."

State Attitudes and Actions: The constitution of the Marshall Islands does protect religious freedom and the government enforces those protections. While the government provides for registration of religious groups, there are no requirements for such registration, nor is there a penalty for failure to register. There is no religious instruction in state-run schools, but extracurricular activities typically began with an interdenominational prayer.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There were no reports of discrimination or violence among religious groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are three Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

MARTINIQUE

Population: 412,305 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 15,510

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 95%, Hindu and indigenous African beliefs 5%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Settled in 1635, this Eastern Caribbean Island is an overseas region of France. While Martiniquais enjoy a high standard of living compared to their neighboring islands, this is mostly due to high subsidies from the French national government. Unemployment and trade deficits remain high. Most of the residents of Martinique claim mixed African and European ancestry.

Constitutional Provision: Martinique follows the French constitution. Article 1 states: “France shall be an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic. It shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of origin, race or religion. It shall respect all beliefs. It shall be organized on a decentralized basis.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Being a French overseas territory, Martinique allows for and protects the religious freedom of its citizens.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of animosity or violence among different religious groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 68 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one high school, one bookstore, and one radio station. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are some reports of problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

MAURITANIA

Population: 3,516,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 43

Religious Groups: Nearly 100% Sunni Muslim

Perspectives on Current Issues: Mauritania became independent from French control in 1960. Mauritania is one of the world’s poorest countries and one-third of its children experience chronic malnutrition. Several military coups have taken place since independence was declared. Slavery is alleged to be an ongoing problem. Christian expatriates are subject to intimidation, harassment,

persecution, and even murder. Racial tensions between the ethnic blacks in the south and the ethnic Arab-Berbers in the north continue to spark conflict. General Aziz was elected president in 2009 and continues to hold on to power.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 1: “(1) Mauritania is an indivisible, democratic, and social Islamic Republic.” Article 10 says: “The State shall guarantee to all its citizens public and individual freedoms . . . [including] the freedom of opinion and of thought.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Mauritania is an Islamic state and freedom of religion is severely limited. Islamic Law (Shari’a) has been the law of the land since 1983. In April 2007, the military junta that took power in August 2005 returned control of the country to a democratically elected president in free and fair elections. The transitional and newly elected governments made no significant changes to the constitution or the previous government’s policies on religious freedom. The new government continues to prohibit the distribution of non-Islamic religious materials and the proselytism of Muslims. Religious groups are not allowed to register. However, secular NGOs, including humanitarian and development groups affiliated with religious groups, must register with the Ministry of the Interior. A constitutional mandate requires small non-Muslim groups to meet in the few pre-existing Catholic or other Christian churches. Besides these major restrictions, non-Muslim resident expatriates and a few non-Muslim citizens are generally allowed to practice freely. In 2013, the government sponsored a “moderation” conference where hundred of Imams participated in efforts to encourage Muslims to interpret Islamic doctrine in a moderate way.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Almost the entire nation practices Sunni Islam. Christian NGOs report that family and friends usually ostracize those who participate in Christian gatherings.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no Seventh-day Adventist churches in Mauritania.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not allowed to evangelize.

MAURITIUS

Population: 1,331,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 4,740

Religious Groups: Hindu 48%, Roman Catholic 26%, Sunni Muslim 17%, other Christian (Seventh-day Adventist, Anglican, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Evangelical, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Assembly of God) 6%, other (Buddhist, animist) 3%

Perspectives on Current Issues: This island nation off the eastern coast of Madagascar came under French control in 1715. Great Britain seized the island in 1810 and the British continued to develop Mauritius' sugar plantation economy and important shipping harbors. The nation became an important strategic point during World War II, and the British did not grant the country independence until 1968. Since independence, Mauritius has become an example of stable democracy and has maintained peace among its diverse ethnic groups. It is a country with a Hindu majority in a multi-faith society. Mauritians also enjoy one of the highest per-capita incomes in Africa.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter 2, Article 11: "Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience. . . That freedom includes freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. Religious groups present on the island before independence, such as the Catholic Church, Church of England, Presbyterian Church, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Hindus, and Muslims are recognized in a parliamentary decree. Each of these groups receives an annual payment from the government based on the number of members. Newer religious organizations (which must have a minimum of seven members) are registered by the Registrar of Associations and are recognized as legal entities with tax-exempt privileges. The government is not known to have refused registration to any group. The Prime Minister's office is the final authority on issuance of the required documents for missionaries. While there are no explicit limits on the ability of missionaries to operate, there are limits on the number of missionaries permitted to obtain the requisite visas and work permits.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Occasional tensions between the Hindu majority and Christian and Muslim minorities continue, but no violent confrontations have occurred recently. Due to the predominance of Hindu citizens in the upper echelons of the civil service, some minorities, usually Creoles and Muslims, allege that they are prevented from reaching positions in the higher levels of government. Christian religious groups report a prevailing fear and increased hostility towards Christian proselytizing among the Hindu population due to a high rate of conversion in the Hindu community. Unlike in previous reports, there were no cases of private Mauritian companies refusing to hire Muslim women wearing hijabs.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 33 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one secondary school, one nursing home, and a media center. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is recognized by parliamentary decree.

Sabbath keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

MEXICO

Population: 120,286,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 681,345

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 83%, Evangelical Protestant 5%, other (other Protestant, Jehovah's Witness, Jewish) 5%, unspecified 2%, no affiliation 5% (2010 census). Official statistics sometimes differ from membership figures religious groups provide.

Perspectives on Current Issues: A geographically massive country, Mexico is the second-largest Latin American economy. Over 70 years of one-party rule threatened to overrun the nation's democracy until the opposing party finally came to power in the 1997 elections. While being a major exporter of crude oil, Mexico continues to struggle with a very wide socio-economic gap and growing poverty. At one point, over one million Mexicans per year tried to cross the northern border into the United States in search of better work opportunities. That number has diminished greatly due to improvements in the economy since the 2008 financial collapse. Mexico continues to have one of the highest kidnapping and other violence rates in the world. This violence is largely attributed to the nearly \$13 billion drug trafficking industry.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 24: "Everyone is free to embrace the religion of his choice and to practice all ceremonies, devotions, or observances of his respective faith, either in places of public

worship or at home, provided they do not constitute an offense punishable by law.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Although the government favors the Catholic Church, it has generally respected freedom of conscience for individuals. Discrimination, including on the basis of religion, is deemed illegal. Religious groups are allowed to operate without being registered, but if they desire to attain legal status, they need to be registered. Religious groups are barred from holding political meetings and members of the clergy are not allowed to hold political office or be publicly involved in things of a political nature. Religious groups are not allowed to be the legal owners or administrators of radio or television stations, and government approval is needed in order for them to transmit any programs on radio or television. Public education is officially secular but religious institutions may operate private schools. Various indigenous communities reported discriminatory treatment in being denied government benefits because of their religious practices.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There have been reports of harassment and, in some cases, violence in the southern states of Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Hidalgo. Protestants have been subjected to persecution, imprisonment, destruction of their church buildings, expulsion from their villages, and death threats at the hands of individuals claiming to be Catholic lay people. The authorities have been accused of not doing enough to reverse the trend of persecution. The majority of Protestants are found in the southern states.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 3,403 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one hospital, three universities, 19 schools, two clinics, and one airbase. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

MICRONESIA, FEDERATED STATES OF

Population: 105,600 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,605

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 50%, Protestant (United Church of Christ, Baptist, Assembly of God, The Salvation Army, Seventh-day Adventist) 47%, other (Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Baha'i) 3%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Consisting of 600 small Pacific islands, Micronesia is divided into four federated states: Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk, and Yap. These island-states came together to form Micronesia in 1979 and adopted a unifying constitution. In 1986, Micronesia signed a Compact of Free Association with the United States whereby Micronesia allows the United States to freely establish military bases on the islands in exchange for defense and over \$100 million per year in aid. This compact was extended in 2003. High unemployment and a serious lack of infrastructure have kept the Micronesian economy heavily dependent on foreign aid.

Constitutional Provision: Article IV, Section 2, of the constitution states "No law may be passed respecting an establishment of religion or impairing the free exercise of religion, except that assistance may be provided to parochial schools for non-religious purposes."

State Attitudes and Actions: For the most part, the free exercise of religion is permitted. Micronesia's citizens are overwhelmingly Christian, but the constitution forbids the establishment of a state religion. Although the government does provide some aid to religious private schools, no religious

instruction is mandated in public schools. The Micronesian government does not require registration of religious organizations.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Despite minor differences, most faiths have amicable relationships. However, some religious segregation does occur. For example, the island of Pohnpei is religiously divided, with Protestants living in the west and Catholics living in the east.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are seven Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates three schools and one clinic. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

MOLDOVA

Population: 3,583,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 9,650

Religious Groups: Orthodox 97%, other (Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Seventh-day Adventist, Jehovah's Witness, Baptist, Jewish, Evangelical Christian) 4%, atheist 5%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once part of the Soviet Union, Moldova achieved its independence in 1991. Nearly two-thirds of Moldovans are of Romanian descent and the two countries share a linguistic and cultural heritage. Moldova's eastern Transnistria region borders Ukraine and is populated by mostly ethnic Ukrainians and Russians. Through a violent uprising, this region declared its independence, though the international community has never recognized it as an independent territory. The region remains in limbo today.

Moldova is Europe's poorest economy. It is reported that 25% of Moldovans seek work outside the country. Social problems include alcoholism, organized crime, and human trafficking. The involvement of religious institutions in political matters tends to impede religious freedom.

Constitutional Provision: Title II, Chapter I, Article 31 of the constitution states: "(1) The freedom of conscience is guaranteed, and its manifestations should be in a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect. (2) The freedom of religious worship is guaranteed and religious bodies are free to organize themselves according to their own statutes under the rule of law. (3) In their mutual relationships religious cults are forbidden to use, express or incite to hatred or enmity. (4) Religious cults are autonomous *vis-à-vis* the State and shall enjoy the latter's support, including that aimed at providing religious assistance in the army, in hospitals, prisons, homes for the elderly and orphanages."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice. The government registered one religious group (affiliated with a previously registered group), and continues to deny registration to certain groups attempting to gain legal status. In Transnistria, authorities generally respect the rights of registered groups, but continue to deny registration to a number of minority religious groups and to harass their members. A Contraventions Code stipulates fines for violating religious freedom.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Many societal abuses have occurred based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, including in the separatist region of Transnistria. Verbal and other harassment of Protestant Christian missionaries of various denominations have been reported. Several Orthodox leaders were reported as having made anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic comments. Islamic

leaders have affirmed, however, that discrimination against Muslims in Moldova has improved in recent years.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 152 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

MONACO

Population: 30,508 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: None

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 90%, Protestant or other 10%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Located on Europe's Mediterranean coast and surrounded by France, Monaco is the world's second-smallest independent country. A monarch who appoints a Minister of State to govern on his behalf rules the principality; the people of Monaco elect a legislature. The country's citizens enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world and no income taxes are levied against citizens. Monaco's economy has thrived on tourism and banking for the very wealthy due to the country's extremely favorable tax policy. Monaco's state religion is Roman Catholicism.

Constitutional Provision: Article 23 of the constitution states: "The freedom of worship, the public exercise thereof, and freedom to express [religious] opinions in all matters are guaranteed . . . No one can be compelled to contribute to the acts and the ceremonies of worship nor observe the day of rest of it."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution. However, there are some restrictions because Catholicism is the state religion. Catholic ritual plays a significant role in state festivities and in the life of the ruling family. Though there is no law against proselytizing, it is strongly discouraged and no missionaries currently operate in the principality. In the past, authorities have routinely denied registration to organizations they regard as dangerous religious sects.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious and there are no reports of significant tensions. There is an active ecumenical movement that seeks to promote understanding between faith communities.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There is no permanent Seventh-day Adventist presence in the country of Monaco.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Adventist Church undertakes no evangelism in Monaco.

MONGOLIA

Population: 2,953,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,986

Religious Groups: Buddhist 53%, atheist 38.6%, Muslim 3%, Christian 4.7% (2010 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Mongolia is a massive, sparsely populated land of rugged landscapes, sandwiched between China and Russia. Genghis Khan established a mighty Mongol empire in the 13th century, and today's

Mongolians invoke this heritage with pride. The country was ruled by the Chinese since the 17th century, but achieved independence in 1921 with Soviet help. Mongolia remained isolated, however, until the 1990s when democratic elections were held and the country's economy opened. Mongolia's economy has since grown in leaps and bounds. The development of the mining sector has provided a considerable boost to the economy of this country, though recent slumps in commodity prices has held up growth. Many continue to live in extreme poverty and there is a sizable population of street children in the capital. Other concerns include the trafficking of women and children.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 9: “(1) The State shall respect the Church and the Church shall honor the State. (2) State institutions may not engage in religious activities and the Church may not pursue political activities. (3) The relationship between the State and the Church is regulated by law.” Article 16 continues: “The citizens of Mongolia are enjoying the following rights and freedoms . . . (15) Freedom of conscience and religion.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Although the constitution provides for separation between church and state and allows for freedom of conscience, the Mongolian government favors Buddhism—which is seen as the “natural religion” of the country—and has enacted laws restricting missionaries and proselytizing. The government requires annual registration for religious organizations, especially those seeking to build structures. Authorities in Tuv Province, near Ulaanbaatar, have continued to deny Christian groups registration. Even registered churches have reported harassment and demands for bribes by local authorities.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Mongolians are generally tolerant of other belief systems. At the same time, there have been crimes committed against Christians, especially foreigners. Authorities consider those crimes xenophobic,

rather than religious in nature. Christians consider them religiously motivated. Christians have been criticized for allegedly offering material rewards to individuals who convert to their religion. They have denied those accusations. Various Mongolian organizations have warned of Christians' attempts to convert Mongolians and to eliminate their culture. Islam, linked historically with the region, has not faced such discrimination.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are four Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church must register with the government each year. New Adventist institutions experience problems with registration.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Some employees and students have had problems with Sabbath-keeping, but Adventist students and employees have generally been able to observe the Sabbath.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely. However, the government seldom allows individuals to enter the country for more than 90 days on a religious visa and this hampers the ability of foreign missionaries to enter the country.

MONTENEGRO

Population: 650,036 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 246

Religious Groups: Orthodox 72%, Bosniak (mostly Sunni Muslim) 16%, Roman Catholic 3.4%, Muslim 3%, atheist 1.25, other 5%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once an independent theocracy ruled by Orthodox bishops, Montenegro was absorbed into Serbia after World War I. Montenegro, then joined neighboring states in forming Yugoslavia after World War II, which dissolved in 1992. Not until 2006 did Montenegrins vote to split

from Serbia and once again stand alone as an independent state. Because there is a large ethnic population of Serbians and Albanians in the country, only 55% of the population approved independence. Conflict between ethnic groups is common in Montenegro, and some ethnic groups also represent various religions. Failure to bring war criminals to justice has marred the country's human rights record. As with many other countries in the region, discrimination against the Roma people and human trafficking have been difficult for the state to eradicate. Montenegro continues to strive for membership in the European Union.

Constitutional Provision: Article 11 of the constitution states: "The Orthodox Church, Islamic religious community, the Catholic Church and other faiths shall be separate from the State. All the faiths shall be deemed to be equal and free in the performance of their religious rites and affairs. All the religious denominations will independently arrange their interior organization and religious affairs within the legal set-up. The State shall offer material assistance to religious denominations."

State Attitudes and Actions: There is no state religion. Official funds are available to support religious communities and are allocated according to individual requests submitted by the communities, following approval of the Secretariat General of the government. Religious studies are not included in primary or secondary school curricula. The government has been criticized for not having returned church properties seized during the Yugoslav communist era. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of only seventeen religious organizations officially recognized in Montenegro.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are some instances of societal abuse and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice; however, religion and ethnicity are closely intertwined throughout the country and it is difficult to categorize such acts as either primarily religious or ethnic in origin.

The press has reported an increase in the number of church burglaries and cemetery vandalism, although no official statistics were given. Tensions are high between the two Orthodox Churches, the SPC and the CPC. They continue to struggle over property and standing, with both claiming to be the “true” Orthodox Church in the country.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are five Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

MONTSERRAT

Population: 5,215 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,134

Religious Groups: Protestant 67.1% (includes Anglican 21.8%, Methodist 17%, Pentecostal 14.1%, Seventh-day Adventist 10.5%, and Church of God 3.7%), Roman Catholic 11.6%, Rastafarian 1.4%, other 6.5%, none 2.6%, unspecified 10.8% (2001 estimate)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Montserrat was once considered the “Emerald Isle of the Caribbean.” Settled by the British in 1632, Montserrat is now a British overseas territory. A once vibrant tourism industry was halted by volcanic eruptions that began in the 1990s and continue today. A major eruption of the Soufriere Hills volcano in 1995 nearly destroyed the capital city Plymouth, which is now a ghost town. Many of the island’s residents have since fled to the United States. Those who remain rely heavily on subsidies from the British government and the European Union.

Constitutional Provision: Montserrat is an overseas territory of the United Kingdom and as such follows UK law.

State Attitudes and Actions: Freedom of religion is afforded to all citizens of Montserrat.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of animosity or violence among the different religious groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are two Seventh-day Adventist churches in Montserrat. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

MOROCCO

Population: 32,987,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 53

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 99%, other (Christian, Jewish, Shi'a Muslim, Baha'i) less than 1%

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Kingdom of Morocco is located on the northwestern corner of Africa and touches both the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Morocco came under the control of Spain and France. In 1956, full sovereignty over the Kingdom was handed to Sultan Muhammad V, the current monarch's grandfather. In 2011, responding to protests in the disputed region of Western Sahara related to the Arab Spring movement, King Muhammad VI called for constitutional reforms that grant

more political power to the parliament. Morocco has seen the integration of Islamists into the mainstream political arena as evidenced by the election of the Secretary General of the Party for Justice and Development to the post of Prime Minister. Economic difficulties are increasing, causing enormous challenges for political leaders, and 15% of the population lives below the poverty line on less than two dollars a day. Arab monarchies have created a development fund, aware that social unrest and the Arab Spring revolutions are directly connected to the economic predicament of their subjects. Morocco is to receive five billion dollars from this fund. Freedom of expression, assembly, association, and the press are restricted. Violence against women is widespread. Migrants are routinely arrested and expelled. Morocco is the only country on the African continent that is not a member of the African Union.

Constitutional Provision: Unlike many other states in the region, Morocco's constitution defines the kingdom as a Muslim country, but does not cite Islamic Shari'a law as the foundation of its legal system. Article 6 of the constitution states: "Islam shall be the state religion. The state shall guarantee freedom of worship for all."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government continues to sporadically enforce existing legal restrictions on religious freedom. The government has not interfered with non-Muslims practicing their religions openly. The government has, however, enforced laws that prohibit proselytizing by non-Sunni Muslims or attempting to convert a Muslim.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are reports of societal abuses and discrimination toward those with different religious beliefs, including converts from Islam to other religions. Many citizens believe that its centuries-old Jewish minority enriches the country and Jews live in safety throughout the country. Christian communities continue to report that government officials do

not investigate or otherwise respond to threats of violence or discrimination against them.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no Seventh-day Adventist churches in Morocco.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: As a religious minority in a Muslim nation, Adventists who wish to keep Sabbath find it a continual hindrance in obtaining work and attending school.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism is highly discouraged by society and the government.

MOZAMBIQUE

Population: 24,692,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 313,080

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 28%, Protestant 27%, Muslim 18%, no affiliation 18%, other 9% (2007 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: After over 400 years of Portuguese rule, Mozambique won its independence in 1975. Thirty years of guerilla warfare have resulted in disastrous living conditions and the country's life expectancy of 43 years of age is among the lowest in the world. Previous adherence to Marxist economic theories contributed to the current plight of this country. Since 1990, a multiparty democracy and a market economy have been in place, but it will still take a long time to achieve economic stability. Recent elections have been considered fraudulent and as of 2009, the NGO Freedom House no longer considers Mozambique an electoral democracy. Mozambique's economy has been growing at a fast pace thanks, mainly, to coal and titanium. This, however, has not improved the daily lives of most citizens; infrastructure remains in colonial-era decay and most individuals live on \$1 USD per day.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 78: “All citizens shall have the freedom to practice . . . a religion.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. Religious groups are required to register with the government, and there are no reports that registration has been denied. The law on religious freedom requires religious institutions and missionary organizations to register with the Ministry of Justice, reveal their principal source of funding, and provide the names of at least 500 followers in good standing. The Christian Council reported that not all religious groups register, but unregistered groups worship unhindered by the government. There are 735 religious denominations and 151 religious organizations registered with the Department of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice. The constitution gives religious groups the right to acquire and own assets and a more recent law permits them to own and operate schools, which are increasing in number. Religious instruction is the primary focus of the new primary and secondary schools, but universities associated with religious denominations do not offer religious studies. The Papal Nunciature reported that the government continues to occupy properties in Inhambane, Maputo, Niassa, and Zambezia provinces that were used for schools, seminaries, and residences, and that the Vatican has entered into negotiations with the government for their restitution. Because of the complexity of the issue and apparent contradictions within the law, the Catholic Church prefers to collaborate with the government to reach resolution, rather than rely on the court system. The Greek Orthodox Church has recently approached the government for the return of lands previously seized by the government. The talks are in progress. In 2013, a synagogue previously closed by the government was reopened in the capital city. The ceremony was well attended by religious leaders of various faiths.

Private Attitudes and Actions: While relations between blacks and established citizens of South Asian origin are generally good, cultural conflict between black communities and South Asian migrants has led to tensions. There is controversy over the official date of the Eid al-Fitr festival. Black Muslims choose the date based on when the full moon is sighted from anywhere within the geographical boundaries of the country, whereas Asian Muslims choose the date based on when it is sighted within a much wider area outside the country. Despite these differences, there are signs that tension is lessening as younger Muslims seem to recognize the need for dialogue to reconcile their differences.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,011 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a seminary, a publishing house, and a Bible correspondence school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely. The Seventh-day Adventist Church maintains a good relationship with the government.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is registered with the Department of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

NAMIBIA

Population: 2,198,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 18,398

Religious Groups: Lutheran 60%, Roman Catholic 20%, Anglican 10%, other (Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Evangelical and Charismatic, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Dutch Reformed Church of Namibia) 10%. These are unofficial estimates by religious leaders.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Present-day Namibia was once the colony of South-West Africa under German rule. South Africa gained control over the region during World War I. After World War II, South Africa annexed the region, but guerilla fighting ensued in an effort to gain independence. Not until 1988 did South Africa agree to a peaceful transition and Namibia became independent in 1990. This nation has developed relatively stable democracy since independence. Race relations between the black majority and the white minority landowners have improved as government officials encouraged reconciliation. Some, however, call for land reform that would strip white landowners of their property and redistribute it to expatriated Namibians. The International Criminal Court has threatened to prosecute the former president of the country for alleged crimes against humanity. Today, despite radical improvements, there are still reports of torture, violence against women and girls, and restrictions on freedom of expression. 25% of Namibians are HIV/AIDS positive and the current government has made fighting the disease a top priority.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution protects the freedom to “practice any religion and to manifest such practice” in Article 21, Paragraph 1.

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. There is no state religion and no religion is formally recognized or subsidized. Since his election, the president of the country has conferred with leaders of several religious groups, including the predominantly Afrikaner Dutch Reformed Church. There are no registration requirements for religious organizations. The University of Namibia, owned and operated by the state, has provided spaces for Muslim students to pray.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious and there are no reports of significant tensions.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 91 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a home for senior citizens. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

NAURU

Population: 9,488 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 25

Religious Groups: Protestant 65%, Catholic 32%, other (Confucian, Buddhist, Taoist, Christian, or no affiliation) 5%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Because the Nauruan language does not resemble any other in the Pacific region, the origins of its people are unclear. Occupied by various European powers due to its mineral deposits, Nauru was later invaded during both World Wars. The island became independent in 1968. Nauru is now the smallest United Nations member state.

