



R E L I G I O U S F R E E D O M

WORLD REPORT

2021



Seventh-day
Adventist® Church

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



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

WORLD REPORT 2021



Seventh-day
Adventist® Church

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

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
COUNTRIES	7
SOURCES	351
THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH & RELIGIOUS FREEDOM	353
THANK YOU	354
CONTACT INFORMATION	355

INTRODUCTION

As a brief reminder of the extraordinary journey of our association, IRLA, it is worth remembering that IRLA began its trajectory and passion for advocacy and promotion of religious freedom, back in 1893, when the association was officially chartered. The context that prompted the creation of this association is significant. In 1888, a senator from New Hampshire proposed two bills before the US Congress, one to make Sunday observance law mandatory, the other to make America into a Christian nation. This latter proposal would have made it difficult for religious minorities. It would have led to discriminations of minorities of other faith traditions or of no religious affiliations.

To rally people all over the US to this cause, Seventh-day Adventists created the National Religious Liberty Association (NARLA) in 1889 and then in 1893 this association was expanded to the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA).

Imagining a world that embraces religious liberty is not an unnecessary exercise. If religious liberty were embraced, there would be no totalitarian, authoritarian or oppressive regime. There would be no domination or domestication of people. There would be no coercion, and therefore no slavery, no human trafficking, no subjugation, annexation, occupation or plundering of people's resources.

The sacred conscience of people would be respected. The inviolability of people's self-determination and choices would be the norm, especially when they harm no one. There would be no war of conquest.

One can immediately see why freedom of religion or belief is difficult to adopt. It goes against the prevailing impulses to dominate other individuals and peoples.

Moreover, at interpersonal level, when freedom of conscience is integrated in one's lifestyle, one becomes free from being prey to conspiracy constructions nurtured in one's own mind. We give people space and trust in their right even to make mistakes. Religious freedom contributes to reinforce a benevolent disposition towards life and others. It contributes to mental health and to holistic societal wellbeing.

From a faith-based perspective, the deepest roots, justification, and the rationale for embracing religious freedom ultimately pairs with the decision to let God be God and not intrude in other people's sacred space, their conscience, an inner space where only God and the conscience bearer have access.

At a global or geopolitical level, the state of religious freedom in the world is dire in many ways. There are literally no regions of the world where religious liberty enjoys an unconditional acceptance. Nevertheless, the passion to promote this fundamental existential right is a moral imperative. For to be human and humane freedom of conscience for all is incontrovertible. The world report highlights the state of religious liberty in every country in the world. At the end of every survey on the state of religious freedom, it focuses on the experience of Seventh-day Adventists.

We do hope that this tool will help develop not only awareness of the state of religious freedom globally, but also a passion of promoting a culture of religious freedom, without which our humanity is injured and impaired.

May freedom be part of your daily experience.

Ganoune Diop, Ph.D.
Secretary General IRLA

LIST OF COUNTRIES

<u>Afghanistan</u>	10	<u>Canada</u>	66
<u>Albania</u>	11	<u>Cape Verde</u>	68
<u>Algeria</u>	13	<u>Cayman Islands</u>	69
<u>American Samoa</u>	15	<u>Central African Republic</u>	70
<u>Andorra</u>	16	<u>Chad</u>	72
<u>Angola</u>	17	<u>Chile</u>	73
<u>Anguilla</u>	19	<u>China</u>	75
<u>Antigua and Barbuda</u>	20	<u>Colombia</u>	78
<u>Argentina</u>	21	<u>Comoros</u>	80
<u>Armenia</u>	23	<u>Congo, Democratic</u>	
<u>Aruba</u>	25	<u>Republic of the</u>	81
<u>Australia</u>	26	<u>Congo, Republic of the</u>	82
<u>Austria</u>	28	<u>Cook Islands</u>	84
<u>Azerbaijan</u>	30	<u>Costa Rica</u>	85
<u>Bahamas</u>	32	<u>Cote d'Ivoire</u>	86
<u>Bahrain</u>	33	<u>Croatia</u>	88
<u>Bangladesh</u>	35	<u>Cuba</u>	90
<u>Barbados</u>	36	<u>Cyprus</u>	92
<u>Belarus</u>	38	<u>Czech Republic</u>	93
<u>Belgium</u>	39	<u>Denmark</u>	95
<u>Belize</u>	41	<u>Djibouti</u>	97
<u>Benin</u>	42	<u>Dominica</u>	99
<u>Bermuda</u>	44	<u>Dominican Republic</u>	100
<u>Bhutan</u>	45	<u>Ecuador</u>	102
<u>Bolivia</u>	47	<u>Egypt</u>	103
<u>Bosnia and Herzegovina</u>	48	<u>El Salvador</u>	105
<u>Botswana</u>	50	<u>Equatorial Guinea</u>	107
<u>Brazil</u>	51	<u>Eritrea</u>	108
<u>British Virgin Islands</u>	54	<u>Estonia</u>	110
<u>Brunei Darussalam</u>	55	<u>Ethiopia</u>	112
<u>Bulgaria</u>	57	<u>Falkland Islands</u>	114
<u>Burkina Faso</u>	58	<u>Fiji</u>	115
<u>Burma (Myanmar)</u>	60	<u>Finland</u>	117
<u>Burundi</u>	62	<u>France</u>	118
<u>Cambodia</u>	63	<u>French Guiana</u>	120
<u>Cameroon</u>	65	<u>French Polynesia</u>	121