Constitutional Provision: Part II, Article 11 of the constitution states: “(1) A person has the right to freedom of conscience, thought and religion, including freedom to change his religion or beliefs and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest and propagate his religion or beliefs in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The constitution provides for religious freedom, but it may be limited by any law that is necessary for “the interests of defense, public safety, public order, public morality or public health.” The government has a history of using that law as a means of restricting foreign-based churches

from proselytizing, though that has not been a problem recently. Some less-well-known churches, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and Seventh-day Adventists, are not allowed the same freedoms as the more established ones. All churches must register with the state. Registration allows each organization to engage in evangelism and the construction of churches and schools, and to officiate at marriages. At present, only the Catholic Church and two Protestant denominations are registered.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Members of differing religious organizations have amicable relationships. Missionaries of various religious groups are present in the country and have reported no issues with visa processes.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There is one Seventh-day Adventist church in Nauru. The church operates one bookstore under certain restrictions.

Government Recognition: The church is not an officially recognized denomination and therefore does not enjoy freedoms that recognized churches enjoy.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

Freedom to Evangelize: Seventh-day Adventists may not hold evangelistic meetings or engage in regular proselytizing activities.

NEPAL

Population: 30,986,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 8,859

Religious Groups: Hindu 81.3%, Buddhist 9%, Muslim 4.4%, other less than 5% (2011 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once considered the world's only Hindu monarchy, Nepal has enacted constitutional reforms in 2006 that have declared the state to be secular. Political instability has long gripped this small nation,

which is heavily dependent on funds sent home by Nepalese working outside the country. In 2008, it reached 49% of the GDP. It is now around 20%. The agricultural sector has enjoyed growth of 4.1%. In 2015, Nepal was devastated by a massive earthquake that has claimed the lives of at least 7,000 people. Human rights abusers of the earlier regime have not been brought to justice. There are allegations of police brutality. Violence against women and girls seems to be widespread and unabated. Human trafficking for sexual and labor purposes is widespread. A major challenge the government faces are thousands of internally displaced people and more than 100,000 Bhutanese refugees.

Constitutional Provision: Article 26 of the interim constitution of 2007 states: “Every person shall have the right to profess, practice and preserve his/her own religion as handed down to him/her from ancient times having due regards to the social and cultural traditional practices.” The Article goes on to state: “Provided that no person shall be entitled to convert another person from one religion to another, and shall not act or behave in a manner which may jeopardize the religion of others.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The interim constitution of 2007 declared Nepal to be a secular state. Proselytism is illegal and those guilty of it can face fines and imprisonment. However, it is legal for persons to change their religion apart from being proselytized. Even though there is no registration requirement for religious groups, Christians, Muslims, and Jews have encountered difficulties in registering their NGOs.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are reports of societal abuse and discrimination based on religious practice. Converts sometimes face violence and occasionally are ostracized from society.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 26 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one hospital. In 2009, the death of a patient at the Adventist hospital led to an attack on the hospital by a mob.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Employees and students are presented with significant difficulties regarding Sabbath observance.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism is restricted by law.

NETHERLANDS

Population: 16,877,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 5,624

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 28%, Protestant 18%, Muslim 5%, other (Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist) 4%, no affiliation 45% (2011 data)

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Netherlands is so named due to the fact that over a quarter of its land lies below sea level. Since the Middle Ages, the Dutch have engineered a series of dykes that keep the North Sea from flooding great portions of their country. Traditionally a neutral country, the Netherlands is now a major player in international cooperation organizations such as the European Union. This shift in policy was largely due to the country's occupation during World War II. Recent events have also shifted governmental policy on tolerance. Various outspoken activists for Human Rights were killed over the last decade, which encouraged the government to deny asylum requests and limit immigration. Reports from the UN have drawn attention to the failure to protect migrant women from discrimination. There are also allegations of failure to adequately implement anti-discrimination and anti-racism policies for long-term citizens. Even so, the Netherlands has the eighth least corrupt government in the world, according to Transparency International.

Constitutional Provision: Article 6 of the constitution states: "(1) Everyone shall have the right to profess freely his religion or belief, either individually or

in community with others, without prejudice to his responsibility under the law.

(2) Rules concerning the exercise of this right other than in buildings and enclosed places may be laid down by Acts of Parliament for the protection of health, in the interest of traffic and to combat or prevent disorders.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The constitution provides for freedom of religion and other laws and policies contribute to the generally free practice of religion. It is a crime to engage in public speech that incites religious, racial, or ethnic hatred and the government prosecuted several cases in recent years. The government has instituted various bodies to investigate and prosecute religious discrimination, including the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights. The current government has given high priority to the issue of combatting religious discrimination in all forms. In 2013, the legislature voted to remove wording in Dutch law that gives special preference to Sunday as a day of rest.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are some reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Jews and Muslims have faced instances of abuse. The government repeatedly condemns any form of anti-Semitism or anti-Islam activity, and it works with NGOs to combat such abuses.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 56 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a Bible correspondence school, two nursing homes, and a publishing house. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

NEW CALEDONIA

Population: 267,840 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 822

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 60%, Protestant 30%, other 10%

Perspectives on Current Issues: New Caledonia came under French rule in 1854. Conflicts between the native population and descendants of European settlers erupted in the 1980s and 90s over the issue of independence. In 1998, the French government agreed to grant increasing autonomy to the local government of New Caledonia over the next twenty years. A referendum on the question of independence is scheduled before 2018.

Constitutional Provision: French law governs New Caledonia. The Preamble to Article 1 states: “[France] shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of origin, race or religion. It shall respect all beliefs.”

State Attitudes and Actions: No problems with religious discrimination have been reported.

Private Attitudes and Actions: No incidents of religious strife have been reported.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are six Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one bookstore. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are some reports of problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students and employees. High school and university students are required to attend classes on Sabbath even though officials from the church negotiated on their behalf. Some

members could not obtain teacher certification due to the exam being held on Sabbath.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

NEW ZEALAND

Population: 4,401,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 12,157

Religious Groups: Anglican 11.8%, Roman Catholic 12.6%, Presbyterian 8.1%, Methodist 2.6%, other Protestant 7.5%, Christian with affiliation not specified 5.5%, Hindu 2.3%, Buddhist 1.5%, Maori 1.4%, Muslim 1.2%, Jewish 0.2%, objected to question 4.4%, no affiliation 42% (2013 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: New Zealand was first settled by Maori Polynesians in AD 800 before coming under British rule in 1840. The Pacific colony, comprising two main islands and many smaller ones, achieved its independence in 1907. New Zealanders enjoy a very high standard of living and their economy is driven by agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, and a growing film industry. New Zealand is now ranked the second-least corrupt among the 175 nations assessed by the NGO Transparency International. Native Maoris make up slightly over 16% of the population. The government is currently seeking ways to attend to Maori grievances, related mainly to land issues.

Constitutional Provision: The political and judicial powers of New Zealand's government are based mainly on the Constitution Act of 1986. In 1990, however, the government enacted the Bill of Rights Act, which states in Part 2, Section 15: "Every person has the right to manifest that person's religion or belief in worship, observance, practice, or teaching, either individually or in community with others, and either in public or in private."

State Attitudes and Actions: New Zealand allows for religious freedom and registration is not necessary in order to function as a religious group. The government treats all religions equally. Religious instruction in public schools, while not required, is permitted. New Zealand's Human Rights Commission (HRC) continues to implement its program designed to promote understanding and tolerance among all religious groups.

Private Attitudes and Actions: The HRC has received seventy recent complaints of discrimination on religious grounds. Various reports of anti-Semitic graffiti and other messages have also been recently reported. The HRC openly condemned these actions.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 82 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates four schools, a retirement center, and three bookstores. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The government does not require any denomination to register unless the denomination seeks tax exemption. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized Christian denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

NICARAGUA

Population: 5,848,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 128,351

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 58%, Evangelical (Pentecostal, Mennonite, Moravian Lutheran, Baptist) 21.6%, other Protestant 15%, other (Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jewish, Muslim) (2005 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: In spite of its rich natural resources, political turmoil and civil war have prevented Nicaragua from truly prospering. Natural disasters, such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and hurricanes, have caused tremendous devastation. Nicaragua is considered the second-poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and has only recently been able to take advantage of its natural beauty to foment its tourism industry. While income distribution continues to be uneven, Nicaragua has improved in the areas of access to potable water, general sanitation, life expectancy, as well as infant and child mortality.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution, in Title VI, Article 120 and Title V, Chapter 1, Article 71 sets the parameters of religious freedom in Nicaragua. Article 120 guarantees freedom of conscience. This includes “the manifestation of every religious belief and every practice of faith, which are compatible with life or the physical integrity of human beings. And these practices are not against moral convention or public order. Acts contrary to the moral public order, which are executed with occasion or under pretext of the exercise of faith, fall under legal sanction.” Otherwise, “it is prohibited to enact laws that protect or restrict certain faiths.” Article 71 sets limits on the free exercise of religion: “Nobody can be troubled or persecuted by the manifestation of opinions or acts that do not infringe upon the law. . . . Political propaganda by clergymen . . . or ministers of any faith will not be tolerated in any form” even if they are “invoking religious reasons or using themselves the religious beliefs of the town or the temple” to do so. Moreover “acts of faith or religious propaganda, used to . . . [criticize] the laws of the State, the Government or its officials will not be tolerated by the Government from the individual.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The state provides religious freedom for its citizens and religious groups generally enjoy fair treatment under the law. The Catholic Church, by virtue of its historical connection to Nicaragua, enjoys a “first amongst equals” status. Many of the official state holidays are connected

to specific Catholic holidays and political leaders often meet and consult with Catholic clergy. The Catholic Church has significant influence and is the most politically active religious body. Although favoritism towards the Catholic Church exists, most faiths are free to practice their religion. The government has been providing increasing support to Evangelical Christian groups linked to the Sandinista National Liberation Front, a political party. It has become increasingly intolerant of religious bodies that make comments that are of a sociopolitical nature—especially if those comments are critical of the government. In 2013, the current government unveiled its reform project, “The Live Beautiful (“*Vivir Bonito*”) Plan,” which mandates that children in public schools receive an education based on “Christian, socialist and solidarity values.” Christian clergy of various denominations have reported no longer receiving government aid for churches or parochial schools due to political party affiliation. Religious leaders also reported that government officials refuse to meet with them on matters of religious liberty.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There were no reports of religious discrimination among the various communities in Nicaragua.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 259 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one school and one radio station. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Seventh-day Adventists regularly experience problems at school. These include demands to finish projects late Friday night or attend meetings or classes on Saturday. They also frequently experience workplace problems.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

NIGER

Population: 17,466,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 245

Religious Groups: Muslim 98%, other (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Baha'i) 2%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Niger achieved independence in 1960 after living under French control. After decades of military rule, this country did not hold free elections until 1993. Various coups and authoritarian regimes took turns running the country until 2011 when Issoufou Mahamadou was elected president and the constitution was restored. Nigeriens have suffered as a result of their country's instability. Niger is one of the world's poorest countries, situated at the bottom of the Human Development Index. Droughts and locust invasions continually threaten its already precarious economy. Continued armed conflicts between government forces and Touareg militias have led to various abuses. Civilian collateral deaths, arbitrary detentions, torture, and extra-judicial killings are frequently reported. Restriction of freedom of expression is also of concern to human rights activists. Unrest in neighboring countries such as Mali and Liberia are also threats to Nigerien stability.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 23: "Each person has the right to freedom of thought, of opinion, of expression, of conscience, of religion and of worship. The State guarantees the free exercise of worship and expression of beliefs."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government monitors religious expression it considers to be a potential threat to public order and national unity. No religious groups are subsidized, but Muslim and Christian groups are given airtime on government-controlled television stations. Islamic programming is given priority. Religious groups are required to register with the Interior Ministry. Clerics must be registered and receive a special permit when seeking to speak before a large public gathering. In 2013, the government prevented an

Islamic cleric from preaching because he was unregistered. Later in the same year, the Islamic Council of Niger traveled to all eight sectors of the country in order to promote religious tolerance at the government's request.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Various NGO events attempt to promote tolerance and peace, even among dissenting Islamic groups. The Muslim-Christian interfaith forum continues to operate in Niger. Religious leaders met regularly to discuss cooperation between the two religions.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are two Seventh-day Adventist churches in Niger. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

NIGERIA

Population: 177,155,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 200,311

Religious Groups: Muslim 50%, Christian (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) 40%, indigenous beliefs 10%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once controlled by Great Britain, Nigeria was granted independence in 1960. A series of unstable and authoritarian governments led to a new constitution in 1999. 2007 saw the first elections regarded by the international community as fair for this nation. The most populous African nation is currently, however, in the midst of crises that challenge its unity. Extremists fuel clashes between religious groups. The fragile balance of ethnic cohabitation is once again threatened as it was during

the Biafra War. The lingering memory of at least two million killed between 1967 and 1970 in the southeastern region of the country is revived by the hundreds of deaths associated with religious-ethnic cleansing which have taken place in recent months. Human rights abuses include all imaginable violations. According to Amnesty International, the following have been documented: “politically motivated and extrajudicial killings by security forces, including summary executions; torture, rape, and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of prisoners, detainees, and criminal suspects; harsh and life-threatening prison and detention center conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; prolonged pretrial detention; denial of fair public trial; executive influence on the judiciary and judicial corruption; infringement on citizens’ privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, religion, and movement; official corruption and impunity; violence and discrimination against women; the killing of children suspected of witchcraft; female genital mutilation (FGM); child abuse and child sexual exploitation; societal violence; ethnic, regional, and religious discrimination and violence; vigilante killings; trafficking in persons for the purpose of prostitution and forced labor; discrimination against persons with disabilities; discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; child labor; forced and bonded labor; and abductions by militant groups.” Nigeria gained a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2014-15 term.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 38: “Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution, but in some instances violates religious freedom when addressing security and public safety concerns. The

republic is composed of 36 states, and all are given significant autonomy in their decision-making. The northern region and much of the middle section of the country are overwhelmingly Muslim. Since 2000, elements of the Shari'a Islamic law have been reintroduced and enforced in the 12 northern states, creating what some Christians call a *de facto* state religion. The Nigerian federal government has failed in recent years to investigate or respond to reports of religiously motivated harassment, violence, and discrimination. Christians in northern states report constant discrimination by local officials, especially when seeking building permits for new or expanding churches.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Tensions persist between Christians and Muslims in some areas. Regional, tribal-ethnic, and occupational differences often divide people along religious lines and lead to cases of tension and violence. As a result, ethnic and economic competition fueled religious conflicts between different groups. The extremist and separatist Islamist rebel group, Boko Haram, is responsible for countless violent acts in efforts to overthrow the government. It is reported that this group specifically attacked Christian villages throughout the country on at least eleven separate occasions. In 2014, Boko Haram abducted 276 Christian girls from a school in Chibok. The Nigerian government has been largely ineffective against this terrorist group.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,033 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, four hospitals, 18 clinics and dispensaries, seven secondary schools, and two literature ministry seminaries. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

NIUE

Population: 1,190 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 4

Religious Groups: Ekalesia Niue (Congregational Christian Church of Niue) 67%, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints 10%, Roman Catholic 10%, Jehovah's Witness 2%, other 6%, none 2%, Seventh-day Adventist 1%, Presbyterian 1%, Methodist 1% (2011 estimate)

Perspectives on Current Issues: The 2,000 Niueans living on the island are outnumbered ten times by their compatriots living in New Zealand. Niue is a state operating under free association with New Zealand. While Niueans autonomously run their own country, they are citizens of New Zealand, their most important trade partner. Niue's economy consists of the fishing, agricultural and tourism industries. In 2003, Niue became the world's first territory to offer free wireless internet to all of its citizens.

Constitutional Provision: New Zealand's legislative branch enacted the Niue Constitution Act of 1974, granting Niue a constitution and autonomous rule. Niue's human and civil rights, however, come from the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act, which states in Part 2, Section 15: "Every person has the right to manifest that person's religion or belief in worship, observance, practice, or teaching, either individually or in community with others, and either in public or in private."

State Attitudes and Actions: The state allows freedom of conscience concerning religious beliefs.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of strife between various faiths. The community is generally conservative and it is expected that citizens and visitors be respectful of Sunday observances.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There is one Seventh-day Adventist church. It is generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

NORWAY

Population: 5,147,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 4,530

Religious Groups: Evangelical Lutheran 79%, other Christian (Roman Catholic, Pentecostal) 12%, Muslim 4%, other (Buddhist, Orthodox Christian, Sikh, Hindu, Jewish) less than 5%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Over a thousand years ago, Vikings sailed from the shores of what is now the Kingdom of Norway. Norway seceded from its union with Sweden in 1905 and became fully independent. At first subsisting through commercial fishing, Norwegians now enjoy one of the richest economies in the world due to oil and gas deposits in their coastal waters. Norwegians have twice voted against joining the European Union. The integration of growing immigration and minority populations continue to be a source of conflict in Norwegian society. Lutheranism is the state religion of Norway.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Part A, Article 2: “All inhabitants of the Realm shall have the right to free exercise of their religion. The Evangelical-Lutheran religion shall remain the official religion of the State. The inhabitants professing it are bound to bring up their children in the same.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. While the Evangelical Lutheran Church continues to receive unique financial support from the Norwegian government, a recent constitutional amendment establishes the separation of church and state. The Norwegian government has taken substantial steps to ensure cultural integration of all groups. Norway's current Minister of Culture is the first Muslim to hold this position and has, according to polls, been the most popular person to hold this office.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Since a brutal 2011 attack took the lives of nearly 100 Norwegians, many in the country have grown suspicious of minority groups. Various newspaper cartoons and articles in Norway have highlighted this point. While they are currently permitted, 75% of Norwegians oppose the use of religious symbols or head coverings in the workplace.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 62 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church also operates a junior college, a health and rehabilitation center, a nursing home, a publishing house, a Bible correspondence school, and two Radio-TV production centers. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

OMAN

Population: 3,219,000 (2014 estimate, 67% are citizens)

Seventh-day Adventists: 39

Religious Groups: Ibadhi Muslim 75%, Sunni Muslim 20%, Shi'a Muslim

less than 5% (these numbers are for citizens). Non-citizens are Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Baha'i, Christian (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant).

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Sultanate of Oman is situated to the south of Saudi Arabia, along the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman. Oman is the longest surviving sovereign state in the Middle East; while the Sultanate conferred with Britain over the years, it was never colonized. This country was largely isolated from the rest of the world until, in 1970, the heir to the throne deposed his father and began developing Oman's economy. Reforms have also been implemented, including greater citizen participation in local government as well as unemployment benefits. Oman, like other countries in the Gulf region, benefits from its petroleum assets. However, the government is responding to social pressure by developing strategies to diversify the economy. Currently, 25% of the population is composed of expatriates, but there is a new political will to gradually reassign their jobs to citizens through a process called "Omanization." People of other faiths do not enjoy the same rights and privileges as those who adhere to the state religion.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution, Article 17 states: "All citizens are equal before the Law, and they are equal in public rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination between them on the grounds of gender, origin, color, language, religion, sect, domicile or social status."

State Attitudes and Actions: Oman regulates the practice of religion of both Muslims and non-Muslims. The laws and policies of the government prohibit discrimination on religious grounds, and the government generally enforced these. The government recently lifted the previously imposed limitations on the number of religious workers in the country and shortened the process for granting permission to religious leaders to enter the country from two months to one week. The government has inconsistently enforced laws regarding public worship and assembly.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of societal abuses based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Discrimination is largely absent. Anti-Semitism is present in the private media, with anti-Semitic editorial cartoons depicting stereotypical and negative images of Jews and Jewish symbols. There have been some interfaith dialogues to foster religious tolerance.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There is one Seventh-day Adventist church.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism is allowed but it is restricted.

PAKISTAN

Population: 196,174,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 7,531

Religious Groups: Muslim 96.4% (Sunni 85-90%, Shi'a 10-15%), other (Christian, Hindu) 3.6% (2010 estimate)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Pakistan is situated along the Indus River Valley, to the north of India. This region was home to ancient civilizations and in the 18th century, came under British control together with British India. The northern region, comprised of mostly Muslim believers, split from British India and achieved independence as Pakistan in 1947. Border conflicts with India have erupted into war on several occasions, but the two countries have recently taken steps to mend the precarious relationship. The economic situation in Pakistan is negatively influenced by ethnic and religious violence. Poverty affects 45.6% of the population and the Index of Human Development ranks the country 146th out of 187 countries assessed. Public debt is equivalent to approximately 66.4% of the GDP. The political strain between Washington and Islamabad makes it more difficult for the latter to obtain loans from international monetary institutions. The country faces major security

challenges. The tribal structure of Pakistani society makes it difficult to maintain an independent judicial system. For example, tribal councils have sometimes excused so-called “honor killings.” Violence against women and girls is widespread. Freedom of expression is restricted, as is freedom of religion. Human rights defenders have deplored the practice of forced disappearances. Reports indicate that discrimination against religious minorities is part of daily life.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Part I, Article 2: “Islam shall be the State religion of Pakistan.” Part II, Chapter 1, Article 20 adds: “Subject to law, public order and morality: (a) every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice and propagate his religion; and (b) every religious denomination and every sect thereof shall have the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Religious freedom in Pakistan has deteriorated during this reporting period. Freedom of religion is constitutionally subject to legal restrictions “in the interest of the glory of Islam.” The state and local bodies have not done enough to ensure the protection of religious minorities. Various violent attacks on Christian places of worship were reported, including the 2013 bombings of the All Saints Church in Peshawar and the Joseph Colony Christian Community in Lahore. Extrajudicial execution of members of minority religions while in police custody is also a reality. With the exception of Ahmadiyya Muslims, missionaries are allowed to enter the country; however, they must declare their religion upon entrance. The Ahmadiyya Muslim community is not allowed to preach or teach inside Pakistan. Pakistan's anti-blasphemy law is broad and as a result tends to make it easy for private individuals to bring charges of blasphemy against Christians in particular. Currently, 17 people were sentenced to death and are awaiting execution for blasphemy-related crimes and 20 others are serving life sentences.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There has recently been an increase in violence directed toward Christians. Members of Ahmadiyya, a banned form of Islam, have faced difficulties similar to those experienced by Christians. Sufi and Shi'a Muslims have also been discriminated against and even violently attacked during this reporting period.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 122 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a college, school, hospital, dental clinic, and publishing house.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Sabbath observance is always difficult for students and employees in an Islamic state.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism is allowed, but societal pressure makes it dangerous.

PALAU

Population: 21,186 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,160

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 65%, Evangelical 10%, Seventh-day Adventist 5%, Protestant 18%, Modekngai (indigenous to Palau) 9%, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints more than 1%, Jehovah's Witness less than 1%, Modekngai (combination of animist and Christian) 9%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Quite the ecologically friendly country, Palau's main economic source is sustainable tourism. Palau was also the first country in the world to ban all commercial shark fishing in its waters in order to protect endangered shark species. Various countries have since followed suit. A series of over two hundred northern Pacific islands, Palau refused to join the Federated States of Micronesia and opted for independence in 1994. Palau continues to receive substantial aid from the United States as part of a mutual compact.

Constitutional Provision: Article IV, Section 1 of the constitution states: “The Government shall take no action to deny or impair the freedom of conscience or of philosophical or religious belief of any person nor take any action to compel, prohibit or hinder the exercise of religion. The Government shall not recognize or establish a national religion, but may provide assistance to private or parochial schools on a fair and equitable basis for nonreligious purposes.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government of Palau allows the free exercise of religion. Religious instruction is not permitted in public schools, but the government does provide financial subsidies for religious schools. Though many state and national events begin with prayer, there is no distinct bias toward any particular religious body.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports regarding interfaith tension or strife in Palau. Most faiths have congenial relationships.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are three Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one high school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized Christian denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

PANAMA

Population: 3,608,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 99,862

Religious Groups: Catholic 75-85%, Evangelical Christian 15-25%, other (Seventh-day Adventist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah’s Witness, Hindu, Buddhist, Baha’i, Rastafarian, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Panama is considered the crossroads between, not only North and South America but also the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Built in the early 20th century by the United States Army, the Panama Canal allows over 15,000 ships to cross from one ocean to the other each year. After a brutal military dictatorship ended in 1989, Panama has seen considerable economic growth, mostly dependent on the canal and agricultural products. Still, 33% of Panamanians live below the poverty line, particularly in rural areas and indigenous communities.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Title III, Articles 35 and 36: “(35) One is free to profess any religion, as well as exercise any faith, without limitation other than [it] respects Christian morality and public order. The Catholic religion is the recognized religion of most Panamanians. (36) Religious associations having legal standing and order must administer their goods within the limits indicated by Law, just like other legal entities.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Although Catholicism is not considered the state religion, it is the majority religion and enjoys certain privileges that other religions do not. The Catholic faith is the only religion taught in public schools. However, attendance is not compulsory for students who do not wish to participate. Religious leaders are not, however, permitted to hold public political office. Other religions enjoy a considerable degree of freedom. Panamanian immigration law allows foreign religious workers to be granted six-year visas as temporary religious workers.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most faiths have amicable relationships with each other with no reports of strife or violence.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 295 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one high school, two radio stations, and one bookstore. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is officially recognized by the state.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Employees and students face occasional hurdles to Sabbath-keeping. Classes are held late on Friday and some projects require work on Saturday. Some employees face discrimination because of their Sabbath-keeping.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Population: 6552,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 238,273

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 27%, Evangelical Lutheran 20%, United Church 12%, Seventh-day Adventist 10%, Pentecostal 9%, Evangelical Alliance 5%, Anglican 3%, Baptist 3%, other (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witness, The Salvation Army) 9%, Baha'i less than 1%, indigenous or other beliefs 3%. Many citizens integrate Christian faith with indigenous beliefs and practices. (2000 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Over 700 native languages are spoken in this very diverse nation. Papua New Guinea shares the world's second largest island with Indonesia to the west. Over 80% of Papua New Guineans live in very rural and isolated areas and do not participate heavily in the formal economy. Rich in natural resources, the economy of Papua New Guinea is closely tied to the global demand for various commodities. While the government projects a future made prosperous by exploiting oil and natural gas deposits in the country, poor infrastructure will continue to hamper further development.

Papua New Guinea suffers extremely high violent crime rates, particularly gender-based and xenophobic crimes against refugees. The HIV/AIDS infection rate in the country is the highest in the Pacific region.

Constitutional Provision: Constitutional Provision 45, Section One, states: “Every person has the right to freedom of conscience, thought and religion and the practice of his religion and beliefs, including freedom to manifest and propagate his religion and beliefs in such a way as not to interfere with the freedom of others, except to the extent that the exercise of that right is regulated or restricted by a law that complies with Section 38 (general qualifications on qualified rights).”

State Attitudes and Actions: Even though the predominance of Christianity is recognized in the preamble of the constitution, there is no state religion and the state has consistently recognized the right of conscience. The state subsidizes schools and healthcare institutions that were in existence before independence and, as such, they form part of the infrastructure of the state. In public schools, the state generally requires at least one hour of religious instruction per week, provided by various Christian groups including the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For the most part the state allows for proselytizing and the practice of religion. In July 2013, the government considered a referendum on whether to Papua New Guinea should ban non-Christian religions in the country. The measure failed after leaders from various religious organizations spoke out against the proposal.

Private Attitudes and Actions: For the most part, religious faiths have amicable relationships with one another.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 951 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college, three schools, 39 clinics, four bookstores, and an airbase. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees. Some Sabbath work exemptions are obtained through employers, sometimes intervention by local clergy is necessary, and some cases are litigated in court.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

PARAGUAY

Population: 6,703,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 13,347

Religious Groups: Catholic 90%, Evangelical Protestant 6%, other (Jehovah's Witness, Jewish, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Muslim, Buddhist, Baha'i, Mennonite, Unification Church, indigenous tribal beliefs) less than 5% (2002 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Paraguay considers itself a bilingual and multi-ethnic society. Over 80% of Paraguayans speak Guaraní—a pre-columbine native language—as well as Spanish. Paraguay has not, however, had a stable history. Since gaining its independence from Spain in 1811, Paraguay has suffered near-constant war with its South American neighbors through the first half of the 20th century. A 35-year dictatorship continued to stagnate the country's economy even after the dictator was ousted because his party remained in power after democratic elections. In 2008, the opposition party came to power briefly, before being ousted in 2013. In recent years, however, Paraguay's economy has grown steadily, even as many of its neighbors continue to struggle following the worldwide financial meltdown. The Paraguayan government continues to struggle with pockets of Hezbollah

and Hamas supporters near its eastern border as well as urban and agricultural expansion into lands occupied by native communities.

Constitutional Provision: Title II, Chapter II, Article 24 of the constitution states: “(1) Freedom of religion, worship, and ideology is recognized without any restrictions other than those established in this Constitution and the law. The State has no official religion. (2) Relations between the State and the Catholic Church are based on independence, cooperation, and autonomy. (3) The independence and autonomy of all churches and religious denominations, without restrictions other than those imposed by this Constitution and the law, are hereby guaranteed. (4) No one may be disturbed, questioned, or forced to give testimony by reason of his beliefs or ideology.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Paraguay’s constitution protects the free exercise of religion, but does specifically mention the Roman Catholic Church’s historical context in Paraguayan society. Religious groups are required to register with the Vice Ministry of Worship in order to receive tax-exempt status and to be able to run state-accredited and recognized educational institutions. To date, no sanctions have been imposed on religious organizations that refuse to register. While the state allows political parties based on religious ideals, it forbids clergy from holding high national political positions. Paraguay does not allow religious instruction in schools but does provide subsidies for some parochial school teachers’ salaries. Some non-Catholic religious groups report not receiving as much funding as their Catholic counterparts. Chaplaincy by non-Catholic clergy in the armed forces is now encouraged and the state recognizes the right to conscientious objection. In 2013, the state held its first International Religious Freedom Conference, attended by over 800 people.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Indigenous communities in the Chaco region of Paraguay have reported labor discrimination when applying for positions with Mennonite-owned companies. These companies allegedly hire only

individuals who have converted to their faith. The government is investigating. Reports also indicate that community groups throughout the country have developed programs, forums, and workshops seeking to reduce religious discrimination.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 61 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates two high schools, two clinics, and one radio station. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

PERU

Population: 30,147,303 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 421,937

Religious Groups: Catholic 81%, Protestant 13%, other (Seventh-day Adventist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witness, Israelites of the New Universal Pact, Baptist, Anglican, Assembly of God, Jewish, Baha'i, Hare Krishna, Muslim) less than 3%, traditional faiths and syncretic beliefs (2007 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Peru was the epicenter of various ancient civilizations including the Incan cities of Cuzco and Machu Picchu. This South American nation boasts rich ecological, archeological and mineral riches. After continuous war between the government and guerilla groups between 1980 and 2000, Peru's economy boomed in the following decade. A corrupt political leadership in the early 2000's, however, ended with the conviction and imprisonment of former president Alberto Fujimori on human rights violations.

Peru's economy continues to grow, but widespread poverty and the largest production of cocaine in the world hamper further development.

Constitutional Provision: Title I, Chapter I, Article 2 of the constitution states: "For the freedom of conscience and religion, in the individual or associated form: There is no persecution for ideals or beliefs. There is no crime of opinion. The public exercise of every confession is free, as long as it does not offend or alter morality and public order."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government allows the free exercise of religion and has laws against discrimination. However, the Catholic Church receives preferential treatment. A 2010 law grants all registered religious groups tax-exempt status and other benefits granted to the Roman Catholic Church. This law does not necessarily, however, grant official government recognition to all religious groups. Clergy from various minority religious groups have spoken out against the law because it continues to discriminate against groups while protecting the Roman Catholic Church. Stringent requirements work to disqualify many religious organizations from registering. The current president has promised to revise the law, but this has not yet occurred. Catholic clergy are the only ones permitted to serve as military chaplains. Catholicism is viewed as the religion of the military and police force. The government also requires Catholic religious instruction in public schools. Parents may have their children exempted from this instruction by writing a letter.

Private Attitudes and Actions: The Andean Peru National Socialist Movement is an anti-Semitic group that seeks the expulsion of all Jews from Peru. This group, however, only has forty official members and is not legally recognized as a political party.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 2,215 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, 11 high schools, three clinics, and 14 radio stations. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

PHILIPPINES

Population: 107,688,000 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 872,267

Religions: Roman Catholic 80-85%, Muslim 11%, other (Seventh-day Adventist, United Church of Christ, United Methodist, Episcopal Church in the Philippines, Assembly of God, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Philippine Southern Baptist; Church of Christ, Philippine Independent Church, Church of God International, The Kingdom of Jesus Christ, Name Above Every Name, Lumad [indigenous people of various animistic and syncretic religions]) less than 5% (2000 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Philippine archipelago encompasses 7,000 islands and lies to the south of Taiwan. The treaty that ended the 1898 Spanish-American War transferred sovereignty over the Philippines to the United States. After fighting Japanese invasion during World War II, the Philippines achieved independence in 1946 and has generally enjoyed a stable democracy to the present. The Philippine economy was one of very few in the world that did not contract during the 2008 global financial crisis. However, one-third of Filipinos continue to live in poverty. The country is also particularly vulnerable to natural disasters, such as the 2014 typhoon that devastated the country's infrastructure and affected over one million people. Due mainly to its Spanish colonial past, most Filipinos identify as Roman

Catholic. Tensions have developed with the Muslim minority in the country's southern region as armed groups, including the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), have claimed over 120,000 lives through sectarian fighting. In 2012, the government reached a peace agreement with the MNLF and has granted greater autonomy to the region they inhabit.

Constitutional Provision: Article II, Section 6, and Article III, Section 5, of the constitution state: “(6) The separation of Church and State shall be inviolable.” “(5) No law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever be allowed. No religious test shall be required for the exercise of civil or political rights.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The Philippines allows for religious freedom and the separation of church and state. The government offers tax-free status for all faiths that register, but does not compel any faith to do so. Religious instruction is permitted in public schools under the conditions that the government does not have to pay for it and parental consent is acquired. Public schools are also required to respect the religious rights of all students and the government allows for religious literature to be distributed in them. Some local Muslim leaders have complained of economic discrimination due to the fact that Muslim-dominated areas suffer greater economic hardships than other areas. The government provided support for the Interfaith Harmony Week coordinated with Religions for Peace Philippines, an NGO.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most faiths have amicable relationships with each other. However, there have been numerous reports of Christian clergy being killed, allegedly by members of terrorist groups such as the Abu Sayyaf Group and the New People's Army, which have both religious and political ideologies. Muslims have complained of discrimination at the hands of

Christian employers who are reluctant to hire them because of their religion. In an attempt to counter this, some Muslims have adopted western names and style of dress. There is also tension with regard to Christians proselytizing in historically Muslim areas. There have been several reports of Muslims engaging in violent acts against Christians.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 4,566 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, six colleges, 22 high schools, one publishing house, two clinics, and nine hospitals. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a recognized Christian denomination and enjoys tax-exempt status.

Sabbath keeping for Students and Employees: Sabbath-keeping can present difficulties for those seeking and maintaining employment. Students are protected by law from being required to take examinations on Sabbath.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely. In some cases, particular religious groups have sought to stifle evangelism in specific regions.

PITCAIRN ISLAND

Population: 48

Seventh-day Adventists: 22

Religious Groups: Seventh-day Adventist

Perspectives on Current Issues: These islands were the first British colony established in the Pacific, and are the last remaining British colony in the Pacific. The Pitcairn Islands once had a population of over 200 residents, but emigration to nearby New Zealand has brought the population down to fewer than 50. In the 1890s, a Seventh-day Adventist missionary named John Tay led

the conversion of the entire island population. At present, the Seventh-day Adventist church is the only church on the islands.

Constitutional Provision: The citizens of the Pitcairn Islands are governed by British common law.

State Attitudes and Actions: The government allows for religious freedom, although it has not really been an issue since the only religion on the island is Seventh-day Adventism.

Private Attitudes and Actions: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is the only church on the island and it operates freely. There are no known religious conflicts between citizens or visitors of differing faiths.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There is one Seventh-day Adventist church. The church operates a bookstore. These institutions are allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is the only organized church on the island.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no problems reported for students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: On an island historically dominated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, freedom to evangelize is not an issue.

POLAND

Population: 38,346,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 5,790

Religious Groups: Catholic 89%, other (Jehovah's Witness, Lutheran, Greek Catholic, Pentecostal, Polish Orthodox Church) less than 5%, other (Jewish, Muslim)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Over a thousand years of history have shaped the Polish culture and national identity. The 20th century brought invasion, suffering and genocide to Poland, as this nation was invaded by both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union during World War II. It is estimated that several million Jews were slaughtered during this time. After decades of being behind the Iron Curtain, Poland held free elections in 1989, ending its Communist era. Poland has since joined the European Union and has become one of the fastest growing economies on the continent. Poland's history and culture have been linked with the Catholic Church. This relationship was strengthened during Pope John Paul II's reign as the first Polish-born pope in the church's history.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 25: “(1) Churches and other religious organizations shall have equal rights. (2) Public authorities in the Republic of Poland shall be impartial in matters of personal conviction, whether religious or philosophical, or in relation to outlooks on life, and shall ensure their freedom of expression within public life. (3) The relationship between the State and churches and other religious organizations shall be based on the principle of respect for their autonomy and the mutual independence of each in its own sphere, as well as on the principle of cooperation for the individual and the common good.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution. The law protects this right against abuse or hate speech, either by the government or private actors. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of 15 religious organizations sanctioned to perform marriages and other civil functions. Religious instruction is provided in public schools, according to a Concordat between the Polish government and the Vatican. Students who do not wish to participate are exempt. The government has initiated processes to return nationalized properties seized during or shortly after World War II. There are no government restrictions on establishing and maintaining places of worship.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are occasional reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice; however, prominent leaders have taken positive steps to promote religious freedom and there is a generally amicable relationship among religious groups. Anti-Semitic sentiment persists among some elements of society and within marginal political parties; however, the government publicly denounces anti-Semitic acts. There are occasional desecrations of Jewish and Catholic cemeteries. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has good relations with all religious groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 117 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college, a retirement center, a publishing house, a Bible correspondence school, and a radio-TV production center. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

PORTUGAL

Population: 10,813,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 9,207

Religious Groups: Catholic 80%, other (Orthodox Christian, Protestant, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, Taoist, Zoroastrian) less than 5%, no affiliation 6% (2011 census of those above age 15)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once a mighty seafaring and colonial power, Portugal ceded its last overseas holding (Macau) back to the Chinese in 1999. Its legacy remains, however, in the fact that over 200 million people in the world speak Portuguese today. After deposing its monarchy, Portugal became a

republic in 1910, but spent most of the 20th century under dictatorships. In 1974, democracy was restored. Portugal has since joined the European Community (now, the European Union) and has adopted the Euro currency. A mostly agricultural economy, Portugal required the assistance of other EU nations due to its high debt burden and its GDP continues to be below the EU average.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution guarantees religious freedom in Article 41: “Freedom of conscience, religion and worship is inviolable.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice. The constitution provides for freedom of religion and other laws and policies contribute to the generally free practice of religion. The law at all levels protects this right in full against abuse, either by the government or private actors. The government is secular. Other than the constitution, the two most important documents relating to religious freedom are the 2001 Religious Freedom Act and the 1940 Concordat with the Holy See. In 2013, the government enacted a law returning citizenship to descendants of Sephardic Jews expelled in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of societal abuse or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, and prominent societal leaders have taken positive steps to promote religious freedom.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 96 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one high school, three retirement centers, one publishing house, one Bible correspondence school, and one youth camp. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

PUERTO RICO

Population: 3,620,897 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 34,971

Religious Groups: Catholic 85%, Protestant and other 15%

Perspectives on Current Issues

Puerto Rico, an archipelago in the Western Caribbean, is a Spanish-speaking commonwealth associated with the United States. Although very strong throughout the second half of the 20th century, the country's economy has slowed to negative growth numbers over the past four years. With the unemployment rate rising past 16%, Puerto Ricans are moving out of the country in record numbers. Division within the country regarding the country's economic future is thought to be a contributor to the recent economic downturn. Puerto Rico continues to be a major tourism destination, receiving nearly four million tourists annually.

Constitutional Provision: While Puerto Rico is subject to the Federal Constitution of the United States, the Commonwealth's constitution also protects the freedom of religion. Article II, Section 3 of the constitution prohibits the government from establishing a religion or inhibiting "the free exercise thereof," but also goes a step further to declare the "complete separation of church and state."

State Attitudes and Actions: Puerto Rico follows the tradition of the United States and as a result provides for and protects the free exercise of religion for its citizens. In 2014, a federal appellate court ruled that religious groups must be afforded access even to gated communities in order to evangelize freely

throughout Puerto Rico. Local congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses litigated the case.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Various religious groups live harmoniously with each other. There are no reports of strife or violence.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 301 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, 12 high schools, three radio stations, one hospital, and two clinics. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

QATAR

Population: 2,123,000 (2014 estimate, 12.5% citizens)

Seventh-day Adventists: 149

Religious Groups: Citizens: Muslim 77.5%, Christian 8.5%, other 14% (2004 census) Non-citizens: Hindu 30%, Roman Catholic 20%, Buddhist 7%, others (Anglican, Egyptian Copt, Baha'i, Greek and other Eastern Orthodox Churches) less than 5%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Qatar, a British protectorate until 1971, has boomed economically since it abandoned pearl fishing as its main economic sustainer. Qatar has been recognized as the most dynamic economy in the world. Petroleum products represent 85% of exports. However, its liquefied natural gas has catapulted this small country's economy into the global market in remarkable ways. As a result of this prosperity, Qataris are investing in various sectors around the world. Expatriates make up 65% of the population.

According to human rights advocates, migrant workers face widespread discrimination and ill treatment. This has been increasingly brought to international attention as Qatar initiates a massive construction project in preparation for the 2022 World Cup. Detentions of political activists are reported. Violence against women is also said to be widespread.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution in Articles 1, 35, and 50 states: “Article 1. Qatar is an independent sovereign Arab State. Its religion is Islam and Shari’a law shall be a main source of its legislations. Its political system is democratic. The Arabic Language shall be its official language. The people of Qatar are a part of the Arab nation.” “Article 35. All persons are equal before the law and there shall be no discrimination whatsoever on grounds of sex, race, language, or religion.” “Article 50. Freedom to practice religious rites shall be guaranteed to all persons in accordance with the law and the requirements of the maintenance of public order and morality.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Qatar is an Islamic state, which is governed by both secular and Shari’a law. The constitution provides for religious freedom and the government generally enforces it. However, it does prohibit proselytism. Public Christian worship and the observance of specific holidays are tolerated.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of societal abuses based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, and prominent government leaders take positive steps to promote religious freedom in the country.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There is one Seventh-day Adventist church.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

Freedom to Evangelize: Proselytizing is illegal.

REUNION

Population: 845,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,463

Religious Groups: Catholic 80%, Hindu 6%, Protestant 6%, Muslim 4%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Reunion is an island to the east of Madagascar and has been an overseas department of France since 1946, but has been controlled by France since the 17th century. Ethnically, Reunion is diverse as migrant workers from India, China, and other regions have travelled to Reunion throughout its history. Currently, unemployment among young people stands at 60%, while almost half Reunion's residents live below the poverty line.

Constitutional Provision: Reunion is a French territory and therefore falls under the French Constitution, which guarantees universal religious freedom.

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the French constitution and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. The island prefect has considerable autonomy and religious liberty has been maintained, but there have been reports of discrimination toward non-Catholics by the large Catholic majority.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious. However, there are occasional tensions between the non-Catholic minority groups and the Catholic majority.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 18 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a radio station. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventist teachers and students have faced problems in public schools because of their Sabbath observance.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

ROMANIA

Population: 21,729,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 66,651

Religious Groups: Orthodox 86%, Roman Catholic 4-6%, Greek Catholic less than 1%, other (Old Rite Russian Christian, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Jehovah's Witness, Baha'i, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Zen Buddhist, Family (God's Children), Unification Church, Society for Krishna Consciousness) (2011 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, the region known today as Romania achieved its independence in 1878. The 20th century brought a decades-long Communist dictatorship that was not overthrown until 1989. Romania has since enjoyed democratic governments and is now a member state of NATO and the EU. Romania's economy has improved greatly in recent years due to increases in agricultural and industrial production. According to human rights defenders, discrimination continues to be a problem, allegedly orchestrated by the Romanian Orthodox Church, which has hindered freedom of religion or belief from becoming a full-fledged reality. Discrimination against and marginalization of ethnic minorities, such as the Roma, also continues to be a problem.

Constitutional Provision: Title II, Chapter II, Article 29 in the constitution states: "(1) Freedom of thought, opinion, and religious beliefs shall not be restricted in any form whatsoever. No one shall be compelled to embrace an opinion or religion contrary to his own convictions."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government continues to differentiate between recognized and unrecognized religious groups, and requirements for registration and recognition continue to pose obstacles to minority faiths. Minority religious groups are not allowed free access to state-owned media. As of 2013, a number of new Christian denominations were allowed to register. Public schools sponsor religious instruction, and students may receive instruction based on the religion of their parents. The government continues the process of returning churches confiscated during the dictatorship era. The Seventh-day Adventist Church reports improvement in areas of discrimination against religious minorities and freedom of religion.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. There were incidents in which the Romanian Orthodox Church showed hostility toward non-Orthodox churches and criticized proselytizing by Protestant and other religious groups. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has reported a continued lack of cooperation from local Orthodox Church officials, particularly regarding requests for broadcast time on local television stations. However, the Church also reported a decrease in defamatory articles in local newspapers regarding Adventists.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,097 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college, one theological institute, three high schools, a media center, a radio station, a publishing house, a Bible correspondence school, and a humanitarian service for prisons. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is recognized as one of only 18 religious groups covered by the religion law that went into effect in January 2007.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are employers who do not hire Adventists who wish to observe the Sabbath, though this is not a widespread situation. The church continues to experience problems with universities refusing to change examination dates for Adventist students when tests are scheduled on Saturdays; however, there has been some progress on this issue. Students were prevented from participating in the school Olympics because they were scheduled on Saturday. Since 2002, the School Inspectorate of Cluj County declined to include two of three requested classes on Adventist religion in the school curriculum, although there were sufficient students for the classes.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church reports occasional problems in obtaining approval to use public halls for religious activities due to pressure by Orthodox priests, especially in rural areas or small localities. In many instances, the Adventist Church has decided not to use public halls for such activities. However, local authorities do not always give in to pressure by the Orthodox Church and, in some cases, have acted in accordance with the law by granting approval for the events.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Population: 142,470,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 44,298

Religious Groups: Russian Orthodox 42-74%, Muslim 6-7%, other (Buddhist, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witness, Hindu, Baha'i, Hare Krishna, pagan, Tengrist, Scientologist, Falun Gong) less than 5% each (2012 poll). Russia has large populations of non-practicing believers and non-believers, a legacy of more than seven decades of Soviet rule.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once a vast empire under the control of the Romanov Dynasty, Russia continues to be the world's largest country, geographically. Russia is also a diverse nation, both ethnically and religiously. The 1917 Russian Revolution ushered in an era of Communist rule and the

creation of the Soviet Union, along with neighboring Communist states in the region. This era fostered the elimination of religion in Russian society and the promotion of secularism. The Cold War ended upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s and Russia has continued on a path of economic and military growth. Still, Russia generally stands on the opposite side of many issues to its Western European neighbors and the United States. The European Court, however, has condemned the country for cases of forced disappearances, especially during military operations in Chechnya. Other human rights concerns include discrimination against minorities, violence against women, denial of freedoms, and accusations that those who criticize the government lack patriotism. There are also reports of intimidation, harassment, police brutality, and torture of detainees. There are an estimated 800,000 orphans in Russia. It is reported that 825,000 persons are imprisoned. Russia's military actions in Ukraine, as well as the annexation of Crimea, continue to draw international criticism.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution provides for religious freedom in Article 28: "Everyone shall be guaranteed the right to freedom of conscience, to freedom of religious worship, including the right to profess, individually or jointly with others, any religion, or to profess no religion, to freely choose, possess and disseminate religious or other beliefs, and to act in conformity with them."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects the right of religious freedom in practice; however, in some cases the authorities have imposed restrictions on certain groups, most often through the registration process. The constitution provides for equality of all religions before the law and the separation of church and state; yet, the government does not always respect these provisions and sometimes selectively enforces such laws. Many religious groups have difficulty acquiring land or permits to build houses of worship. Four times a year, the government updates a list of banned extremist

publications. Minority religious groups not of the Judeo-Christian line are discriminated against the most. By law, only the Russian Orthodox Church may review pending legislation in the Duma. Though Russia enforces a mandatory military draft for men, the law protects conscientious objectors.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are reports of societal abuse and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, including some physical attacks on individuals and communities because of the victims' religious affiliation. There are reported incidents of vandalism against Muslims and Jews, as well as other crimes of an anti-Semitic nature. Although there are several laws that address crimes motivated by ethnic or religious hatred, law enforcement agencies apply these laws inconsistently, infrequently, and sometimes arbitrarily.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 654 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, two English language schools, one publishing house, and one media center. The church-initiated Association for Religious Freedom is very active in organizing symposiums.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: According to the Slavic Law Center, government officials in Elista, Republic of Kalmykia, threatened to take “extreme measures” against Seventh-day Adventists for not allowing their children to attend school on Saturdays.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

RWANDA

Population: 12,337,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 604,110

Religious Groups: Catholic 56.5%, Seventh-day Adventist 11.1%, other Protestant 26%, Muslim 4.6%, no affiliation 1.7%, other (Jehovah's Witness,

animists, Baha'i, Jewish) less than 1%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once a Belgian colony, Rwanda achieved independence in 1959. It is a fertile country, sometimes called the Switzerland of Africa because of its mountainous landscape and remarkable climate. Ethnic tensions between the Hutu majority and Tutsi minority erupted into mass violence in 1994. The Rwandan Genocide had devastating effects on the ethos of this country. In recent years, relations between ethnic groups have become more peaceful as an emphasis is placed on reconciliation. To date, the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda has convicted 27 individuals responsible for genocidal acts. When the government was restructured, 50% of the seats in the parliament were designated for female members. Rwanda's economy has also improved, growing at 8% each year over the past decade. Rwanda gained a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2013-2014 term.