<u>Gabon</u>	122	<u>Liberia</u>	187
<u>Gambia</u>	123	<u>Libya</u>	188
<u>Georgia</u>	125	<u>Lichtenstein</u>	190
<u>Germany</u>	127	<u>Lithuania</u>	191
<u>Ghana</u>	128	<u>Luxembourg</u>	192
<u>Greece</u>	130	<u>Macedonia</u>	194
<u>Grenada</u>	132	<u>Madagascar</u>	195
<u>Guadeloupe</u>	133	<u>Malawi</u>	197
<u>Guatemala</u>	134	<u>Malaysia</u>	198
<u>Guinea</u>	135	<u>Maldives</u>	200
<u>Guinea-Bissau</u>	137	<u>Mali</u>	202
<u>Guyana</u>	138	<u>Malta</u>	203
<u>Haiti</u>	139	<u>Marshall Islands</u>	205
<u>Honduras</u>	141	<u>Martinique</u>	206
<u>Hong Kong</u>	143	<u>Mauritania</u>	206
<u>Hungary</u>	144	<u>Mauritius</u>	208
<u>Iceland</u>	146	<u>Mexico</u>	210
<u>India</u>	147	<u>Micronesia</u>	
<u>Indonesia</u>	150	<u>Federated States of</u>	211
<u>Iran</u>	151	<u>Moldova</u>	212
<u>Iraq</u>	154	<u>Monaco</u>	214
<u>Ireland</u>	156	<u>Mongolia</u>	215
<u>Israel</u>	157	<u>Montenegro</u>	217
<u>Italy</u>	159	<u>Montserrat</u>	218
<u>Jamaica</u>	161	<u>Morocco</u>	219
<u>Japan</u>	163	<u>Mozambique</u>	221
<u>Jordan</u>	164	<u>Myanmar (Burma)</u>	60
<u>Kazakhstan</u>	166	<u>Namibia</u>	223
<u>Kenya</u>	168	<u>Nauru</u>	224
<u>Kiribati</u>	170	<u>Nepal</u>	225
<u>Korea, Democratic</u>		<u>Netherlands</u>	227
<u>People's Republic of</u>	171	<u>New Caledonia</u>	228
<u>Korea, Republic of</u>		<u>New Zealand</u>	229
<u>(South Korea)</u>	173	<u>Nicaragua</u>	231
<u>Kosovo</u>	175	<u>Niger</u>	233
<u>Kuwait</u>	177	<u>Nigeria</u>	234
<u>Kyrgyzstan</u>	178	<u>Niue</u>	236
<u>Laos</u>	180	<u>Norway</u>	237
<u>Latvia</u>	182	<u>Oman</u>	238
<u>Lebanon</u>	183	<u>Pakistan</u>	240
<u>Lesotho</u>	185	<u>Palau</u>	242

<u>Panama</u>	243	<u>Sri Lanka</u>	295
<u>Papua New Guinea</u>	244	<u>Sudan</u>	297
<u>Paraguay</u>	246	<u>Suriname</u>	299
<u>Peru</u>	248	<u>Swaziland</u>	300
<u>Philippines</u>	249	<u>Sweden</u>	302
<u>Pitcairn Island</u>	251	<u>Switzerland</u>	303
<u>Poland</u>	252	<u>Syria</u>	305
<u>Portugal</u>	254	<u>Taiwan</u>	307
<u>Puerto Rico</u>	255	<u>Tajikistan</u>	308
<u>Qatar</u>	257	<u>Tanzania</u>	310
<u>Reunion</u>	258	<u>Thailand</u>	311
<u>Romania</u>	259	<u>Timor-Leste</u>	313
<u>Russian Federation</u>	261	<u>Togo</u>	314
<u>Rwanda</u>	263	<u>Tonga</u>	316
<u>Saint Kitts and Nevis</u>	265	<u>Trinidad and Tobago</u>	318
<u>Saint Lucia</u>	266	<u>Tunisia</u>	319
<u>Saint Pierre and Miquelon</u>	267	<u>Turkey</u>	321
<u>Saint Vincent and the</u>		<u>Turkmenistan</u>	322
<u>Grenadines</u>	268	<u>Tuvalu</u>	324
<u>Samoa</u>	269	<u>Uganda</u>	325
<u>San Marino</u>	271	<u>Ukraine</u>	327
<u>Sao Tome and Principe</u>	272	<u>United Arab Emirates</u>	329
<u>Saudi Arabia</u>	273	<u>United Kingdom</u>	331
<u>Senegal</u>	275	<u>United States of America</u>	332
<u>Serbia</u>	277	<u>United States Virgin Islands</u>	334
<u>Seychelles</u>	279	<u>Uruguay</u>	335
<u>Sierra Leone</u>	280	<u>Uzbekistan</u>	337
<u>Singapore</u>	282	<u>Vanuatu</u>	338
<u>Slovakia</u>	283	<u>Venezuela</u>	340
<u>Slovenia</u>	285	<u>Vietnam</u>	342
<u>Solomon Islands</u>	286	<u>Wallis and Futuna</u>	344
<u>Somalia</u>	288	<u>Yemen</u>	345
<u>South Africa</u>	290	<u>Zambia</u>	346
<u>South Sudan</u>	292	<u>Zimbabwe</u>	348
<u>Spain</u>	293		