Constitutional Provision: Article 18 of the constitution states: "Freedom of religion and the public exercise thereof, liberty of conscience, as well as liberty of expressing one's opinion about any subject, shall be guaranteed, except for the punishment of infractions committed during the exercise thereof."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution; however, there are reports of discrimination involving Jehovah's Witnesses. Various Jehovah's Witness children, many of whom were secondary school students, were expelled from school for failure to sing the national anthem. Government officials intervened, however, and most of these children have been reinstated. Twenty-one Jehovah's Witnesses have filed lawsuits against the government for being fired after refusing to take the public servant's oath while touching the national flag. None have been reinstated or compensated at the time of this report. Unlike in previous reports, the government has streamlined the registration process for

religious groups and has officially recognized the Jehovah's Witness organization.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are a variety of interfaith groups that contribute to understanding and tolerance, including the Ecumenical Council of Churches and the Protestant Council of Rwanda. Additionally, the Interfaith Commission for Rwanda promotes unity and reconciliation through supporting programs that reconcile genocide survivors, released genocide prisoners, and genocide detainees' families. Unlike in previous years, no Seventh-day Adventists reported retaliation against students who refused to take exams or participate in other school activities during the Sabbath.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,665 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates two high schools, one literature ministry seminary, one school of nursing, one hospital, six clinics and dispensaries, and a radio-TV production center. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to share its religious convictions freely.

SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

Population: 51,538 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,469

Religious Groups: Anglican 50%, Roman Catholic 25%, other (Methodist, Moravian, Pentecostal, Seventh-day Adventist, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Rastafarian, Muslim, Hindu, Baha'i) 25%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once inhabited by Carib Indians, the British settled the pair of islands that make up this nation in 1623. In 1983, Saint Kitts

and Nevis became an independent state but relations between the two islands have not been without conflict. In a 1998 referendum, the residents of Nevis voted to separate from Saint Kitts. The vote fell short of the two-thirds majority needed for secession, but separatist sentiments continue to brew in Nevis. In 1998 and again in 2008, the government came under international scrutiny for human rights violations when it decided to enforce capital punishment on a number of convicted criminals.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter II, Article 11: “(1) Except with his own consent, a person shall not be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience, including freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others, and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government views itself as secular and as a result provides religious freedom and allows the free exercise thereof. Public schools may conduct Christian prayers or hymn singing, but allow students who do not wish to participate to be exempt.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Members of various religious communities have amicable relationships with one another. There are no reports of strife or violence. Rastafarians complain of discrimination with regard to schools and hiring practices.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 11 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a dental clinic. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

SAINT LUCIA

Population: 163,362 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 17,641

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 61%, Seventh-day Adventists 10.4%, Pentecostal 8.8%, Evangelical 2.2%, Baptist 2.1%, Rastafarian 2%, other (Anglican, Church of God, Jehovah's Witness, Methodist, Muslim, Baha'i) less than 5%, no affiliation 6% (2010 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Control over Saint Lucia was passed between the United Kingdom and France fourteen times before the island-nation's independence in 1979. French influence continues to live on in the form of a French patois spoken by its people. Tourism is the main economic driver and continues to be Saint Lucia's main employment source. Saint Lucia has attracted foreign investment and banking, but growth has slowed since the global financial crisis of 2008.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter 1, Article 9: "(1) Except with his own consent, a person shall not be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience, including freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others, and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance."

State Attitudes and Actions: The preamble of the Saint Lucia constitution affirms belief in a monotheistic God, most likely referring to the Christian God. Nevertheless, the state has provided for freedom of belief. The government provides for the registration of religious groups as well as visa processes for missionary workers. Registered groups are allowed duty-free imports and the

right to register births, deaths, and marriages. Non-registered groups are only free to assemble and worship. In 2012, a Seventh-day Adventist woman was fired from her job at Saint Lucia's government-owned electric company for refusing to work on the Sabbath. Her labor union has decided to support her and has taken the case to the country's tribunal. A hearing date has not yet been set.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There were no reports of discrimination among the various religious groups in Saint Lucia.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 48 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one high school and one radio station. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Saint Lucia's tribunal will soon hear the case of a Seventh-day Adventist woman's firing for refusing to work on the Sabbath. There were no other reports of issues with Sabbath-keeping.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

SAINT PIERRE AND MIQUELON

Population: 5,716 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: Unknown

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 99%, other 1%

Perspectives on Current Issues: The French settled on this pair of islands off the Atlantic coast of Canada in the 17th century. Currently, it is the final remaining French overseas territory in North America. While a territorial dispute with Canada has crippled the islands' fishing industry, France has continued to heavily subsidize Saint Pierre and Miquelon's very high standard of living.

Constitutional Provision: Saint Pierre and Miquelon follow the French constitution. Article 1 states: “France shall be an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic. It shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of origin, race or religion. It shall respect all beliefs. It shall be organized on a decentralized basis.”

State Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of government infringement upon the religious liberties of its citizens.

Private Attitudes and Actions: No animosity or violence between different religious groups has been reported.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: There are no reported restrictions on evangelism.

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Population: 102,918 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 14,709

Religious Groups: Anglican 18%, Pentecostal 18%, Seventh-day Adventist 14%, Methodist 11%, Baptist 10%, Roman Catholic 7%, others (Baha’i, Rastafarian, Jehovah’s Witness, Church of God, other Evangelical groups)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is an archipelago in the Eastern Caribbean known for its tropical beauty. Wealthy tourists frequent the islands, though this is not the country’s main economic producer. Banana crops sold to European markets continue to drive the Vincentian economy. Changes in the import policy of the European Union, however, have stymied economic growth for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as its unemployment rate continues to rise.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter 1, Section 9(1) of the constitution states: “Except with his own consent, a person shall not be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience, including freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others, and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The state generally follows the constitutional provision regarding religious freedom. Rastafarians complain about police discrimination and about being unable to use marijuana within the context of their religious practices.

Private Attitudes and Actions: An amicable relationship exists among the various religious groups. Though Rastafarians have complained about discrimination in hiring and schools, they now report that there has been significant improvement in this area.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 36 Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

SAMOA

Population: 196,628 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 8,900

Religious Groups: Congregational 32%, Catholic 19%, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints 15%, Methodist 14%, Assembly of God 8%,

Seventh-day Adventist 4%, other (Jehovah's Witness, Congregational Church of Jesus, Church of the Nazarene, nondenominational Protestant, Baptist, Worship Centre, Peace Chapel, Samoa Evangelism, Elim Church, Anglican) less than 5%, small number of Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim (2011 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: With a culture that spans thousands of years, Samoans were not exposed to European explorers until the 18th century. The Pacific islands comprising Samoa have been divided between various European and American powers since the 19th century. Western Samoa achieved independence in 1962 and changed its name to Samoa in 1997. The tsunami of 2009 devastated the island and the need for reconstruction slowed the economy considerably. Samoan expatriates, about 150,000 people, produce one-third of the country's GDP. The latest census numbers for Samoa show a slight decline in the membership of traditional Christian denominations and an increase in the membership numbers of nontraditional or Evangelical churches.

Constitutional Provision: Part II, Section 11, Paragraphs 1 and 2, of the constitution state: "(1) Every person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others, and, in public or private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance. (2) Nothing in clause 1 shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law in so far as that existing law or the law so made imposes reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred under the provisions of that clause in the interests of national security or of public order, health or morals, or for protecting the rights and freedom of others, including their rights and freedom to observe and practice their religion without the unsolicited interference of members of other religions."

State Attitudes and Actions: The preamble of the constitution affirms that Samoa is “an Independent State based on Christian principles and Samoan custom and tradition.” While the government clearly favors Christianity and offers Christian prayers before public events and assemblies, it also protects the rights of minority faiths and allows for the free practice of religion. Public schools require students to participate in religious instruction at the primary level, but not at the secondary level.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most faiths have amicable relationships with each other. There is some social pressure, especially in the smaller villages, for individuals to become involved in Christian religious activities.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 31 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college and one bookstore. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

SAN MARINO

Population: 32,742 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: Unknown

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 97%; other (Jehovah’s Witness, Baha’i, Muslim, Jewish, Orthodox, Waldensian) 3%

Perspectives on Current Issues: San Marino is one of the smallest nation-states in the world. It is landlocked and completely surrounded by Italy. It is believed that San Marino may be the world’s oldest surviving republic. Though not part of the European Union, San Marino does have an open border policy

with Italy (an EU-member) and uses the Euro currency. San Marino is believed to have been founded by a 4th century Christian named Marinus, hence the country's name and its deep-rooted Catholic tradition.

Constitutional Provision: San Marino's constitutional tradition can be traced back more than a thousand years through various laws and constitutional orders. The legal tradition provides for religious freedom in Article 6 of the Declaration of Citizens' Rights of 1974, which states: "Everybody shall enjoy civil and political freedoms in the Republic. In particular, personal freedoms, freedom of residence, establishment and expatriation, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of thought, conscience and religion shall be guaranteed." This declaration also affirms San Marino's adoption of the European Convention on Human Rights.

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the country's legal tradition and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. There is no state religion in San Marino. The Catholic Church receives direct benefits from the state via income taxes, but individuals may choose to allocate 0.3% of their income tax payments to other charities, including three religious groups—the Waldensian Church, Baha'i Community, and Jehovah's Witnesses. There are no private parochial schools. Public schools provide Catholic instruction, but students may freely choose not to participate.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Catholicism is dominant in society since most citizens were born and raised under Catholic principles that form part of their culture and national history. The country's dominant Catholic heritage may inform individual choices on lifestyle matters such as marriage or divorce, although there is no government persuasion involved.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience: There is no official Seventh-day Adventist presence in San Marino.

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

Population: 190,428 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 4,922

Religious Groups: Catholic 85%, Protestant (Seventh-day Adventist, Methodist, Evangelic Assembly of Christ, Universal Church of Christ, Thokoist Church) 12%, Muslim less than 2%. Some Christians and Muslims also adhere to aspects of indigenous beliefs.

Perspectives on Current Issues: This nation consists of two main islands and a number of smaller islets off the western coast of Africa. Settled by Portuguese explorers in the 15th century, the islands became a shipping hub for the African slave trade as well as a major producer of sugar. Sao Toe and Principe took advantage of the coup in Portugal in the 1970s to declare independence in 1975. The country's first free elections did not take place until 1991, but two coups were attempted over the next decade. Nigeria played a role in defeating the coup because the two nations share offshore oil fields. Sao Tome and Principe's economy, heavily dependent on cocoa, has been shrinking over the past few years. Plans are in place to begin extracting and exporting oil as well as developing a robust tourism industry. Because of the islands' Portuguese heritage, most citizens are Catholic and many adhere to indigenous practices as well.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 27: "The freedom of conscience and religion is inviolable."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. There is no state religion. Religious organizations must register

with the government. To register, a group must first send a letter requesting authorization from the Ministry of Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. Once the group has obtained authorization, it must submit its official name and charter to the national registrar's office to ensure no other organization has the same name.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious, and no significant tensions are reported.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are nine Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

SAUDI ARABIA

Population: 27,345,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 197

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 85-90%, Shi'a Muslim 10-15%. The 10 million foreigners in the country include Muslims from the various branches of Islam, Christians (Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, Roman Catholic), Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, and others.

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Al-Saud royal family began ruling the region in the 19th century, but the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was not established until 1932. This nation is considered the birthplace of Islam as it contains the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad and the pilgrimage city of Mecca. The ruling family adopted a strict interpretation of Islam known as Wahhabism that regulates Saudis' daily lives. While this nation has a long record of human

rights violations and oppressive laws, the royal family has focused the country on modernization and stamping out violent religious extremism. Saudi officials held local elections for the first time in the kingdom's history, but political parties are banned. The government's opposition is based and organized outside the country. Untouched by the revolutions sweeping through many Arab countries, Saudi Arabia has actually benefited from troubles elsewhere. The decrease of oil production in other regions has prompted Saudi leaders to increase their oil production, resulting in higher revenues and leading to economic growth. To reduce the likelihood of poverty-fueled popular protests spreading to the kingdom, Saudi authorities have multiplied public expenses to provide additional employment opportunities for citizens. The country is known for its poor human rights record. Discrimination against women is endemic. Freedoms of expression and of assembly are tightly controlled. Detentions are occasions for numerous abuses, and cruel and degrading punishments, such as flogging and the severing of limbs, are utilized. Religious freedom is nonexistent.

Constitutional Provision: The country is a monarchy with a legal system based on its interpretation of Shari'a law. Article 1 of the constitution states that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab Islamic state. Article 8 underscores that the government in Saudi Arabia is in accordance with the Islamic Shari'a. It is required that all citizens be Muslims.

State Attitudes and Actions: As a matter of policy, the government guarantees and protects the right to private worship for all, including non-Muslims who gather in homes for religious services. This right has not always been respected in practice and is not defined in the law. Government policies continue to place severe restrictions on religious freedom and the government continues to enforce its official interpretation of Sunni Islam. Muslims who do not adhere to this interpretation face significant political, economic, legal, social, and religious discrimination. This also includes limited employment and

educational opportunities, under-representation in official institutions, and restrictions on the practice of their faith and on the building of places of worship and community centers.

Private Attitudes and Actions: The majority of citizens support an Islamic state, even though there are differences of opinion on how it should be governed. Discrimination based on religion is a factor in the mistreatment of foreign workers by citizen employers and coworkers. There are reports that some employers withhold pay or residency card renewal based on religious factors.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no Seventh-day Adventist churches or institutions in Saudi Arabia, but there are several thousand Adventist foreign workers in the country.

Government Recognition: Only Sunni-Islam is recognized in Saudi Arabia.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

Freedom to Evangelize: It is illegal to publicly practice any faith other than Sunni-Islam. Conversion from Islam to another faith may result in death.

SENEGAL

Population: 13,635,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 557

Religious Groups: Muslim 94%, Christian (Roman Catholic, Protestant) 4%, indigenous belief or no affiliation 2%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once a French colony, Senegal joined other neighboring nations before splitting and establishing the Republic of Senegal in 1989. Senegal is considered one of the most stable democracies in Africa. Senegal is characterized by a multiparty democracy, which was put to the test in 2012 when President Abdoulaye Wade controversially ran for a third term.

He lost to current president, Macky Sall, and peaceful transitions of power continued. There are tensions in part of the country; separatist groups in the southern region of Casamance have been in conflict with the central government for decades. Even though a cease-fire has been agreed upon, recent resumption of violence threatens the fragile peace. Life expectancy is 55 years. Poverty and high unemployment destabilize the social fabric of the country and the disparity between the rich and the poor is significant. Young people often face the choice of migrating to other countries or joining one of the three main religious groups which make up the Islamic Sufi brotherhood—the Mouride, the Tidiani, and the Qadiryi, which are wealthy, well-organized fraternities with enormous political influence. Another factor threatening inter-religious peaceful cohabitation is the presence of aggressive Islamist groups funded by Saudi Arabia and, until recently, by Libya. A country previously known for its tolerance may now have to be more intentional to preserve this status. Human rights violations, such as detention, imprisonment, and torture while in custody, have been reported. Senegal has become quite influential in the region, having mediated in conflicts between Sudan and Chad. Senegal has also sent peacekeeping troops to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, and Kosovo.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution guarantees universal religious freedom in Articles 8, 9, and 10. Article 8 states “The Republic of Senegal guarantees to all citizens their individual fundamental freedoms . . . These freedoms and rights are: civil and political liberties, freedom of opinion, freedom of expression . . . religious freedoms.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. There is no state religion as the nation is specifically defined by the constitution as a secular state. Religious organizations are required to register with the government, but there are no reports of discrimination.

Missionaries must obtain residence visas from the Ministry of the Interior. Private schools are allowed to freely provide religious instruction and the government allows religious teaching in public schools. Islamic schools run by the government are growing in popularity with over 20,000 students. Religious groups are free to speak about social and political issues, most recently focusing on political violence and the HIV/AIDS crisis.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious and there are no significant tensions. The nation has a long history of friendly and peaceful coexistence between the Muslim majority, Christians, traditional indigenous religions, and other minority groups. Christian and Muslim leaders continue to dialogue publicly. This idyllic picture has been marred by recent attacks on churches that some attribute to the growing influence of radical Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa. Government officials and police have responded to these attacks.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are six Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one dispensary and one radio/TV production center. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

SERBIA

Population: 7,209,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 6,549

Religious Groups: Serbian Orthodox 85%, Catholic 5%, Muslim 3%, Protestant 1%, other (Jewish, Eastern religions, agnostic, atheist, no affiliation) 6%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once part of Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro were the last remaining countries that continued to be linked since the dissolution of the union. After Montenegro's independence in 2006, Serbia became a landlocked country for the first time in 90 years. Discrimination against ethnic minority communities, domestic violence, and human trafficking are widely condemned by the UN and international human rights advocates. Though significant progress has been made, the issue of prosecuting perpetrators of war crimes—committed, mostly, during the Yugoslav era—has not been completely resolved. After the arrest of several war criminals and an agreement to normalize relations with Kosovo, Serbia was able to officially begin the process of European Union membership.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution guarantees freedom of religion in Article 43: "Freedom of thought, conscience, beliefs and religion shall be guaranteed, as well as the right to stand by one's belief or religion or change them by choice. No person shall have the obligation to declare his religious or other beliefs. Everyone shall have the freedom to manifest their religion or religious beliefs in worship, observance, practice and teaching, individually or in community with others, and to manifest religious beliefs in private or public."

State Attitudes and Actions: The constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the law places limits on religious practice by discriminating among religious groups and denies some groups legal status. There is no state religion, but the majority Serbian Orthodox Church and other traditional religious communities receive preferential consideration. The government continues to subsidize salaries for Serbian Orthodox clergy working in other countries. The government's respect for religious freedom remains problematic because of the religion law and the Religion Ministry's arbitrary implementation of the law. Police investigations of acts of hate speech and

vandalism tend to be slow and inconclusive. There continue to be isolated reports that officials have made public, negative statements regarding minority religious groups. In 2013, the Serbian government officially recognized a number of religious minority groups, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are few reports of societal abuse or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. However, leaders of minority religious communities continue to report acts of vandalism, hate speech, physical attacks, and negative media reports. Because ethnicity and religion are often inextricably linked, in some cases it is difficult to identify discriminatory acts as primarily religious or primarily ethnic in origin. There are some isolated incidents of anti-Semitism.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 167 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a theological seminary, four Bible correspondence schools, one retirement center, one publishing house, and two radio-TV production centers. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: On January 29, 2007, the government signed a document officially accepting the registration of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Serbia. This followed a difficult registration process, which occurred as a result of the 2006 law on religion.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

SEYCHELLES

Population: 91,650 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 892

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 76%, Anglican 6%, other Christian (Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Assembly of God, Pentecostal, Nazarite, Jehovah's Witness), other (Hindu, Muslim, Baha'i) present in small numbers

Perspectives on Current Issues: Colonized by the British, the Seychelles was not granted independence until 1976. This archipelago lies in the Indian Ocean, off the eastern coast of the African continent. An era of military coups and tightly controlled government rule came to an end in 1993 when a new constitution was enacted and free elections were held. The Seychelles is a nation-state dependent on the fishing and tourism industries for economic growth. Since independence, the country's economy has grown seven times and has been able to sustain growth through the most recent global financial crisis.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 21: "Every person has a right to freedom of conscience and for the purpose of this article this right includes freedom of thought and religion, freedom to change religion or belief and freedom either alone or in community with others and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate the religion or belief in worship, teaching practice and observance."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. There is no state religion. The main religious groups have acts of incorporation, and other groups that are not corporate entities are also required to register with the government in order to qualify for tax-exempt status. The government remains uninvolved with religious matters, but it provides program time to different religious organizations on the national radio broadcasting service. On alternating Sunday mornings, the national radio service airs Catholic Mass and Anglican services, which last from one hour and 15 minutes to one hour and 30 minutes. Muslim and Hindu groups are allowed 15-minute

broadcasts every Friday afternoon, and the Baha'i and Seventh-day Adventists are allowed 15-minute broadcasts every Saturday afternoon.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious, and there are no significant tensions.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are five Seventh-day Adventist churches. They are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

SIERRA LEONE

Population: 5,743,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 10,989

Religious Groups: Muslim 77%, Christian (Protestant, Roman Catholic, others) 21%, others (Baha'i, Hindu, Jewish, indigenous and other religious beliefs) less than 2%. Many persons combine Islam or Christianity with indigenous religious beliefs.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Britain colonized the region known today as Sierra Leone in the 18th century and used it as a major post for the slave trade. After the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, Britain began seizing ships carrying illegal slaves and settled the freed slaves in the Sierra Leone colony. Britain granted this nation its independence in 1961. From 1991 to 2002, Sierra Leone suffered a violent civil war that claimed the lives of tens of thousands and displaced over 2 million people. 17,000 foreign troops and UN Peacekeepers were deployed in the country and helped bring the civil war to an end. Democracy has since been reestablished and Sierra Leone held its first

elections without UN supervision in 2012. After years of armed conflict, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been established. In spite of the fact that Sierra Leone is rich in natural resources, such as diamonds, gold, and titanium, the poverty rate is high and healthcare services are inadequate. Life expectancy is only 42 years. A very high percentage of girls are victims of female genital mutilation and this widespread practice tarnishes the human rights record of this country. Sierra Leone was one of several West African nations struck by the Ebola epidemic in 2014.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 24: “(1) . . . no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of . . . religion, freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom either alone or in community with others and both in public and in private to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. There is no state religion. Religious groups are not required to register with the government. Religious instruction is permitted in all schools and students can choose whether to attend religious classes.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious and there are no significant tensions. The Inter-Religious Council is composed of Christian and Muslim leaders and plays an important role by promoting the peace process in the country. Candidates for President of Sierra Leone have generally picked a running mate of a different religion, though there is no requirement to do so. Intermarriage among Christians and Muslims is common.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 50 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one high school and two hospitals. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

SINGAPORE

Population: 5,567,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,916

Religious Groups: Buddhist 42.5%, Christian 14.6%, Muslim 14.9%, Taoist 8.5%, Hindu 5%, other (Sikh, Zoroastrian, Jain, Jewish) less than 5%. There are no membership estimates for the banned Jehovah's Witnesses and Unification Church.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Singapore is an ethnically diverse city-state located on Malaysia's southern tip. Once unified with Malaysia, Singapore became independent in 1965. Its government has been known for its strict conservatism and social controls. Its economy, however, has boomed since independence and it is considered one of the Asian "Tigers." It is reported that numerous people suspected of involvement in terrorist activities have been detained without trial or access to lawyers. Several organizations accused of "defamation" against the state have been banned. Singapore's human rights record has also been questioned with regard to its policy of capital punishment for drug trafficking offenses.

Constitutional Provision: Part IV, Article 15, of the constitution states: "(1) Every person has the right to profess and practice his religion and to propagate it. (2) No person shall be compelled to pay any tax the proceeds of which are specially allocated in whole or in part for the purposes of a religion other than

his own. (3) Every religious group has the right (a) to manage its own religious affairs; (b) to establish and maintain institutions for religious or charitable purposes; and (c) to acquire and own property and hold and administer it in accordance with law. (4) This article does not authorize any act contrary to any general law relating to public order, public health or morality.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The constitution allows religious freedom, but this right has, at times, been curtailed by other laws. All religious bodies are required to register with the government. There is a belief that proselytizing is not good for the nation. Since the passage of the Religious Harmony Act of 1990 and its revision in 2001, the government has sought to crack down on what it deems to be insensitive proselytizing and the mixing of religion and politics. The Religious Harmony Act restricts any political religious movement or attempts by other faiths to disrupt social harmony. Penalties are usually in fines, but may include imprisonment and revocation of registration. The government has also continued to ban Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Unification Church from legally operating in the country.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most faiths have an amicable relationship with one another and there are no reports of violence or discrimination.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are seven Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one school and one radio station. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is recognized as an official religious organization.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees. Most Adventists who work in the public sector have no problems because the government operates on a five-day workweek.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely. However, since the Religious Harmony Act of 1990 and its revision in 2001, certain limitations have been placed on evangelism.

SLOVAKIA

Population: 5,443,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,236

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 62%, Augsburg Lutheran 5.9%, Greek Catholic 3.8%, no affiliation 13.4%, other (Reformed Christian, Protestant, Jehovah's Witness, Orthodox, Jewish, Baha'i) small numbers (2011 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: After over 1,000 years of being part of other states, including the Hungarian Kingdom, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and then-Czechoslovakia, Slovakia finally became an independent and sovereign state in 1993. Slovakia's rocky first decade since independence, defined by unstable governments and a stagnant, debt-laden economy, was followed by years of a booming industrial economy and a stable democracy. Slovakia is now a member of the European Union and has taken on the Euro as its currency. Severely impoverished Hungarian and Romany minority groups living in Slovakia, as well as post-war property seizures, continue to be sources of conflict between this nation and its neighbors.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter 1, Article 1 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic states: "The Slovak Republic is a sovereign, democratic, and law-governed state. It is not linked to any ideology or religious belief." Chapter 1 continues to state in Article 24: "(1) The freedoms of thought, conscience, religion, and faith are guaranteed. This right also comprises the possibility to change one's religious belief or faith. Everyone has the right to be without religious belief. Everyone has the right to publicly express his opinion. (2) Everyone has the right to freely express his religion or faith on his own or

together with others, privately or publicly, by means of divine and religious services, by observing religious rites, or by participating in the teaching of religion. (3) Churches and religious communities administer their own affairs. In particular, they constitute their own bodies, inaugurate their clergymen, organize the teaching of religion, and establish religious orders and other church institutions independently of state bodies.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Generally, the constitution and other laws protect religious freedom. Slovakia’s registration laws, however, create a disadvantage for smaller religious groups because only groups with at least 20,000 Slovak-citizen members may register. While non-registered groups are still protected, these groups cannot preside at state funerals, open bank accounts, own or rent property, conduct wedding ceremonies, or be eligible for state subsidies. The Slovak government signed a concordat with the Vatican, allowing special privileges for Catholic clergy not afforded to non-registered groups. In 2013, the government took steps to preserve Jewish historical sights, particularly those linked to the World War II era.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Neo-Nazi groups continue to vandalize Jewish cemeteries, historical sites, and synagogues. Catholic groups have also joined in preventing non-registered religious groups from carrying out youth activities throughout the country.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 40 Seventh-day Adventist churches in Slovakia.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

SLOVENIA

Population: 1,988,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 541

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 58%, other or unspecified 23%, atheist 10.1%, Orthodox Christian 2%, Muslim 2%, other Christian 1%, unaffiliated 3%, no religion 10%

Perspectives on Current Issues: This republic once formed part of Yugoslavia before seceding in 1991. Slovenia has been relatively prosperous over the past two decades. Slovenia joined the European Union in 2004 and became the first formerly communist country to preside over the EU. While the 2012 European financial crisis heavily burdened the Slovenian economy, the country has largely been able to bounce back. Slovenia received heavy criticism after its parliament decided to strip residency and property from Slovenian residents who were of ethnicities related to other formerly Yugoslav countries. As part of a series of measures directed at EU membership, Parliament reversed the measure and sought to make restitution to those disenfranchised by this law.

Constitutional Provision: Article 41 of the constitution states: “(1) Religious and other beliefs may be freely professed in private and public life. (2) No one shall be obliged to declare his religious or other beliefs. (3) Parents have the right to provide their children with a religious and moral upbringing in accordance with their beliefs.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Beside the constitution, Slovenia has also enacted the Religious Freedom Act to enhance rights related to religion and conscience. The law outlines the government’s respect for religious freedom, including the legal status and rights of all religious communities. There are no requirements for registration for religious groups and faith communities are free to practice their religion whether or not they register. They must register if they wish to be legal entities and be eligible for rebates on value-added taxes.

Various government officials, including the Prime Minister, attended events organized by various religious groups in order to foster tolerance in Slovenia.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are isolated reports of minor societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Interfaith relations are generally amicable, although there is little warmth between the Catholic Church and foreign missionary groups, which are viewed as aggressive proselytizers.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 14 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a publishing house and a Bible correspondence school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is registered with the government.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Population: 609,883 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 46,158

Religious Groups: Anglican 33%, Roman Catholic 19%, South Seas Evangelical 17%, Seventh-day Adventist 11%, United Methodist 10%, indigenous animistic religions 5%, others (Muslim, Baha'i, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Unification Church, indigenous churches that have broken away from major Christian denominations) less than 5%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once a British protectorate, the Solomon Islands became the scene of some of the fiercest Pacific battles of World War II. Since achieving independence in 1976, the islands have experienced severe ethnic fighting that led to civil war in the early 21st century. The effects of the 1998-2003 civil war still linger and reconciliation is an ongoing process. The majority of the population secures its livelihood from subsistence agriculture and fishing. Timber accounts for 70% of the country's exports, but the supply is dwindling. Gold mining has resumed and has become a source of employment.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter II, Articles 3 (b) and 11 (1), of the Constitution state, respectively: "Whereas every person in Solomon Islands is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, that is to say, the right, whatever his race, place of origin, political opinions, color, creed or sex, but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for the public interest, to each and all of the following, namely . . . (b) freedom of conscience of expression and of assembly and association. . . . 11. (1) Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience, and for the purposes of this section the said freedom includes freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others, and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government provides religious freedom as a general practice. Religious organizations must register with the Registrar of Companies, which generally accepts any applications pursuant to the organization not being for-profit. The state, although not Christian, subsidizes Christian schools and hospitals for the public good. In order to receive government funds, church schools must adjust their curricula to meet government standards. In public schools, one hour each day is devoted to

religious instruction, though attendance is not mandatory. Instruction in religions other than Christianity is permitted, although there were no reports of it taking place.

Private Attitudes and Actions: The Solomon Islands are dominated by five major Christian denominations. In the past there were instances of local village church leaders advocating Sunday-worship only for Christians. However, there has been a marked decrease in such incidents and a greater level of tolerance now prevails. The Solomon Islands Christian Association is an organization representing various denominations and works closely with the community and the government on matters of social concern.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 186 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates two vocational schools, one high school, and 17 clinics. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely. In some areas, Adventist efforts have been hindered due to religious prejudice.

SOMALIA

Population: 10,428,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: Unknown

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 99%, others 1%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once controlled by British and Italian powers, Somalia gained independence when these European forces withdrew from the region in 1960. A 1969 coup ushered Somalia into more than 20 years of authoritarian rule. This government collapsed in 1991 and Somalia has

maintained a constant state of crisis. Somalia is considered Africa's most failed state. Rivalry between the superpowers during the Cold War resulted in the presence of innumerable weapons and fueled inter-tribal conflict. Significant political instability, the collapse of infrastructure, famine, malnutrition, and piracy are among the consequences of the country's ongoing civil war. Radical Islam has found a refuge in Somalia and a massive exodus of people fleeing to neighboring countries presents a regional humanitarian disaster. Islamist insurgents took hold of Somalia for most of the 21st century's first decade. Kenyan peacekeepers launched an offensive in 2011 that successfully drove the insurgents out of major urban strongholds. In 2012, Somalia reinstated its Parliament for the first time in two decades. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, an academic and activist, was chosen by Parliament as acting president in hopes of long-awaited political stability.

Constitutional Provision: The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) Charter does not specifically protect religious practice, but Article 71 states that the 1960 Somalia Constitution still applies "in respect of all matters not covered and not inconsistent with this Charter." The 1960 Somalia Constitution states in Article 29, "Every person has the right to freedom of conscience and to freely profess his own religion and to worship it subject to any limitations which may be prescribed by law for the purpose of safeguarding morals, public health, [and] order."

State Attitudes and Actions: Though the Transitional Federal Government provides for religious freedom, it is limited in extent and practice. The TFG established Islam as the national religion and, in the northern region of Somaliland, Islam is also declared as the official religion. In the northern region of Puntland, security forces closely monitor religious activities and proselytism of non-Muslims is expressly prohibited. Elsewhere in the country, proselytism is disallowed by informal social consensus. Christian-based international relief organizations generally operate freely, although they are not allowed to

proselytize. Moreover, there are reports of significant interference from al-Shabaab, which is considered a terrorist organization. Religious groups are required to obtain approved entry visas and are prohibited from practicing certain doctrines. Religious practices outside Islam by ethnic Somalis are not accepted by the culture. The TFG does not enforce legal protection of religious freedom. This is partly because the central government exercises limited control over a small area, while the majority of the country is under the control of extremist militias.

Private Attitudes and Actions: The country is almost entirely Muslim, but there are reports of tensions within the Muslim community as well as with other minority groups. Non-Sunni Muslims are viewed with suspicion by the Sunni majority. Non-Muslims who openly practice their religious beliefs face harassment and rejection. Conversion from Islam is not legally prohibited, but is seen as unacceptable by society. Al-Shabaab administration officials use Shari'a as a tool for authoritarian control. Violence is escalating against practicing and suspected Christians. Various reports indicate that Al-Shabaab executed a Muslim cleric for speaking out against the terrorist group. The 2013 execution by Al-Shabaab of a suspected Christian convert was also reported. No places of worship exist for non-Muslims in Somalia.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience: There are no reported Seventh-day Adventist members or churches in Somalia.

SOUTH AFRICA

Population: 48,375,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 116,826

Religious Groups: Zion Christian 11%, Apostolic 10%, other Christian (Pentecostal, charismatic groups, Methodist, Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, Greek Orthodox, Dutch Reformed, Congregational) 59%, no affiliation 15%, other (Hindu, Muslim,

Jewish, Buddhist, indigenous beliefs) less than 5 percent (2001 census). Many combine Christian and indigenous religious practices.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Cape Town, on the southern tip of the African continent, was founded by Dutch explorers on trade routes to Asia in the 17th century. Struggles for control of the region ensued between British and Dutch forces, ending in the establishment of an independent Republic of South Africa in 1961. Because the region's black majority was barred from voting, the whites-only National Party controlled the government for decades. During this time, South Africa became increasingly isolated due to its policy of apartheid—the systematic segregation of races and marginalization of the black majority. In 1994, South Africa held its first elections open to all races, which brought the end of apartheid and the beginning of African National Congress rule under President Nelson Mandela. Despite being the richest and most industrialized nation on the continent, South Africa faces enormous challenges, including poverty and a high crime rate. Violence against women and girls continues to mar the country's human rights record. South Africa also struggles with the second-highest number of HIV/AIDS patients in the world.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter 2, Section 15: “Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. The government allows religious freedom for all faiths. Christianity is the majority religion in South Africa, but the law does not recognize a state religion. The government recognizes Christian holidays and provides for, but does not require, Christian teaching in public schools. Members of other religions may observe their own religious holidays and are provided religious counsel in prisons and during military service.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious. Many ecumenical contacts take place among the denominations, the largest being the South African Council of Churches. The major traditional indigenous religions, along with most Afrikaans-language churches, have their own coordinating bodies. A number of reports state that private organizations and individuals made anti-Semitic comments in public. These were isolated incidents. On October 3, 2014, religious leaders held an interfaith memorial service for a South African victim of the Westgate Mall attack in Kenya.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,041 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college, five high schools, 22 nursing homes, one publishing house, and a Bible correspondence school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely. The church's religious liberty department is active in building bridges with the government, civil society, and other faith groups.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: It is reported that some church members were denied religious freedom either by government employment structures, government or private schools, or private companies. The church's religious liberty department intervenes when such situations arise.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely although there are isolated cases of intimidation where other religious groups disrupt evangelistic meetings for fear of losing their members.

SOUTH SUDAN

Population: 11,562,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 21,288

Religions: Muslim 18-35%, principal Christian groups (Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Sudan Pentecostal, Sudan Interior, Presbyterian Evangelical, African Inland Church), smaller groups (Ethiopian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Greek Orthodox). A substantial part of the population probably adheres to indigenous religious beliefs or combines Christian and indigenous practices.

Perspectives on Current Issues: The world's newest sovereign state encompasses a region with a history of strife and power struggles. Throughout the 19th century, British and Egyptian forces clashed for control of the region. During this time, Christian missionaries converted the southern portion of what, in 1956, became an independent Sudan. Conflicts between the country's Muslim majority and the Christian and animist minorities erupted into violent uprisings that claimed the lives of an estimated 2.5 million people in Africa's longest civil war. A Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in 2005 and in 2011, 98% of the Southern Sudanese people voted for independence. While South Sudan's economic future is hopeful due to large oil deposits in its territory, disagreements with Sudan have stalled production and exportation. South Sudan also faces violence by guerilla groups that have claimed 800,000 lives.

Constitutional Provision: The Transitional Constitution was adopted by the South Sudan Legislative Assembly and came into force on July 9, 2011. It clearly states the separation of religion and state and guarantees that all religions shall be treated equally and specifies that religion or religious beliefs shall not be used for divisive purposes. The Transitional Constitution also guarantees the right to assembly and specifically recognizes the days of rest of every religious group.

State Attitudes and Actions: The laws and official government policies respect and protect religious liberties in South Sudan. There have been reports,

however, of discrimination by government officials against Muslims seeking passports or naturalization documents. The government has also been criticized for not yet acting to restore seized lands owned by Muslim families before South Sudanese independence. President Kiir has publically stated his full support for religious liberty and the return of seized properties. Muslims and Christians are represented in various government positions at the national and state levels.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are reports of religious discrimination particularly, against the Muslim population. Muslim leaders report widespread discrimination in seeking employment. Societal mistrust of the Muslim community in South Sudan has been attributed to the very recent civil war and continued hostility with Sudan. Religious leaders in South Sudan have actively sought interreligious dialogue to encourage tolerance.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 57 Seventh-day Adventist churches and these are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There have been no reports of difficulties or discrimination.

Freedom to Evangelize: The church is allowed to evangelize freely in South Sudan.

SPAIN

Population: 47,737,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 16,513

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 71%, non-believers 17%, atheist 8%, other (Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Buddhist, Orthodox Christian, Baha'i, Scientologist, Hindu, Christian Scientist, other Christian groups) 3% (2014 survey)

Perspectives on Current Issues: The Kingdom of Spain was unified by the marriage of King Ferdinand to Queen Isabella, who sponsored the first voyage of Christopher Columbus to the New World in 1492. Spain's national history has been closely linked to the Roman Catholic Church and its efforts to thwart the Protestant Reformation, as well as expel Muslims and Jews in the 16th century. Spain was also a world power, controlling vast stretches of the Americas, and parts of Africa and Asia through the 19th century. Though Spain remained neutral during both World Wars, the nation was ruled by a military dictatorship that ended in 1975. A constitutional monarchy was restored and democracy returned to Spain. This Mediterranean nation has since joined the European Union and has been able to quickly modernize its economy. Still, high unemployment is a major issue for Spaniards. Human rights issues include political corruption, police responses, arbitrary detentions, torture, and poor treatment of asylum-seekers and migrants held in extra-territorial detention centers.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution provides for religious freedom in Article 16: "(1) Freedom of ideology, religion, individuals and communities is guaranteed without any limitation in their demonstrations other than that which is necessary for the maintenance of public order protected by law. (2) No one may be obliged to make a declaration on his ideology, religion, or beliefs. (3) No religion shall have a state character. The public powers shall take into account the religious beliefs of Spanish society and maintain the appropriate relations of cooperation, with the Catholic Church and other denominations."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice. There continue to be concerns that Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Buddhists do not have cooperation agreements with the government, which would afford them the same benefits and privileges as other groups with "deeply rooted status." Groups are required to register with the

government, though in practice unregistered groups are allowed to operate freely, but without certain privileges. In general, the government places no legal restrictions on opening new places of worship; however, representatives of minority religious groups sometimes have difficulty opening places of worship, most frequently because of resistance from neighborhood groups. The Spanish Ministry of Justice monitors hate crimes, including those that seem religiously motivated. The national government is still discussing the possibility of enacting legislation aimed at granting Spanish citizenship to descendants of Sephardic Jews expelled in the 16th century.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious, although there are ongoing tensions surrounding the increase in the country's immigrant population and the spread of Islam. Several religiously affiliated NGOs have held tolerance conferences throughout Spain.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 107 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one high school, one seminary, a health-food factory, a retirement home, a publishing house, a radio station, and a Bible correspondence school. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely. Church officials have good relations with state authorities and are signatories to the agreement between the state and Protestant entities.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees. The 1992 government accord with the Federation of Protestant Entities also accommodates Seventh-day Adventists who celebrate Saturday as the Sabbath by giving them Friday afternoon off from work, with pay.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

SRI LANKA

Population: 21,866,000 (2013 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,757

Religious Groups: Buddhist 70%, Hindu 15%, Christian (Roman Catholic 80%, Anglican, Seventh-day Adventist, Jehovah's Witness, Methodist, Assembly of God, Baptist, Pentecostal, Dutch Reformed, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) 8%, Muslim 7%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Consisting of a main island off the coast of the Indian sub-continent, Sri Lanka is a largely Buddhist nation that gained independence from British rule in 1948. Violent struggles for power have kept this nation from developing its economy throughout the 20th century. Ethnic violence has isolated hundreds of thousands in Sri Lanka and has killed 70,000. The civil war between government forces and the Tamil Tigers resulted in many forced disappearances. However, there are signs that Sri Lanka is now beginning to overcome its negative reputation among the international community and may be on a path to greater protection of human rights. The recovery of tourism is a clear sign of overall improvement. The country's trade deficit has risen to 93%, which constitutes a challenge, but the influx of funds from Sri Lankans working outside the country has somewhat reduced the impact of this shortfall. Moreover, the prospect of foreign investment in infrastructure, especially by China, will most likely boost the economy in the near future.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter II, Article 9: "The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the State to protect and foster the Buddha Sasana, while assuring to all religions the rights granted by Articles 10 and 14 (1) (e)." Chapter III, Article 10 states: "Every person is entitled to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including the freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice." Chapter III, Article 14 (1) (e) continues:

“Every citizen is entitled to the freedom, either by himself or in association with others, and either in public or in private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice, and teaching.”

State Attitudes and Actions: During the course of the 26-year civil war between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), all religious groups faced difficulties. The war, which ended in May 2009, claimed at least 100,000 lives. The constitution endorses religious freedom, while at the same time promoting Buddhism. Evangelical Christian groups encounter difficulties with registration. The government has committed to dealing with religiously motivated violence. However, Christians tend to believe that the authorities give tacit approval to some of the perpetrators of violence.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Buddhist fanaticism is the main source of religious violence. The All Ceylon Buddhist Congress (ACBC) has campaigned against what it calls “unethical conversions” of Christian groups converting Buddhists. The Jathika Hela Urumaya Party (JHU) introduced a bill before parliament in 2004 seeking the criminalization of “unethical conversions.” Portions of the bill are considered unconstitutional and it has not been passed. In recent years, there were numerous attacks upon Christian churches, pastors, and members.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 37 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates three schools, one hospital, and one publishing house.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventists experience continual difficulties in obtaining work or attending school due to their Sabbath observance.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism is very difficult in the context of Buddhist fanaticism and strong anti-Christian sentiment.

SUDAN

Population: 35,482,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 105

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 97%, Christian (Coptic Orthodox, Greek Orthodox Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox, Africa Inland Church, Armenian (Apostolic) Church, Sudan Church of Christ, Sudan Interior Church, Sudan Pentecostal, Sudan Evangelical Presbyterian, Presbyterian Church of the Sudan, Seventh-day Adventist, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Jehovah's Witness) 3%, indigenous beliefs less than 1%. Some Christians and Muslims incorporate aspects of traditional beliefs into their monotheistic faiths.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Sudan is one of Africa's largest countries with a very diverse population. Once controlled by the Britain and Egypt, Sudan became an independent state in 1956. Since independence, the Sudanese government has been controlled by Islamic-favoring military regimes. Two civil wars—between the Islamic majority and southern minority groups, including Christians—have devastated the country and resulted in an estimated 2.5 million deaths. A peace agreement was signed in 2005 and in 2011, the southern ten Sudanese states voted to become a separate, independent country. The painful legacy of the conflict in Sudan's Darfur region has contributed to the ongoing suffering of the Sudanese people. Seven million people have been displaced in total. In spite of the country's considerable natural resources, poverty is widespread. The International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague has accused the current Sudanese president, Omar al-Bashir, of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur. Though the ICC issued a warrant for his arrest in March 2009, he has not yet been detained.

Constitutional Provision: The 2005 Interim National Constitution (INC) was enacted as a result of the peace agreement that ended the longest running civil war in African history. It expressly recognizes the country's diversity of ethnicity and religion. The INC protects the freedom to worship, assemble,

establish places of worship and specifically protects the right to observe religious days of rest. However, the constitution also allows for legislation and policy based on “popular consensus,” which has resulted in the establishment of Shari’a law. The law forbids conversion from Islam to any other religion.

State Attitudes and Actions: Sudanese law is based on its interpretation of Islamic Shari’a law. No Sudanese citizen is permitted to convert to any religion other than Islam under penalty of imprisonment or death. Sudanese law also regulates marriages by not permitting interfaith marriages if the husband is not a Muslim. Religious groups are required to register with the government according to the March 2006 Organization of Humanitarian and Voluntary Work Act. However, this requirement is not generally enforced, and some Christian groups that are registered still pay taxes. Many Christian groups refuse to register for fear of government interference. Religious groups are required to obtain building permits from the government before constructing houses of worship. Sudan has historically discriminated against Christian groups requesting permits. All schools, including private religious schools of other faiths, are mandated to provide religious instruction in the Islamic tradition.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Past and current government policies that favor certain religious groups to the detriment of others have undermined religious tolerance in Sudanese society. Muslims who want to convert to Christianity face extreme social pressure to remain Muslim. Muslim converts to Christianity are generally regarded as social outcasts and are sometimes forced to leave the country. Social pressure remains for all women to wear headscarves in public, though it has decreased somewhat from past years. Employers continue to defy government regulations that allow Christians two hours for prayer on Sundays. Christians have reported worshipping on Fridays, Saturdays or Sunday evenings to avoid conflicts with their employers.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: The church operates one vocational training academy and a Bible correspondence school.

Sabbath keeping for Students and Employees: Converts to the Seventh-day Adventist Church experience the same discrimination and abuse faced by any Muslim converting to Christianity.