COUNTRIES

AFGHANISTAN

Population: 38,928,346

Seventh-day Adventists: 5

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 80%, Shia Muslim 10-19%, other (Hindu, Sikh, Baha'i, Christian, Buddhist, and Zoroastrian) less than 1%

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. 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. Following the United States military withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, the Taliban forces took control. Since then, Afghanistan has been experiencing an acute humanitarian crisis accentuated by displacement, the COVID-19, and a struggling economy. Women and girls, and many internally displaced people are at greater risk. On October 7, 2021, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on the human rights situation in Afghanistan, establishing the mandate of a Special Rapporteur, reaffirming that the international community continues to support the Afghan people.

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: Religious minority communities which includes Christians experienced severe human rights violations under Taliban rule. All citizens are considered Muslim by default. 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. Although Afghanistan’s new Taliban leadership promised to respect human rights, so far there has been no sign of improvement. In September 2021, the new Taliban rulers replaced the ministry for women with a department that used to enforce strict religious doctrines.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Afghanistan's religious minorities, including Hazaras, Sikhs, Hindus, and Christian communities, are worried about their future and safety. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights recently declared that "Afghanistan's diverse ethnic and religious minorities are at risk of violence and repression," considering the Taliban's history and recent reports of killings and targeted attacks.

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: 2,877,797

Seventh-day Adventists: 467

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%

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. The Albanian economy is showing signs of growth, particularly in the area of agriculture. However, Albania is currently experiencing high amounts of public debt and remittances continue to be a significant source of the country's GDP. According to Transparency International, Albania ranks 99th of 180 countries in term of corruption. On the other hand, in June 2014, Albania became an official candidate for entry to the European Union. In March 2015, Albania received recommendations from the EU Commissioner for Enlargement, Johannes Hahn, to make reforms in areas such as politics, public administration, corruption, organized crime, rule of law, and fundamental rights. Human rights concerns include domestic violence, human trafficking, poor prison conditions, and allegations of torture and mistreatment while in police custody. According to Freedom House, corruption and organized crime remain serious problems, despite recent attempts by governments to combat them.

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. In 2020, 92 buildings owned by religious groups have been legalized, compared with 164 the year before, and 32 additional buildings are currently being examined.

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. Religious leaders have canceled gatherings for two months due to the government's COVID-19 preventive measures. The Interreligious Council of Albania, a forum for religious leaders to discuss issues of concern, has organized several online and in-person events.

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: 43,851,044

Seventh-day Adventists: 79

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. The Algerian government continues to struggle with terrorist groups that claim to have ties with Al-Qaeda 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 104th of 180 countries according to Transparency International's Index of perceived corruption. Human rights concerns include the restriction of the right of protestors to assemble, sometimes even in private spaces indoors; criminally prosecuting journalists, bloggers, and media figures using the article in the penal code criminalizing "insulting state officials," "denigrating Islam," or "offending

the president.” Police brutality, prosecution for critical speech, arbitrary detentions, and discrimination against women continue to occur.