Freedom to Evangelize: The church faces tremendous challenges to evangelize due to the fate of converts to Christianity.

SURINAME

Population: 573,300 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 3,444

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 20%, Hindu 20%, Protestant (Moravian, Lutheran, Dutch Reformed, Evangelical, Baptist, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) 21%, Muslim 13.5%, indigenous beliefs 3%, other (Baha'i, Jewish, Buddhist, Brahma Kumari, Hare Krishna, Rastafarian, ancestor worship, indigenous beliefs) present in small numbers. Citizens who identify as Christian often combine Christian practices with indigenous religious customs.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Formerly named Dutch Guiana, Suriname is the only Dutch-speaking nation in South America. Boasting vast ecological treasures and white beaches, the potential for Suriname's tourist industry is ripe but untapped. The country's relatively high standard of living is shadowed by a serious lack of infrastructure needed to develop other industries. Currently, the mining of bauxite and other minerals sustain the Surinamese economy. The Surinamese government, however, has not been a stabilizing force for the nation. Since gaining independence from the Netherlands in 1975, Suriname has suffered civil war, military coups, dictatorship, and unstable democracies. Social and political lines are drawn on ethnicity, which has created a difficult road to national consensus.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter V, Article 18: “Everyone has the right of freedom of religion and philosophy of life.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects and protects freedom of conscience for its citizens. The government does not have any requirements for recognition or registration of religious organizations. There are no restrictions on missionaries entering the country. Public schools are not permitted to offer religious instruction by law. Parents are also not permitted to home school their children even for religious reasons, but may enroll them in private schools with religious affiliation. Military personnel are entitled to the chaplain of their religious affiliation.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Members of various religious groups have amicable relationships with one another. There have been no reports of strife or violence. The government, at times, consults with the Inter-Religious Council whose members represent Islam, Hinduism, and the Roman Catholic Church.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 15 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one bookstore. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

SWAZILAND

Population: 1,419,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 6,891

Religious Groups: Christian (Roman Catholic, a blend of Christianity and indigenous ancestral worship known locally as Zionism, Anglican, Methodist,

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witness) 90%, Muslim 2%, other (Jewish, Baha'i, native African beliefs) 8%

Perspectives on Current Issues: King Mswati III rules one of only seven remaining absolute monarchies in the world, the Kingdom of Swaziland. Since being granted independence in 1968, attempts at democratic reform have not been successful. In 2006, King Mswati III enacted a new constitution after his father dissolved the previous constitution in the 1970s. The constitution has served only to strengthen the power of the monarch, and King Mswati III has banned all opposition political parties and trade unions. The greatest human rights concerns for this country, however, are poverty and inadequate healthcare. Life expectancy is 41 years. It is reported that 26% of the population is HIV positive and one-third of children are orphans. Violence against women is reportedly widespread.

Constitutional Provision: The 2006 constitution states in Article 23 that a person has the right to "freedom of thought, conscience or religion."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. The law requires religious groups to register with the government, and new groups are expected to do so upon organizing. Government approval is required for construction of religious buildings in urban areas, but no groups have been restricted from building places of worship. Some non-Christian groups complain of minor delays in obtaining permits due to the slow bureaucratic process. Religious instruction that is primarily Christian is allowed in public schools. The only organized religious youth clubs officially permitted in schools are Christian, although this is not enforced in practice. Government-owned television and radio stations do not allow non-Christian groups to broadcast messages. The monarchy supports many Christian events, and it is common practice for the royal family to attend various Christian programs.

Unlike in previous reports, there are no reports of traditional tribal leaders discriminating against other religious groups in rural areas.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious and there are no significant tensions. Five different religious groups peacefully coexist with adjoining properties in Mbabane.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 21 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one high school and one clinic. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

SWEDEN

Population: 9,723,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,781

Religious Groups: Lutheran 67.5%, Muslim 6%, other Christian (Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Missionary (or Missions) Church, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) less than 5%, other (Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Zoroastrian, Hare Krishna, Scientology, Word of Faith, Unification Church)

Perspectives on Current Issues: An extremely high standard of living, high life expectancy, and robust economy are Swedish trademarks through the 20th and 21st centuries. This Scandinavian country ranks as the world's fourth least corrupt nation in the world according to Transparency International. Sweden has become a refuge for refugees and asylum-seekers; nearly 10% of the country's population is now foreign born. Though Sweden joined the European

Union in 1995, a strong majority of voters rejected taking on the Euro as currency.

Constitutional Provision: Article 1 of the constitution states: “Every citizen shall be guaranteed . . . freedom of worship: that is, the freedom to practice one’s religion alone or in the company of others.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice. Recognition or registration is not required to carry out religious activity. The Church of Sweden (Lutheran), once associated with the state, severed this link in 2000. Religious education encompassing all world religions is compulsory in secondary schools. Sweden does, however, protect the right of churches to operate independent, religiously affiliated schools.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are some reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Citizens are generally tolerant of diverse religious practices. However, anti-Semitism exists, and Muslims are subject to hate crimes and discrimination. Some resident Muslims maintain anti-Semitic views.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 33 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a junior college, a food factory, and a publishing house. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

SWITZERLAND

Population: 8,061,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 4,448

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 41.8%, Protestant 35.3%, Muslim 4.3%, Christian Orthodox 1.8%, atheist 11%, other (Old Catholic, other Christian denominations, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish) less than 1%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Switzerland's strict neutrality and central location in Europe have contributed to making this one of the richest countries in the world. No other country operates as such a direct democracy as Switzerland; citizens are consulted on nearly every piece of legislation, especially foreign affairs and constitutional amendments. Switzerland is also known for its linguistic and religious diversity. There are four official languages: German, French, Italian and Romansch. More than 22% of people living in Switzerland are foreign born. The diversity of its population has increased because of the international agencies located in Switzerland. However, the UN, whose human rights branch is located in Geneva, has criticized the country for failing to concretely combat racism and xenophobia. The Swiss government has also recently apologized for collaborating with the Nazis on financial matters and keeping out Jewish refugees during World War II.

Constitutional Provision: Article 15 of the constitution states: "(1) The freedom of faith and conscience is guaranteed. (2) Every person has the right to freely choose his or her religion or non-denominational belief and to profess them alone or in community with others. (3) Every person has the right to join or belong to a religious community and to receive religious education. (4) No person may be forced to join a religious community, to conduct a religious act or participate in religious education."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice. With the exception of two, most cantons (administrative divisions within Switzerland) financially support a traditional church—either

Roman Catholic, Old Catholic or Protestant—via a church tax. Most public schools offer religious instruction, though parents may request a waiver for their children. Switzerland banned the construction of minarets on mosques in 2009—a decision that has been widely criticized. The Muslim community, particularly, has brought various discrimination cases before the country's courts on issues relating to the use of *hijabs*, or head coverings, for women.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are isolated reports of societal abuse and discrimination, but whether these instances are based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, or rather on ethnicity and culture is difficult to determine. There are some incidents of vandalism against Jews and Muslims. The Swiss Jewish Association warns that a series of decisions by Swiss courts on minarets or male circumcision is an indication that the government seeks to limit religious freedom.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 49 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one school, a retirement home, and a publishing house. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is registered and recognized by the Swiss government.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely, but church leaders report occasional problems with local authorities in finding places for public meetings.

SYRIA

Population: 17,951,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: Unknown

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 74%, other Muslim (Alawis, Ismailis, Shi'a) 13%, Druze 3%, Christian 8-10%

Perspectives on Current Issues: The region that encompasses Syria today was once the epicenter of the Islamic Caliphate. France controlled Syria following World War I and granted independence in 1946. Today, Syria is home to many ethnic and religious groups, including Arabs, Kurds, Christians, Assyrians, Alawite Shi'a and Sunni Muslims. The Baath government is characterized by brutal authoritarian oppression. Syria is currently drawing international attention for its egregious violations of various human rights. The government's efforts to put down protests inspired by the 2011 Arab Spring have resulted in the detention of hundreds of political prisoners and the deaths of thousands of civilians. Allegations of torture are widespread and these claims are being investigated and documented by human rights organizations. Despite the deployment of UN military observers tasked with monitoring the fragile ceasefire, the violence in Syria continues and protestors have taken on a much more formal political and military organization. Discrimination, persecution, and torture of the Kurdish minority pre-date the current clashes and contribute to the country's overall poor human rights record. The economy is on the verge of collapse, according to the current president. The EU has imposed an embargo on the delivery of oil and a ban on the export of equipment destined for the gas industry. The self-proclaimed Islamic State terror group has taken advantage of the conflict in Syria and has recently taken over large portions of Syrian territory. Syria's political future hangs in the balance.

Constitutional Provision: Articles 3 and 35 of the constitution state: "Article 3. (1) The religion of the President of the Republic has to be Islam. (2) Islamic jurisprudence is a main source of legislation. . . . Article 35: (1) The freedom of faith is guaranteed. The state respects all religions. (2) The state guarantees the freedom to hold any religious rites, provided they do not disturb the public order."

State Attitudes and Actions: There is limited religious freedom in Syria. Many Christian organizations exist in this quasi-Islamic state, but these groups generally have to operate discreetly. The government aggressively prosecutes persons for their alleged membership in the Muslim Brotherhood or Salafist movements and continues to outlaw the Jehovah's Witnesses. The government monitors the activities of all groups, including religious groups, and discourages proselytizing, which it deems a threat to relations among religious groups. Atrocities continue to be carried out against members of religious minorities in parts of Syria now controlled by the jihadist terror organization known as ISIS.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are occasional reports of minor tensions between religious groups, mainly attributable to economic rivalries rather than religious affiliation. Social conventions and religious proscriptions make conversion relatively rare, especially Muslim-to-Christian conversion, which is technically illegal. Groups linked to al-Qaeda and Hezbollah have perpetrated horrific violent acts against minority Muslims, Christians, and Jews. These groups are also involved in forced conversion of non-Muslims.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no official Seventh-day Adventist churches in Syria.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

Freedom to Evangelize: There are no laws against proselytizing, but it is frowned upon by society and the government will arrest anyone who disturbs society through evangelism.

TAIWAN

Population: 23,359,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 6,077

Religious Groups: Buddhist 35%, Taoist 33%, traditional folk religion

(sometimes overlaps with Buddhism and Taoism) 80%, other (I Kuan Tao, Tien Ti Chiao (Heaven Emperor Religion), Tien Te Chiao (Heaven Virtue Religion), Li-ism, Hsuan Yuan Chiao (Yellow Emperor Religion), Tian Li Chiao (Tenrikyo), Universe Maitreya Emperor Religion, Hai Tze Tao, Zhonghua Sheng Chiao (Chinese Holy Religion), Da Yi Chiao (Great Changes Religion), Pre-cosmic Salvationism, Huang Chung Chiao (Yellow Middle Religion), Roman Catholic, Islam, Scientology, Baha'i Jehovah's Witness, Mahikari, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Unification, Presbyterian, True Jesus, Baptist, Lutheran, Seventh-day Adventist, Episcopal) less than 5% (2005 study)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Taiwan is an island off the coast of China that is engaged in an ongoing territorial dispute with mainland China. In 1949, at the end of the Chinese Civil War, the defeated Nationalist government fled to the island of Taiwan and declared itself separate from China. Taiwan was a one-party state until 1990 when multi-party elections were held. At China's requests, Taiwan lost its seat at the United Nations, and has only been able to develop diplomatic relations with a handful of countries. Human rights advocates lament corruption among the island's leaders, and freedoms of assembly and political demonstration are not fully honored. However, Taiwan is set to hold elections in 2016, and the government is pressured to take positive steps toward the eradication of corruption.

Constitutional Provision: Article 13 of the constitution states: "The people shall have freedom of religious belief."

State Attitudes and Actions: The people of Taiwan are deeply religious. The government allows the free exercise of religion and there are no registration requirements. However, registered religious groups receive tax-exempt status, whereas unregistered ones do not. Religious instruction, either in public or private schools, cannot be compulsory. Elective courses in religion may be offered at a government-accredited high school if such courses do not promote one particular religious belief over another. Taiwanese law, however, does not

guarantee the right of domestic workers and caregivers to have a day off for religious observance; this creates problems, particularly, for Sabbath observance.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Members of most faiths exist peaceably with one another and have few problems. Many people are adherents of more than one religion. Large interfaith organizations promote tolerance and dialogue.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 56 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college, two schools, and one hospital. These institutions are allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is officially recognized and enjoys tax-exempt status.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventists encounter Sabbath problems at school since they are required to attend classes on Sabbath. Military service is a requirement and there are no provisions for Sabbath-keepers or non-combatants.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is allowed to evangelize freely.

TAJIKISTAN

Population: 8,051,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 195

Religious Groups: Muslim more than 90%, Christian approximately 150,000, Jehovah's Witness approximately 700, Jewish approximately 300

Perspectives on Current Issues: Surrounded by Central Asian mountains, Tajikistan has endured invasion and insular fighting for many years. Tajikistan is considered one of the poorest countries in the former Soviet Union. Forty percent of the GDP comes from Tajiks who work in Russia. Its dependence on

natural resources from neighboring countries makes it vulnerable and unstable. Russia has reached an agreement to extend its military presence (6,000 persons, the most outside Russia) until 2062. This is prompted, some analysts say, by concern about the traffic of heroin and the expansion of the Islamists out of Afghanistan. The issue of violence against women clouds this country's human rights record.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter II, Article 26: "Each person has the right independently to determine her or his religious preference, to practice any religion alone or in association with others or to practice no religion, and to participate in the performance of religious cults, rituals, and ceremonies."

State Attitudes and Actions: The state promotes secularism and as a result there is tight control over religious matters. A law passed in 2009, the "Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations," has expanded the controls exercised by the state over religious affairs. This law has made things especially difficult for the majority Muslim population. There are size limitations on mosques. Imams and Imam-Khatibs are appointed by state bodies, thus reducing their independence. Imams are also subject to state administered tests of their knowledge of Islamic principles. Those who are not successful in the tests are removed. Jehovah's Witnesses and two Evangelical groups have been banned. Restrictions are placed upon the importation of religious literature.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of strife or violence among religious groups in Tajikistan. Some Islamic leaders view religious minority groups as a threat to national unity. Women who wore hijabs were harassed.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Government Recognition: There are six Seventh-day Adventist churches. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is recognized as a legitimate religious organization.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventists, a religious minority in a Muslim nation, experience difficulties in obtaining work or attending school due to their Sabbath observance.

Freedom to Evangelize: Government policies restrict freedom to evangelize.

TANZANIA

Population: 49,639,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 420,640

Religious Groups: Christian (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal, Seventh-day Adventist, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witness) 60%, Muslim 36%, other (Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Baha'i), 4% (2010 survey). Zanzibar: Muslim 98%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Tanzania is the union of Tanganyika and the island of Zanzibar after it achieved independence in 1963. Other than two brief military attempts to overthrow the president in 1979 and 1981, Tanzanians have lived in relative peace. Until recently, Tanzania was considered an "island of peace" in the midst of a troubled region and it shelters over one million refugees. The growing number of people affected by the HIV/AIDS virus is staggering: 1.7 million infected and 1.3 million children orphaned as a result of this tragedy. Radical Islamists are responsible for recent violence against Christians on the predominantly Muslim island of Zanzibar. The rights of women are widely violated, with domestic violence and female genital mutilation highly prevalent. There are also reports of restrictions of freedom of expression, especially in reference to the media. Tensions between the

mainland and Zanzibar are increasingly frayed; Zanzibar has its own president and parliament.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 19: “Every person has the right to the freedom of thought or conscience, belief or faith, and choice in matters of religion, including the freedom to change his religion or faith.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. There is no state religion. Religious groups are required to register. State law governs all civil and criminal cases, but Muslims may opt to have Islamic law decide cases involving civil conflict. Some Muslims consider it inappropriate for Christian judges to administer Islamic law for civil cases. All religious organizations are barred from involvement in politics. Some Christian pastors complain that it is difficult to get permits for outdoor rallies because most local government leaders in Dar es Salaam are Muslim. To promote religious tolerance, President Kikwete and other Muslim government leaders participate in various Christian events, including international events sponsored by NGOs. The President of Zanzibar also supports interfaith initiatives. In 2013, the government’s communications authority banned various religious groups from broadcasting radio programs in order to cool tensions between various religious groups.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious in rural areas; however, tensions persist in urban centers because some Muslim and Christian groups believe the government favors the other faith community. There are a few reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Some tensions between Muslims and Christians persist. The ritual killing of albinos is an ongoing tragedy in Tanzania. Various accounts have been reported of violence against mosques and churches in 2013. A number of Christian clergy were

attacked and one, a Catholic priest, was shot and killed in Zanzibar. Authorities have investigated each of these incidents and have apprehended suspects.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 2,289 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college, two high schools, a Bible correspondence school, one hospital, 36 clinics and dispensaries, and a publishing house. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

THAILAND

Population: 67,741,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 14,936

Religious Groups: Buddhist 93%, Muslim 5%, other (animist, Christian, Confucian, Hindu, Jewish, Sikh, Taoist) less than 5% (2010 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: This Southeast Asian nation is the only one in the region never to be colonized by European colonial powers. From the mid 14th century, this region existed as the unified Kingdom of Siam. In 1939, the country changed its name to the Kingdom of Thailand. This nation is officially Buddhist and, by law, its monarch is Buddhist as well. Throughout the 20th century, Thailand has lived in constant political turmoil. In 2004, government forces clashed with southern Malay-Muslim separatists in violence that claimed the lives of 5,000 people. As recently as 2014, the military stepped in to control the government in hopes of re-establishing civilian rule in the near future. The flooding of September 2011, the worst in half a century, impacted even the industrial heart of the kingdom. Two thirds of the population lives in rural areas. Five million people live below the poverty line. Political instability has

reportedly triggered arbitrary detentions and restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and assembly. Human trafficking and sex tourism have increased along with the country's tourism industry. The HIV/AIDS infection rate in Thailand has risen as well.

Constitutional Provision: Section 37 of the constitution states: “A person shall enjoy full liberty to profess a religion, a religious denomination or creed, and observe religious precepts or commandments or exercise a form of worship in accordance with his belief; provided that it is not contrary to his civic duties, public order or good morals.” “In exercising the liberty referred to in paragraph one, a person shall be protected from any act of the State, which is derogatory to his rights or detrimental to his due benefits on the grounds of professing a religion, a religious denomination or creed or observing religious precepts or commandments or exercising a form of worship in accordance with his different belief from that of others.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects the exercise of religious freedom. The constitution stipulates that the monarch should be Buddhist and Buddhism is constitutionally protected. Missionaries are free to enter the country and evangelize, but there is a limit to the number of missionaries permitted in the country at any given time. Despite this, there are missionaries—who are not recognized as such—operating freely in the country. The constitution restricts religious speech that offends or insults Buddhism or any other recognized religion. Over 30 government-backed extrajudicial killings of suspected Malay-Muslim separatists were reported in 2013 alone.

Private Attitudes and Actions: For the most part, members of differing faiths live peacefully. In the deep southern region, Muslim-on-Muslim violence has been aggressive and frequent. There are also reports of violence involving Muslims and Buddhists. These violent acts have made it difficult for individuals to experience full religious freedom. In response to numerous

violent attacks, the government has deployed police and military officers to protect monks and Buddhist temples in the far south. Separatist movements have also engaged in violent attacks, though the intersection of ethnicity and religious affiliation make it impossible to pinpoint the true cause of this violence. Unlike in previous reports, there were no incidents of violence against Falun Gong protestors.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 47 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college, three schools, three hospitals, a publishing house, and one food factory.

Government Recognition: The government recognizes the Adventist presence in Thailand.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely. However, in the southern regions of Thailand, which are dominated by Muslim separatists, evangelism can lead to persecution and death. The government offers little protection for Adventists trying to witness there.

TIMOR-LESTE

Population: 1,201,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 514

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 96.8%, Protestant (Assembly of God, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Jehovah's Witness, Christian Vision Church) 2.2%, Muslim less than 1% (2010 census). Many citizens also retain animistic beliefs and practices along with their organized religious affiliation.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Sharing one of Indonesia's islands, this nation's independence was only recently recognized. The country was invaded by Indonesia in 1975, and this was followed by decades of religious and political violence. Timor-Leste is one of the poorest nations in the world, ranking 128th of 187 countries on the Human Development Index, though petroleum resources present the potential for a better economic future. Political instability has slowed recovery from the destruction from years-long conflict with Indonesian forces and Timorese militia groups. Timor-Leste is celebrating its 10th year of independence.

Constitutional Provision: Section 45 of the constitution states: "(1) Every person is guaranteed the freedom of conscience, religion and worship and the religious denominations are separated from the State. (2) No one shall be persecuted or discriminated against on the basis of his or her religious convictions. (3) The right to be a conscientious objector shall be guaranteed in accordance with the law. (4) Freedom to teach any religion in the framework of the respective religious denomination is guaranteed."

State Attitudes and Actions: The Timor-Leste government generally allows religious freedom. Though the state has no established church, the Catholic Church has a major influence on state affairs. Since 2007, an authority was set up for the purpose of registering religious organizations. In this last reporting period, the government has greatly improved its response to acts of religious discrimination, generally.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Within the capital, Dili, various religious groups generally maintain amicable relationships. Outside of the capital, the picture changes dramatically and there have been at least four reports of religious discrimination and violence against non-Catholics. All four incidents involved Catholics attempting to force Protestants out of the country.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There is one Seventh-day Adventist church.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

TOGO

Population: 7,351,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 6,385

Religious Groups: Traditional animist 33%, Roman Catholic 28%, Sunni Muslim 14%, Protestant 10%, other Christian 10%, no affiliation 5% (2004 report)

Perspectives on Current Issues: The region known as Togo today was once part of the “Slave Coast” that witnessed millions of people captured by European powers and forced to labor in the Americas. The region was colonized by Germany in the 19th century, and then control was split between Britain and France after World War I. The British half became incorporated into what is now Ghana, and the French half became the independent Togolese Republic in 1960. Togo was controlled by a 38-year-long military dictatorship that ended with the death of Gnassingbe Eyadema in 2005. Elections have been held and political parties reinstated, but international agencies continue to question the legitimacy of Togo’s attempts at democracy. Restrictions on freedom of expression, especially when in opposition to the present regime, have been reported. The illegal trade of child laborers is estimated at 300,000. A major case of arbitrary detention of a Seventh-day Adventist pastor was finally heard before the Lomé Court of Appeals. After two years of imprisonment, Pastor Monteiro was acquitted of all charges and released. Another Seventh-day Adventist detained along with Pastor Monteiro was convicted during the same hearing and sentenced to life in prison. There is suspicion of a plot to use these men as a scapegoat for criminal activities of officials working for the Togolese political or judicial system. Togo is also known as a major distribution point for illegally poached ivory.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 25: “Every person shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, worship, opinion and expression.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The constitution does not allow any political party to identify itself with a religion. Religious groups are generally free to operate if they refrain from political activities. No other laws specifically restrict religious freedom. Three main religious groups are recognized as state religions: Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam. Other groups are required to register as associations, and such recognition affords a group the same recognition as the official religions. Religion classes are not part of the curriculum at public schools. Private religious schools are common and do not receive funding from the government. The government did not reject the applications of any religious groups.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious and there are no significant tensions. The Christian Council works to address issues common among Protestant denominations, including Seventh-day Adventists.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 40 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a radio-TV production center. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

TONGA

Population: 106,440 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,987

Religious Groups: Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga 36%, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 18%, Roman Catholic 15%, Free Church of Tonga 12%, Church of Tonga 7%, other Christian (Tokaikolo, Constitution Church of Tonga, Church of Tonga, Seventh-day Adventist, Assembly of God, Gospel Church, Anglican, Pentecostal, The Salvation Army, Jehovah's Witness), 10%, other (Baha'i, Muslim, Hindu, Chinese traditional festivals, Buddhist) 2%, unaffiliated 1% (2011 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: "The Friendly Islands" came together under a monarchy in 1845, which is today the Pacific's only remaining monarchy. Not until 2010 did Tonga allow its citizens to elect a full parliament and limit their monarchs to ceremonial rule only. This geographically isolated nation fell victim to both tsunamis and a drought in 2009, disasters from which it is still recovering. The financial support of expatriates, especially those living in the US, represents 30% of the GDP. Tonga is regarded as a very conservative Christian nation. The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga has heavily influenced the monarchy and government practices, including the establishment of a Sunday law at the constitutional level.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution, in Part I, paragraph 5, states: "All men are free to practice their religion and to worship God as they may deem fit in accordance with the dictates of their own consciences and to assemble for religious service in such places as they may appoint. But it shall not be lawful to use this freedom to commit evil and licentious acts or under the name of worship to do what is contrary to the law and peace of the land." In paragraph 6, the constitution requires that the "The Sabbath Day shall be kept holy in Tonga and no person shall practice his trade or profession or conduct any commercial undertaking on the Sabbath Day except according to law; and any

agreement made or witnessed on that day shall be null and void and of no legal effect.” The “Sabbath Day” is here understood to be Sunday.

State Attitudes and Actions: Tongans enjoy religious freedom for the most part. There is no state religion, neither is there any registration requirement. However, religious groups receive tax-exempt status when they register. The state-owned Tonga Broadcasting Commission strictly regulates the contents of religious broadcasts. No preaching on Radio Tonga or TV Tonga may be outside of the limits of mainstream Christianity.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of religious strife or tension among the various religious groups in Tonga.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 15 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one high school and one bookstore. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is recognized as a legitimate Christian denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely. However, there are reports that in some smaller communities local leaders have tried to prevent Adventist evangelistic efforts. This is the exception and not the rule.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Population: 1,223,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 64,942

Religious Groups: Protestant (Pentecostal or Evangelical 12%, Anglican 5.7%, Seventh-day Adventist 4.1%, Presbyterian or Congregational 2.5%,

Baptist 1.2%, Methodist 0.7%) 26.2%, Roman Catholic 21.6%, Jehovah's Witness 1.5%, other Christian 9.8%, Hindu 18.2%, Muslim 5%, traditional religions (Spiritual Baptists 5.7%, Orisha 0.9%) 6.6%, other (small Christian groups, Baha'i, Rastafarian, Buddhist, Jewish) 7.5%, unspecified 11.1%, no affiliation 2.2% (2011 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Just north of South America's Caribbean coast lie a pair of islands as one nation. Trinidad and Tobago is one of the wealthiest countries in the Caribbean, due in large part to its vast oil and natural gas deposits. The descendants of African slaves brought to the islands under colonial control, followed by Indian laborers who arrived in the 19th century, make up most of Trinidadian society today. Due mostly to a narcotics trade route from South America to the United States, Trinidad and Tobago have faced rising violent and organized crime in recent years. While this has hurt the tourism industry, the government has made strides to encourage more visitors, particularly to the island of Tobago.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter 1, Part I, Article 4 (h) of the constitution states: "It is hereby recognized and declared that in Trinidad and Tobago there have existed and shall continue to exist, without discrimination by reason of race, origin, color, religion or sex, the following fundamental human rights and freedoms, namely: (h) The freedom of conscience and religious belief and observance."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects and protects freedom of conscience for its citizens. Religious organizations may operate as business entities without registering with the state; however, in order to receive tax-exempt status or to perform marriages, religious groups must register. The state subsidizes religiously affiliated schools and permits religious instruction in public schools. Attendance at these classes is voluntary and no religious group has a monopoly on religious instruction. Home schooling is not allowed, since the Education Act mandates formal schooling for all children. Trinidad

and Tobago have a law that prohibits offending or insulting another person in relation to race, origin, or religion—this is generally not enforced. This law also provides for prosecution of those desecrating a place of worship. The government limits the number of missionaries per religious group to 35 at any given time. The law that prohibits offending others could effectively cap evangelism by restricting religious free speech. Government officials have regularly attended and spoken at religious holiday celebrations of various religious groups, emphasizing tolerance and religious freedom.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Members of various religious communities have amicable relationships with one another.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 150 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one hospital, two clinics, one university, four schools, and one bookstore. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

TUNISIA

Population: 10,937,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 47

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 99%, other (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Russian Orthodox, French Reformist, Anglican, Seventh-day Adventist, Greek Orthodox, Jehovah's Witness, Jewish

Perspectives on Current Issues: The movement that came to be known as the Arab Spring began in Tunisia, and has ushered in vast political change for this country. Once a French protectorate, Tunisia was granted independence in 1956. Fundamentalist Islamic and authoritarian rule marred Tunisia's first 31 years as a nation. A nonviolent coup replaced the president, but the years that led to the December 2010 uprising saw unfettered corruption, high unemployment, and widespread poverty. Rioting continued into 2011 when President Ben Ali dismissed the government and fled the country. Tunisians instituted a "national unity government" that led to the drafting and eventual enactment of the 2014 constitution. In Tunisia's first elections under the new constitution, a secular political party won control of the government. Unemployment has risen to 18% since the revolution, but Tunisia continues to be the most prosperous country in Northern Africa. Tunisia is the fifth largest purveyor of phosphate and derives a significant amount of funding from its sale, but production has been adversely affected by the recent social upheaval. While Tunisia's government has maintained success against Islamist parties, there is concern over rising terrorist activity at the hand of extremist groups. Tunisia has strong ties to the European Union and it is estimated that Tunisia has provided the greatest number of foreign fighters in Syria.

Constitutional Provision: The 2014 Constitution states in Article 6: "The State shall protect religion, guarantee freedom of belief and conscience and religious practices, and ensure the impartiality of mosques and places of worship way from partisan instrumentalisation. The State shall commit to spreading the values of moderation and tolerance, protecting sanctities and preventing attacks on them, just as it shall commit to preventing calls of *takfeer* [calling another Muslim an unbeliever] and incitement to hatred and violence and to confronting them."

State Attitudes and Actions: For the first time, Tunisia's government has taken a turn in the direction of absolute protection of religious liberty, and civil rights for women. Observers hope the new constitution will bring about lasting

reform in these areas. Christians and other religious minorities in the country are “cautiously optimistic” about the future of religious freedom.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most religious organizations have amicable relationships and tolerate one another. Muslims who convert face social ostracism. Some cartoons depict derogatory caricatures of Jews.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There is one Seventh-day Adventist church.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism of Muslims is illegal.

TURKEY

Population: 81,619,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 109

Religious Groups: Muslim (mostly Sunni) 99%, other (Roman Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Baha'i, Yezidis, Jehovah's Witness, Protestant, Iraqi Chaldean Christian, Greek Orthodox, Jewish) less than 1%

Perspectives on Current Issues: The present-day Turkish nation was founded in 1923 after the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire. Turkey sits on the link between Europe and Asia, which has historically made this region a strategic stronghold. Since 1923, through the vision of President Ataturk, this nation has instituted various reforms to create a democratic and secular state. In 1999, Turkey sought membership in the European Union. Turkey's human rights record is seen as a stumbling block to its acceptance into the EU. The ongoing conflict with the Kurdish community, reported restriction to freedom of expression, violence against women, and allegations of torture are all areas of concern. Military service is compulsory, with no exemptions for conscientious objectors.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Part II, Chapter 1, Article 24, “(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religious belief and conviction. (5) No one shall be allowed to exploit or abuse religion or religious feelings, or things held sacred by religion, in any manner whatsoever, for the purpose of personal or political influence, or for even partially basing the fundamental, social, economic, political, and legal order of the state on religious tenets.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The constitution provides a measure of religious freedom. The government, through its adoption of a secular state policy, has sought to respect this right. In maintaining this secular state ideology, the state continues to impose restrictions upon the religious expression of Muslim and non-Muslim groups. By law, religious leaders of any religion are prohibited from “reproaching or vilifying” any government law or action. Though Turkey considers itself a secular country, the state does provide for training of Sunni Muslim clerics and religious instruction in schools. Non-Muslim parents may request an exemption for their children. Local government officials consistently denied minority religious groups the same constitutional rights afforded to Muslims. In 2013, however, the government lifted the absolute ban on wearing headscarves for female government employees. Various female Members of Parliament wore headscarves to parliamentary sessions for the first time.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Threats against non-Muslims have created an atmosphere of pressure and diminished freedom for some non-Muslim communities. Religious pluralism is widely viewed as a threat to Islam and to national unity. Muslims, Christians, Jews, members of the Baha’i faith, and participants in other religious groups face societal suspicion and mistrust.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are three Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: As a religious minority in a Muslim nation, Adventists have found Sabbath-keeping a continual hindrance in obtaining work or attending school.

Freedom to Evangelize: Adventists may only worship publicly in a few buildings; consequently, most worship is done in private homes for fear of reprisal. Only in private settings can evangelism be safely practiced. In some cases, those suspected of being Christian missionaries have been prosecuted and punished.

TURKMENISTAN

Population: 5,171,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 94

Religious Groups: Muslim 89%, Eastern Orthodox 9%, other (Protestant, Russian Orthodox, French Reformist, Anglican, Seventh-day Adventist, Greek Orthodox, Jehovah's Witness, Jewish) 2%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Turkmenistan is a land once ruled by the Persian and Russian Empires as well as the Soviet Union. The recent death of a longstanding dictator has brought this country out of political and economic isolation. Exports of petroleum and natural gas have boosted the economy and brought about a growth of 10.1%. Intimidation of political opponents is said to occur. Restrictions of freedom of religion, of expression, and of assembly are documented. Reports of prisoners being deprived of their rights and the persecution and imprisonment of conscientious objectors have drawn international criticism.

Constitutional Provision: Section 1, Article 11 of the constitution states: "The Government guarantees freedom of religion and faith and the equality of religions and faiths before the law. Religious organizations are separate from

the Government, and may not perform Governmental functions. The Governmental system of education is separate from religious organizations and is secular in nature. Everyone has the right independently to determine her or his own religious preference, to practice any religion alone or in association with others, to practice no religion, to express and disseminate beliefs related to religious preference, and to participate in the performance of religious cults, rituals, and ceremonies.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Although there is no state religion, Sunni Islam receives special favors, including financial support to build mosques and payment of the salaries of clerics. The state approves the appointment of senior clerics. Minority religious groups experience some difficulty regarding registration, which is essential for them to operate legally. They also experience difficulty in procuring places of worship due to government restrictions. It is illegal to publish religious literature and import of such material is strictly controlled.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of religious strife between religious groups. Leaving one’s religious tradition, especially if Islamic, can result in ostracism. There is a general distrust of foreign religious influences.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There is one Seventh-day Adventist church.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: For Adventists, who are a religious minority in a predominately Muslim nation, Sabbath-keeping makes it difficult to find work or attend school.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism is greatly restricted by government policies.

TUVALU

Population: 10,782 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 270

Religious Groups: Church of Tuvalu (Congregationalist) 97%, Seventh-day Adventist 1.5%, Baha'i 1%, other (Muslim, Baptist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) less than 1%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Once linked to other islands as a British colony, the present nation of Tuvalu was born when ethnic Micronesians decided to create their own state apart from the ethnic Polynesian majority on the other islands. Tuvalu gained its independence in 1978 and is comprised of nine islands, five of which are coral atolls. Tuvalu's economy subsists on issuing commercial tuna fishing licenses, exporting coconut products, and maintaining strong links to Taiwan. Tuvalu is also receiving \$50 million over the course of the next twelve years by selling its internet suffix “-.tv”, which is now used by television broadcasters. Tuvalu is, religiously, almost homogenous as over 97% of the population claims to be Congregationalist Christian.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter II, Article 23, of the constitution states: (1) “Except with his consent no-one shall be hindered in the exercise of his freedom of belief. (2) Freedom of belief includes (a) freedom of thought, religion and belief; and (2) freedom to change religion or belief; and (c) freedom, either alone or with others, to show and to spread, both in public and in private, a religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Even though the Church of Tuvalu is the official state religion, the nation generally respects religious freedom. Churches of 50 members or more must register with the state. Failing to register could result in prosecution. Tribal councils on each island have been granted the authority by the national government to approve or ban new religious groups on the various islands. Some minority religious groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses have

reported informal or official banning on some islands. The national government has not yet ruled on whether this is compatible with the Tuvaluan constitution.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Although churches in Tuvalu have friendly relationships, there have been some acts of discrimination directed toward members of the Brethren Church. Other non-mainstream churches have also faced societal discrimination. There is a tendency to believe that new churches and minority faiths are a threat to the nation's traditions and culture. Violent acts or threats of violent action have caused members of some of these religious minority groups to move to other islands.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There is one Seventh-day Adventist church. It is generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

UGANDA

Population: 35,918,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 274,277

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 42%, Anglican 36%, Pentecostal or Orthodox 15%, Evangelical 7%, Muslim 12%, Hindu 3%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Uganda was granted independence in 1962. The country's boundaries—drawn by British colonizers—included many different ethnic and linguistic groups, making political cohesiveness very difficult. Two dictatorial regimes coupled with guerilla conflicts throughout the 20th century have claimed nearly half a million lives. President Museveni began governing in 1986 and has led Uganda through democratic, economic, and

human rights reforms with the support of Western nations. Uganda has maintained steady economic growth since the 1990s. Uganda has also been able to expel a brutal revolutionary group, the Lord's Resistance Army, and its notorious leader, Joseph Kony. Controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS has been a focus of the Ugandan government and infection rates have dropped by about 20% over the past two decades. Women, however, are still subjected to high levels of violence. It is reported that sexual minorities are persecuted and homosexuality is officially a criminal offence.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution forbids the establishment of a state religion, and further protects religious belief and practice in Article 29, which states: “(1) Every person shall have the right to . . . (c) freedom to practice any religion and manifest such practice, which shall include the right to belong to and participate in the practices of any religious body or organization in a manner consistent with this Constitution.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution. However, local officials restrict nighttime public gatherings in order to prevent violence and noise, which indirectly hampers the worship services of some religious groups. Public schools provide religious instruction as a general overview of world religions. Private schools may offer religious instruction at their own discretion. The government continues to monitor the activities of groups it perceives as “cults,” including Nazareth Ministries in the Mtyana District, a group called “666” in Lwengo, and an undisclosed group of 12 persons in Kabale arrested and detained for “cult practices.” In 2013, government officials shut down ten madrasahs in the country for alleged ties to terrorist activity. The Uganda Muslim Youth Assembly has filed a lawsuit against the government; there have been no developments in this case. Unlike in previous reports, the Ugandan government did not deny registration to any new religious organization in the

country with the exception of the New Jerusalem Church in the Agago District due to “security reasons.”

Private Attitudes and Actions: In 2013, the pastor and members of the His Voice Assembly (a Christian group) vandalized and burned nine African-traditional religion shrines belonging to various families. The police made arrests and chose to release the detainees pending the amicable resolution of the matter among the parties involved. No issues related to the banning of headscarves or hijabs by women were reported, unlike in previous reports.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 878 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, one high school, one hospital, 17 clinics and dispensaries, and a publishing house. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: On August 1, 2006, the Supreme Court in Kampala rejected an appeal filed in March 2005 by members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that sought a ban on weekend classes (namely, those held on Saturday) at Makerere University. The seven-member panel stated that the current policy was “rational, fair and proportional.”

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

UKRAINE

Population: 44,291,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 51,683

Religious Groups: Orthodox 70.6%, Greek-Catholic 5.7%, Roman Catholic 1.3%, Protestant 0.8%, Muslim 0.7%, Jewish 0.3%, Christian 8.6%, no affiliation 11.3% (2013 survey)

Perspectives on Current Issues: This Slavic nation was once part of the Soviet Union, but gained independence upon its collapse in 1991. Since then, Ukraine has been at the epicenter of the conflict between Western Europe (and its allies) and Russia. Different Ukrainian governments have leaned toward either more integration with the European Union, or with Russia. Various unstable governments have led to massive street protests—such as the Orange Revolution of 2004—and an economy burdened with debt. Ukraine is currently involved in military conflict with Russia over land seizures, though Russia is Ukraine’s single-most important trade partner. Human rights advocates denounce the mistreatment of refugees and asylum seekers. Racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination are reported. Frequent reports of domestic violence are a major source of concern.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter II, Article 24: “There shall be no privileges or restrictions based on race, color of skin, political, religious and other beliefs, sex, ethnic and social origin, property status, place of residence, linguistic or other characteristics.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The constitution and the national government of Ukraine provide for the practice of religious freedom. Religious groups operating in the country are required to register with the government. While the registration process is fair, even to minority groups, the law does heavily restrict the actions of foreign clergy or missionaries within Ukraine. Since 2012, the Ukrainian national government screens all draft legislation to ensure it does not discriminate based on a number of factors, including religion. Religious leaders of various denominations have spoken out against recent amendments to law that require religious groups to seek permission of local government officials before holding religious ceremonies in public spaces. The amendments also further restrict foreign missionaries within Ukraine. The government continues to return church properties seized by former Communist governments.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There were a number of acts of violence against persons and property based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Anti-Semitic graffiti and other forms of vandalism continue throughout the country. Vandalism of mosques and Kingdom Halls of Jehovah's Witnesses has also occurred. The government continues to promote interfaith understanding via the All-Ukraine Council of Churches and Religious Organizations.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 900 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college, one media center, and one publishing house. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely. However, according to Ukrainian laws, religious organizations may not establish schools.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Many Adventists have tremendous difficulties with Sabbath keeping and employment.

Freedom to Evangelize: In certain regions—Ternopol, Lvov, Donetsk—local authorities prohibit public worship in rented premises and other public places. In the above regions, as well as in the Chernigov region, local authorities do not allow evangelistic meetings in public places.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Population: 5,628,000 (2014 estimate, 89% are non-citizens)

Seventh-day Adventists: 629

Religious Groups: Citizens: Sunni Muslim 85%, Shi'a Muslim 15% (2010 statistics). Non-citizens: Muslim 76%, Christian 9%, other (Hindu, Buddhist) 15% (2005 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Situated between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, the United Arab Emirates is a highly successful Middle Eastern nation. Six Trucial States united to form this nation in 1971. UAE seems to have overcome its 2009 economic challenges that necessitated an influx of 10 billion dollars by one of its members—Abu Dhabi. 2011 ended with a fiscal surplus. The country is now perceived as an oasis of stability in a region shaken by popular revolutions. The UAE has one of the 25 least corrupt governments in the world, according to Transparency International. It has diversified its economy and is investing heavily in aeronautics with the goal of becoming one of the top five manufacturers of aircrafts. The UAE also enjoys one of the world's highest per-capita GDPs in the world. While the UAE has not seen the public uprising associated with the Arab Spring, citizens have joined to petition government reforms. The government responded with a \$1.6 billion USD infusion into decaying infrastructure in the poorest region of the country, as well as promises to restructure government processes. Migrant workers, however, continue to face discrimination, exploitation, and persecution. Human trafficking and forced labor have been reported. Flogging is still utilized as a form of punishment. Freedom of expression is restricted.

Constitutional Provision: Article 32 of the constitution states: “Freedom to exercise religious worship shall be guaranteed in accordance with established customs, provided that it does not conflict with public policy or violate public morals.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government follows a policy of tolerance toward non-Muslim religious groups and adherents of most major religions worship without government interference, although there are limitations. Religious groups with dedicated religious buildings may worship and conduct business. However, the government controls virtually all Sunni mosques and restricts freedom of assembly and association, including for religious purposes.

Proselytizing and publicly distributing non-Islamic religious literature are prohibited.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of societal abuses based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, although societal pressures discourage conversion from Islam to other religions and there are instances of discriminatory caricatures in the media. Anti-Semitic or religiously intolerant editorials and editorial cartoons have appeared in the English and Arabic-language electronic and print media.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are three Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism aimed at Muslims is forbidden.

UNITED KINGDOM

Population: 63,742,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 34,047

Religious Groups: Christian (Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Protestant) 59.3%, Muslim 4.8%, other (Hindu, Sikh, Jewish, Buddhist) less than 2%, no affiliation 25% (2011 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: The United Kingdom brings together the countries of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland under one nation-state. Once considered the world's largest empire, Britain's global dominance diminished after World War II. This country is the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution and home to one of the world's oldest parliaments. The British monarch is also the official head of state of various countries, including Canada and Australia. London—the country's capital city—is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the world. Christianity, once the state religion, is

becoming increasingly marginalized in favor of a multicultural pluralism, which is accepting of practices such as astrology, New Age, the occult, and old world spiritualisms (Druid/Wicca). Still, the reigning monarch continues to hold the official title of Supreme Governor of the Church of England. Increasing numbers of Muslim and other religious minorities is a source of social conflict in the United Kingdom.

Constitutional Provision: Many civil liberties in England trace their conceptual roots back at least to the Magna Carta of 1215 and have grown through subsequent legislation and court rulings. Important documents relating to religious freedom include the “Declaration of Indulgence,” made by King James II in 1687, which suspended all penalties for not attending the established Church of England or not receiving communion according to its rites, and the Act of Toleration of 1689, which granted Protestant dissenters the freedom to worship according to their convictions. Presently, the United Kingdom is a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights, and has adopted this document into its own law via §1, (1)(a) of its own Human Rights Act of 1998.

State Attitudes and Actions: The state allows for religious freedom and protects the free exercise thereof. Once a religious organization is registered by the state it may receive funds for buildings and subsidies for teachers. The government generally respects religious freedom in practice. There has been a slight improvement in respect for the religious freedom of adherents of non-Christian beliefs. Christians continue to complain about their inability to express their faith in the workplace and the public square. In 2013, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled in favor a British Airlines employee who was reprimanded for wearing a visible cross on a necklace. Similar cases have been brought before the ECHR by Britons and are awaiting a decision.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are some reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, including reports of anti-Semitism and arson. The Home Office reported that between 2012 and 2013, over 43,000 hate crimes linked to religion took place. Hate crimes have been increasing steadily over the past few years in the United Kingdom. A majority of these crimes were against Jewish or Muslim groups, or perpetrated by British nationalists.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 254 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college, two schools, one hospital, and a publishing house.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized denomination.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Population: 320,029,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,108,893

Religious Groups: Protestant 52%, Catholic 24%, Mormon 2%, Jewish 1%, Muslim 1%, other 10%, none 10%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Declaring its independence from the British Empire in 1776, the United States was the first independent nation in the New World. Following the bitter events of the Civil War in the 19th century and the Great Depression in the early 20th century, the United States grew to become a world superpower after World War II. Demographics in this nation are shifting. While the largest groups of immigrants came from Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries, Asians and Latin Americans are now two of the fastest growing

populations in the United States. This has also had religious implications. Traditionally a Protestant Christian country, Americans are increasingly Roman Catholic as more immigrants arrive from Latin America.

Constitutional Provision: The United States Constitution in the Bill of Rights in the First Amendment provides: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Historically, the United States has been unique in its stance on religious liberty and the rights of the individual, influencing other nations to adopt more tolerant practices. However, contemporary trends in law, government, and politics could prove ultimately detrimental to this tradition of freedom. Laws such as the Patriot Act, which expands the government’s authority to monitor its citizens without oversight, and the Military Commissions Act, which arbitrarily suspends habeas corpus, are potentially harmful to all freedoms, including religious freedom. A provision of the Affordable Health Care Act of 2010 has brought to attention the religious freedom rights of privately held companies.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most religious groups have amicable relationships with one another and there are few reports of strife or violence. Some Muslims complain that they experience discrimination. Recent court rulings on same-sex marriage have ignited public debate regarding the scope of religious freedom protections under US law.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 5,045 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates six universities, three colleges, 100 schools, 27 radio stations, one media center, 41 hospitals, six healthcare corporations, 14 nursing homes and 62 bookstores. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is officially recognized.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Although Adventists have thrived under the religious freedom provided by the United States, statistics indicate that every day three Seventh-day Adventists lose their jobs because of their Sabbath convictions and others find it difficult to gain employment.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

Population: 106,405 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 8,684

Religious Groups: Baptist 42%, Catholic 34%, Episcopalian 17%, other 7%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Three main islands in the Caribbean Sea, St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas make up the United States Virgin Islands (U.S.V.I.). Formerly the Danish West Indies, the United States purchased the islands and incorporated them as an insular territory in 1917. Though five constitutional conventions have attempted to create a local constitution for a self-governing territory, these have, thus far, been rejected by the United States Congress. The U.S.V.I. subsist primarily on tourism and related industries.

Constitutional Provision: The United States Constitution governs religious liberty in the United States Virgin Islands. The First Amendment states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The state allows for the free exercise of religion for its citizens.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Various religious groups dwell harmoniously with each other. There are no reports of strife or violence.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 13 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates two high schools. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

URUGUAY

Population: 3,332,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 8,009

Religious Groups: Catholic 66%, Protestant 2%, Jewish 1%, no affiliation 31%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Uruguay's mild climate and long coastlines have made it a tourist haven for South Americans. The nation's economy has been made strong by vast trade agreements with its giant neighbors, Argentina and Brazil. Uruguay is a major exporter of livestock and related products. Even after a long battle against urban guerilla violence in the 1970s and 80s, Uruguay has been able to reestablish a stable democratic government. Uruguayans boast a large middle class with advanced educational and social security systems but continue to marginalize poorer communities mostly made up of racial minorities.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Section I, Chapter III, Article 5: "All religious faiths are free in Uruguay. The State does not subsidize any religion. It recognizes the Catholic Church's control of all places of

worship that have been totally or partially constructed with funds from the National State Treasury, except only the chapels destined to serve as asylums, hospitals, jails or other public establishments. It declares, also, the exemption of all classes from taxes on their places of worship consecrated to the faith of various religions.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Uruguay allows for the practice of religious freedom and strives to protect it. Every faith may obtain tax-exempt status for their place of worship. This has generally been an easy process with little or no discrimination. The state also allows religious affiliation to be placed on identification cards. This provision has benefitted the small Muslim community as it allows for the accommodation of their Friday worship observance. Religious instruction in public schools is not permitted, but students are granted religious exemptions for holidays or other religious observance. While Uruguay is an observer on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, Jewish groups have reported that public schools continue to refuse teaching about the Holocaust.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Generally, members of various religious communities have amicable relationships with one another. However, there have been recent reports of vandalism of Jewish sites, including the painting of swastikas and other hate symbols on Synagogues and Jewish schools. Jewish leaders have also reported that government agencies have been responsive and have diligently investigated these crimes.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 54 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one high school and one radio station. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

UZBEKISTAN

Population: 28,929,716 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 757

Religious Groups: Muslim 88% (mostly Sunni), Russian Orthodox 9%, other 3%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Uzbekistan is Central Asia's most populous country and maintains the region's largest armed forces. Rich in natural resources, countries of the European Union, the United States, and other nations are eager to do business with Uzbekistan. China is already investing billions of dollars and South Korea has signed an agreement to allow access to a deposit of natural gas and permit construction of a chemical plant. However, the country has drawn considerable criticism for its poor human rights record. The list of concerns is disturbing: widespread violence against women, restriction of religious freedom, surveillance, intimidation of NGOs, reported corruption among police and state officials, and allegations of torture. Freedom of expression, association, and assembly are severely restricted.

Constitutional Provision: Part 2, Chapter 7, Article 31 of the constitution states: "Freedom of conscience is guaranteed to all. Everyone shall have the right to profess or not to profess any religion. Any compulsory imposition of religion shall be impermissible."

State Attitudes and Actions: The reality of conditions in Uzbekistan is inconsistent with its constitutional provision. There is constant government infringement upon religious freedoms. The Religion Law of 1998 placed restrictions upon religious rights deemed to be in conflict with national security. Proselytism has been outlawed, religion cannot be taught in public

schools, religious principles cannot be taught privately, and publishing and distributing religious material requires a license. All religious communions must go through a tedious registration process in order to function legally. Minority religious groups face even greater difficulties from authorities in certain parts of the country. Christian communities are sometimes under covert surveillance. Even among the majority Islamic population, the activities of imams are restricted and certain Muslim groups are deemed illegal.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are relatively harmonious relations among the various religions, but proselytism is highly frowned upon.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 12 Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Government Recognition: Though the Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized denomination, church members are at times harassed and subjected to persecution. The amount of religious material that may be imported is restricted. Some churches have been closed and worship services interrupted by police videotaping the parishioners—implying that church members are acting illegally.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: For Adventists, who are a religious minority in a predominately Muslim nation, Sabbath-keeping makes it difficult to find work or attend school.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism is severely restricted by government policies.

VANUATU

Population: 266,937 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 19,272

Religious Groups: Presbyterian 25%, Anglican 13%, Roman Catholic 11%, Seventh-day Adventist 11%, other Christian (Church of Christ, Apostolic Church, Assembly of God, other Protestant, Jehovah's Witness, Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) 15%, Jewish 6%, Jon Frum Cargo cult less than 1%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Over one hundred different languages are spoken in the Pacific archipelago-nation once known as the New Hebrides. Once controlled by both Britain and France, the islands became independent in 1980 and were renamed Vanuatu. In 2015, Vanuatu faced widespread damage and casualties due to Cyclone Pam. The nation's economy is heavily dependent on tourism and agriculture, though persistent natural disasters have hampered government efforts for growth. Australia and New Zealand are the main suppliers of tourists and foreign aid.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter II, Part I, Section 5, subsections 1(f) and (g), of the constitution provide for the freedom of conscience, worship, and assembly, stating: "The Republic of Vanuatu recognizes, that, subject to any restrictions imposed by law on non-citizens, all persons are entitled to the following fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual without discrimination on the grounds of race, place of origin, religious or traditional beliefs, political opinions, language or sex but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and to the legitimate public interest in defense, safety, public order, welfare and health."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government has a close relationship with the Christian community through the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Vanuatu Christian Council. The government subsidizes church-operated schools that existed before the nation became independent in 1980. Those benefits are not extended to the few non-Christian-run schools in the country. Public schools have time allotted for religious instruction, but attendance is not mandatory.

Private Attitudes and Actions: In most cases, people of differing faiths have amicable relationships. In small rural communities, new churches cannot be

built without the approval of the village chief and the wider community. Establishing a new church without first getting approval is looked upon as an act of disrespect and individuals associated with it are viewed with suspicion.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 85 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one high school, six clinics, and one bookstore. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The government of Vanuatu recognizes the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: Local leaders in some rural communities have attempted to stifle Adventist evangelistic efforts, but for the most part the Seventh-day Adventist Church is permitted to evangelize freely.

VENEZUELA

Population: 28,868,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 279,435

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 96%, Protestant (Evangelical, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witness) 4%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Venezuela is a South American republic with a varying landscape ranging from the snow-capped Andes Mountains to Caribbean beaches and the Amazon rainforest. After overcoming strong military rule in 1959, Venezuelans have lived through unstable democratic governments to the present day. Former president, Hugo Chávez, was a controversial figure due to his seemingly anti-American rhetoric and vast socialist reforms through to his death in 2013. Current president, Nicolás Maduro, has promised to continue his predecessor's legacy, though he has been met with strong opposition. Massive street protests across the nation have

negatively impacted an already precarious economy that is based primarily on the temperamental oil market. The unemployment rate in Venezuela has risen in the last few years, along with inflation and poverty.

Constitutional Provision: Title III, Chapter III, Article 59 of the constitution states: “The State guarantees the freedom of worship and religions. All persons have the right to profess their religious faith . . . and express their beliefs in private or in public, by teaching and other practices, provided such beliefs are not contrary to morality, good customs and public order. The autonomy and independence of religious confessions and churches is likewise guaranteed, subject only to such limitations as may derive from this Constitution and the law. Father and Mother are entitled to have their sons and daughters receive religious education in accordance with their convictions. No one shall invoke religious beliefs or discipline as a means of evading compliance with law or preventing another person from exercising his or her rights.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Venezuela adheres to a 1964 Concordat signed with the Vatican making the Catholic Church the preeminent faith, which receives larger subsidies than any other faith. In recent years, however, the government has established the Directorate for Justice and Religion that keeps a registry of all religious organizations within the country. Religious groups have reported that the registry process is mainly administrative and makes them eligible for government funds. The government requires religious groups to perform community service in order to receive these funds. While most groups have not reported discrimination by the government, anti-Semitism continues to be a problem on state-owned media outlets. Throughout 2013 and 2014, various news stories were disseminated speculating that Jews may be behind the “killing” of President Chávez or the general destabilization of the current government. Some evangelical and Mormon groups have reported overt government interest in church properties, stating that the possibility of

expropriation of these properties was imminent. Further reports have not confirmed this to date.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There have been many reports of anti-Semitism stemming from various sectors of society. Print and electronic media have both engaged in flagrant disparagement. In 2014, a major synagogue in Caracas—the nation’s capital city—was vandalized with graffiti depicting swastikas and “SS” symbols. During the most recent presidential election, supporters of President Maduro claimed that the opposition candidate had a “Jewish agenda” and depicted his name in graffiti, replacing the “s” on his campaign posters with swastikas. Generally speaking, other religious bodies have not been subject to attacks and the relationship among the different religious groups has not been as tense.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,020 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, five high schools, three clinics, two hospitals, and one radio station. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely. However, the government is trying to make all education public, and the state has forced private schools to increase the salary of teachers without raising tuition.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventists experience regular problems in school, whether it is being required to finish projects late Friday night or to attend meetings or classes on Saturday. Some Adventists experience workplace problems on a frequent basis.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

VIET NAM

Population: 93,421,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 11,314

Religious Groups: Buddhist 50%, Roman Catholic 7%, Cao Dai 2.5-4%, Protestant 1-2%, Hoa Hao 1.5-3%, Muslim 0.1%, other/animist/none 31%

Perspectives on Current Issues: The French colony of Indochina declared independence after World War II, but did not achieve it until French forces conceded defeat against communist leader, Ho Chi Minh, in 1954. The country was divided between the Communist North and anti-Communist South until a brutal war involving United States armed forces backing the South ended in 1973. Viet Nam grew increasingly isolated as its authoritarian government tightened its control over the country. The government's 1986 renovation policy seeks to slowly reverse human rights violations, modernize the economy and ambitiously make Viet Nam a developed nation by 2020. Viet Nam is a major exporter of rice and seafood products and its economy has grown in recent years. It is one of the few Communist nations remaining in the 21st century. Drug addiction, prostitution, and exploitation of children are widespread. There is a long history of religious persecution. In 2013, the Vietnamese government initiated a new round of trials against peaceful protestors and political dissidents.

Constitutional Provision: Article 70 of the constitution states: "The citizen shall enjoy freedom of belief and of religion; he can follow any religion or follow none. All religions are equal before the law. The law protects the places of worship of all faiths and religions. No one can violate freedom of belief and of religion; nor can anyone misuse beliefs and religions to contravene the law and State policies."

State Attitudes and Actions: There have been improvements with regard to religious freedom in Viet Nam. These have been due to the central government's implementation of the 2004 Ordinance of Religion and Belief. At the provincial and village levels, especially in the Northwest and Central Highlands, progress has been rather sluggish. The central government has

recognized the reluctance of local authorities in those areas to improve their religious freedom track record and has been nudging them toward implementing more freedoms. It has mandated that recognized Protestant groups be allowed to construct places of worship and that even unregistered house groups be allowed to operate freely. The Vietnamese government has a record of seizing properties belonging to religious groups. Economic expansionist policies have contributed to land becoming an even more highly valuable commodity. Consequently, there have been several instances of the government clashing with churches over the issue of land. There are a number of Christian believers imprisoned in Viet Nam on charges related to their faith. There are numerous other reports of religious discrimination. However, there are also marked attempts at improvement. 115 new religious organizations were able to successfully register with the government in 2013. The government has also loosened regulations regarding charitable works within the country as well as regulations relating to public worship assemblies of over 100,000 people. In June 2013, a Protestant Bible school was permitted to open its doors in northern Viet Nam for the first time since 1954.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most religious groups tolerate one another. However, the activities of the Dega separatist group are a cause of tension and some other groups accuse them of using religion for the purpose of furthering their political quests.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 15 Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church received state recognition in 2006 and is finally able to function as a legitimate religious institution.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventist students experience some problems with Sabbath observance. Employees working in the public sector encounter problems with Sabbath observance.

Freedom to Evangelize: There are strict restrictions on evangelism. Foreign evangelists and missionaries are prohibited from proselytizing.

WALLIS AND FUTUNA

Population: 15,561 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 15

Religious Groups: Catholic 99%, other 1%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Presently a French overseas collectivity, this small archipelago in the Pacific was once controlled by the Dutch and the British. 80% of the islands' economy is based on subsistence farming. Demographically, a great majority of its residents are of Polynesian ethnicity.

Constitutional Provision: French law, which provides religious freedom, governs Wallis and Futuna: "France shall be an indivisible, secular democratic and social Republic. It shall ensure equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of origin, race or religion. It shall respect all beliefs."

State Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of discrimination.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of hostility existing between religious groups in the almost exclusively Catholic islands.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no Seventh-day Adventist institutions.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

YEMEN

Population: 26,052,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: Unknown

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 65%, Shi'a Muslim 35%, other (Jewish, Baha'i, Hindu, Christian) less than 0.05%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Yemen sits on the crossroads of Africa and Asia and has been a key center for trade. North and South Yemen united in 1990 and created the modern Republic of Yemen. Inspired by the Arab Spring in 2011, Yemenis took to the streets in mass protest, eventually forcing the country's 30-year president to step down. A transitional government has been created but continued conflict with Houthi rebels has made the adoption of a new constitution impossible. Political and social instability are increasing as al Qaida affiliate organizations fight to establish themselves in the country, clashing with government forces and perpetrating various terrorist acts. Petroleum exports typically supply 70% of public revenues, but many foreign companies have suspended their operations. Unemployment is officially at 34% and two thirds of young people are unemployed. Corruption is seen as a major problem; according to the NGO Transparency International, Yemen ranks 161st of 183 countries. Allegations of torture and the ill treatment of political prisoners who are held for long periods of time have been reported. Flogging is still utilized as a form of punishment.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states: "Article 2. Islam is the religion of the State, and Arabic is its official language. . . . Article 51. Residences, places of worship, and educational institutions have a sanctity which may not be violated through surveillance or search except in the cases stipulated by the law."

State Attitudes and Actions: Religious liberty is not protected by the constitution and government policy and other laws have restricted human

rights, generally. The current transitional government, however, has eased many restrictions previously in place by law. While previously, the celebration of Shi'a Muslim holy days were banned, there have been reports of small commemorations throughout Yemen. Catholic, Protestant, and Ethiopian Orthodox gatherings were celebrated throughout the country without police interference for the first time in many years. The transitional government has also held conferences and created task forces to study how to efficiently implement human rights safeguards.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relations among religious groups are generally amicable; however, reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice have increased, particularly among various denominations of Islam. Sectarian violence associated with rebel groups has exacerbated preexisting tensions during this transitional period.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no Seventh-day Adventists churches.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism is prohibited.

ZAMBIA

Population: 14,638,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 903,326

Religious Groups: Christian (Catholic, Protestant, Anglican) 87%, other (indigenous beliefs, Muslim, Baha'i, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Sikh) 12%, Muslim 1%. Many people combine Christianity and indigenous beliefs.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Under British control since the 19th century, Northern Rhodesia was granted independence in 1964 and this new nation was renamed Zambia. Zambians have enjoyed a very peaceful country since

independence, but not until 1991 were multiparty free elections celebrated. Since 1991, the government has peacefully transitioned each election cycle and the Zambian government is considered transparent and relatively efficient. Recent increases in the price of copper have helped grow the country's economy. Still, life expectancy is 41 years and poverty is widespread. Discrimination and violence against women are prevalent.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 19: “No person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of . . . thought and religion, freedom to change his religion or belief and . . . to manifest and propagate his religion or belief.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution and seeks to maintain that freedom at all levels. Church leaders are free to vocally criticize the government, as is the case with the Oasis Forum, a group of several organizations including the Christian Council of Zambia. Religious groups are required to register through a cumbersome registration process. Unregistered groups are not allowed to operate. Religious instruction is required in public schools and is given in both the Catholic and Protestant traditions. Islamic education is not available in public schools, but is available in private institutions. Restrictions to freedom of expression, assembly, and association are reported. The government has recently deregistered a number of churches accused of falsifying documents, failing to pay required fees or being involved in criminal activity. One such church—the House of Joy Church—appealed this process and won. The government has appealed to the highest court.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Leaders of the various ecumenical movements, including the Christian Council of Zambia and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia, hold regular meetings to promote interfaith understanding and dialogue. Religious leaders are generally free to criticize the

government, organize political activities, and mobilize public opinion. There were various reports of discrimination or violence based on religious affiliation. Adherents of witchcraft and Islam report regular threats of violence against members and places of worship. Some Christian groups have called for references to Zambia as a Christian nation to be stripped from the Bill of Rights for fear that this would alienate non-Christian Zambians.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 2,229 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a high school, three hospitals, seven clinics and dispensaries, and a publishing house. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

ZIMBABWE

Population: 13,771,000 (2014 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 766,079

Religious Groups: Evangelical or Pentecostal 42%, Catholic 33%, other (Anglican, Methodist, or Presbyterian) 17%, Apostolic 8%, indigenous beliefs 14%, Muslim 3%, other (Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Baha'i) less than 1%. The majority of the population also adheres to indigenous religions, often simultaneously with Christianity. (2004 census)

Perspectives on Current Issues: This region was under British colonial rule as the colony of Southern Rhodesia. In order to delay rule by the ethnically black majority, the predominantly white colonial government declared independence in 1965. The international community never accepted Rhodesia's independence and guerilla violence ensued in the region for years. In April 1980, the

independence option won in a universal referendum and the Republic of Zimbabwe was born. President Mugabe's party controlled the government for decades before a new constitution was enacted in 2013 and multiparty elections were held. President Mugabe's party won, however, and plans for a coalition government never came to fruition. Once a prosperous agricultural country, massive land seizures of white-owned properties led to the collapse of the agricultural industry and widespread food shortages. Life expectancy in this tragedy-stricken country is 43 years. In spite of rich agricultural and mineral resources, isolationism has resulted in economic and social meltdown, bringing the country to the brink of collapse. Food shortages and disease are widespread. Moreover, political interference in church affairs has been frequently reported. It is also reported that members of the opposition political party are intentionally subjected to assaults, abductions, and death threats. Occurrences of torture and extrajudicial killings are documented. The Zimbabwean government is accused of restricting the flow of humanitarian aid for political reasons, specifically to hinder the work of opponents to the current regime. Freedom of expression is also restricted.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Article 19: "No person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience, that is to say, freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom to manifest and propagate his religion or belief."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally protects religious freedom in accordance with the constitution. However, the government continues to restrict religious freedom through laws regarding freedom of assembly, expression, and association. The 2002 Public Order and Security Act (POSA), though not specifically aimed at religious groups, continues to interfere with religious groups organizing prayer rallies. POSA exempts religious activities, but the government classifies any public gathering critical of the regime as political even if the event is religious in nature. Missionaries

operate in the country, but are viewed with suspicion by the government if considered to be politically motivated. Missions have experienced delays in implementing humanitarian relief projects. There was a deterioration in the relationship between the government and the Anglican Church. Government officials seized Anglican Church properties and, on various occasions, interrupted Anglican services and arrested clergy. In 2012, the courts favored the Anglican Church in a decision that has prompted a much more tolerant government stance on freedom of religion, generally. Reports indicate a decrease in government harassment of religious groups, especially of those that are critical of the government.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between mainstream Christian groups are generally harmonious, but tensions persist between these groups and practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. Indigenous religions' acceptance of polygamy and avoidance of modern medicine are some of the main reasons for the tension. In addition, ritual killings and mutilations continue to be a problem with certain groups and limited resources prevent authorities from conducting proper investigations. Leaders from a wide spectrum of churches and religious groups discuss these issues productively in meetings of the interfaith council and they cooperate on issues such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic. There are at least five umbrella religious organizations that operate, including the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, the Heads of Denominations, Fambidzano, a group of indigenous churches, and the Islamic Council.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,498 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, six high schools, ten clinics and dispensaries, and one Bible correspondence school. Independent organizations support the church's work through orphanages and medical clinics. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely, provided the government does not consider

them a political threat. Church leaders met with government and community officials and held leadership seminars with the intent of making officials aware of the church's position on religious freedom and other issues.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Church members have reportedly been forced to work on Saturday at the risk of losing their employment. Students have reported conflicts with exams scheduled on Saturday. The church has attempted to solve these problems, but there is no report that these matters have been satisfactorily resolved.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely.

SOURCES

REPORTS:

Adventist News Agency, APD. (Christian B. Schaffler.)

<http://www.APD@stanet.ch>.

Flanz, Gisbert H. *Constitutions of the Countries of the World*. Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 2001.

Seventh-day Adventist Church, *Adventist News Network*,

<http://www.news.adventist.org>.

Seventh-day Adventist Church, *Religious Freedom World Report 2010-2011*, Silver Spring, MD: Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty, 2013.

Seventh-day Adventist Church, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2014*. Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2014.

University of Michigan Document Center, *Foreign Governments, Constitutions, Laws and Treaties*, <http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/forcons.html>.

University of Richmond, *Constitution Finder*, <http://confinder.richmond.edu>.

U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>.

U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, *2014 Report on International Religious Freedom*, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2014>.

U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor,
2014 Report on International Religious Freedom,
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2014>.

ELECTRONIC NEWS SOURCES:

<http://www.adnkronos.com>

<http://www.answersforthefaith.com>

<http://www.asianews.it> <http://www.assistnews.net>

<http://www.becketinternational.wordpress.com>

<http://www.blogcatalog.com>

<http://www.bosnewslife.com> <http://www.cbn.com>

<http://www.chinaaid.org>

<http://www.christianfreedom.org>

<http://www.christianpost.com> <http://www.cia.gov>

<http://www.compassdirect.org>

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb>

<http://www.deccanherald.com>

<http://www.etaiwannews.com>

<http://www.gmanews.tv> <http://www.hindu.com>

<http://www.niueisland.com/culture-relig>

<http://www.iol.co.za>
<http://www.in.reuters.com>
<http://www.jordantimes.com>
<http://www.mizzima.com>
<http://www.mnnonline.org>
<http://www.news.adventist.org>
<http://www.newsvote.bbc.co.uk>
<http://www.nytimes.com>
<http://www.persecution.org>
<http://www.religionandpolicy.org>
<http://www.services.inquirer.net>
<http://www.state.gov>
<http://www.straitstimes.com>
<http://www.sundaytimes.lk>
<http://www.tehrantimes.com>
<http://www.thejakartapost.com>
<http://www.unhcr.org>
<http://www.voanews.com>
<http://www.worldbulletin.net>
<http://www.wwrn.org>

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH & RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Organized on May 20, 1863, in Battle Creek, Michigan, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has more than 18 million baptized members. It is estimated that the Adventist community numbers at least 30 million. The church has a presence in 204 of the nations and regions recognized by the United Nations. This 2014 Annual Statistical Report reveals that the church employs 255,982 people worldwide. The Adventist Church operates 614 healthcare institutions, including 175 hospitals. They also operate 7,842 educational institutions, 113 of which are colleges or universities. Enrollment in these institutions totals more than 1.8 million.

Since its beginning, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has defended religious freedom for all. Under its patronage, several religious liberty associations have been established. The International religious Liberty Association (IRLA) was founded by the Adventist Church in 1893 and became a non-sectarian association in 1946. It currently holds NGO status at the United Nations and continues its work around the world promoting and defending religious freedom for people of all faiths.

THANK YOU

This report on religious freedom is the result of the cooperative efforts of a team of people located around the world. Special thanks go to the division and union directors of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department who submitted information for this report. The report would not have been possible without the first-hand accounts of the conditions in the countries where these directors work.

We also thank the team at the General Conference Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department for all their assistance in updating and editing the *Religious Freedom World Report*.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904 USA
Phone: 301-680-6680 • Fax: 301-680-6695

Ganoune Diop, Ph.D.

Director

diopg@gc.adventist.org

Dwayne Leslie, J.D.

Congressional Relations

Associate Director PARL

leslied@gc.adventist.org

Nelu Burcea, Ph.D.

United Nations Relations

Associate Director PARL

burcean@gc.adventist.org

Bettina Krause, LLB

Communication Director

Assistant Director PARL

krauseb@gc.adventist.org

Gail Banner, B.S.

Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Specialist

BannerG@gc.adventist.org



Public Affairs and Religious Liberty
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904 USA