Constitutional Provision: Article 51 of the new constitution, which became effective on December 30, 2020, states: “Freedom of conscience and freedom of opinion shall be inviolable. Freedom of worship shall be guaranteed and exercised without discrimination in compliance with the law. The State shall impartially guarantee the protection of places 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. Investigations into Ordinance 06-03 by groups such as the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom reports that it requires non-Muslim groups to register formally with the National Commission for Non-Muslim Religious Groups, which meets rarely and has not issued permits for any churches. Proselytizing Muslims by non-Muslims is a criminal offense. The Catholic Church is the only officially recognized non-Muslim religious group in the country. Since 2017, the government has closed 18 Christian churches affiliated with the Protestant Church of Algeria (EPA). The Anglican, Seventh-day Adventist, and other Protestant churches have pending registration requests with the government but report no government interference in holding services.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Foreigners of different faiths are generally treated with respect, as long as they do not proselytize. However, Algeria's religious freedom conditions remained poor in 2021, as the government continued to repress the religious community, according to 2021 report by USCIRF. Algerian courts have sentenced Christians accused of blasphemy and proselytism to many years in prison, and Protestant churches have been forced to close. 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 two Seventh-day Adventist churches.

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: 55,191

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,880

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: 77,265

Seventh-day Adventists: 20

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic is the 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, and 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 tourism and international banking. 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: 32,866,272

Seventh-day Adventists: 544,260

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 41%, Protestant (including Methodist, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Congregationalist, Assembly of God) 38%, atheist 12%, other 10% (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 in September 2017 elected Joao Lourenco as 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 and due to government corruption, Angolans relying on international food aid have not benefitted. However, in the last several years, the government has taken steps to crack down on endemic corruption and has eased restrictions on the press and civil society, but serious governance and human rights challenges persist.

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 81 denominations but more than 1100 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. On May 15, 2019, a full acquittal by the Supreme Court of Angola ended a two-year legal ordeal for four Seventh-day Adventist Church pastors and two laymen falsely accused in an alleged kidnapping plot. Seventh-day Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson met in 2020 with Angola’s president João Lourenço to express appreciation for his intervention in the case involving false accusations against these Adventists.

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. In 2020, several religious leaders, including Seventh-day Adventist pastors, were detained for refusing to comply with a government order against mass gatherings to prevent COVID-19.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,602 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.

ANGUILLA

Population: 15,003

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,236

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: 97,929

Seventh-day Adventists: 8,350

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.

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: 45,195,774

Seventh-day Adventists: 120,959

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 71%, other (Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, 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. With power alternating between left and right wing parties, the country has been affected by a wave of endemic corruption, which, among other local and global social reasons, does not allow it to emerge from a persistent economic crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated Argentina's economic crisis. Since 2018, the country has been in a recession and the economy has contracted by more than 10% in 2020, raising the poverty rate to more than 40% by mid-2020.

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 allows and protects the free exercise of religion. The country proclaims itself secular and adopts the regime of separation of church and state, however, the Catholic Church enjoys some privileges not afforded other religious communions. 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. In public schools, the mandatory curriculum is secular by law. In public schools, students have the option to take elective courses in the religion of their choice, either in a school or a religious institution. It is forbidden to discriminate against employees based on sex, race, marital status, nationality, age, religion, political or trade union ideas, disability or physical appearance. There is a government agency under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, named the board of the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism, which investigates incidents of discrimination based on religion and promotes measures to prevent discrimination.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most faiths have an amicable relationship with each other. However, in 2019, there were 918 reported complaints of anti-Semitism. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government heavily restricted religious groups from meeting in person, including weddings and funerals.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 624 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, one college, 34 high schools, 80 radio stations, one sanitarium, two clinics, and one hospital. These institutions are 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 constantly have had problems with public and private school classes and exams scheduled on Saturday. Nevertheless, most of the time, victories have been gained by moving these obligations to other days of the week.

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

ARMENIA

Population: 2,963,243

Seventh-day Adventists: 834

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

Perspectives on Current Issues: Armenia has been called the world's first officially known 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. In September 2021, it will be a year since Armenia and Azerbaijan started a conflict over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, which has serious geopolitical implications.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter 2, Article 41: "(1) Everyone shall have the right to the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right shall include the freedom to change one's religion or beliefs and the freedom, either alone or in community with others in public or in private, to manifest religion or beliefs in preaching, church ceremonies, other rituals of worship or in other forms. (2) The expression of the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion may be restricted only by law with the aim of protecting state security, the public order, health and morals, or the fundamental 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. “Soul hunting” is a term used in Armenia to describe forceful conversion or proselytizing, and this is illegal. The law requires public education to be secular and states, “Religious activity and preaching in public educational institutions is prohibited.” The history of the Armenian Church (HAC) is an optional course in a public or private school. However, if a school chooses to offer the course, it becomes mandatory for all students in grades 5 through 11, and parents and students cannot choose not to take the course. As an alternative to the compulsory two-year military service, the law provides two types of service to conscientious objectors: non-combat military service for 30 months or alternative labor service for 36 months. Failure to comply with an alternative service requirement is a criminal offense.

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. In contrast to previous years, there was no verbal harassment against the Jehovah’s Witnesses members publicly expressing their religious beliefs, according to the group. Religious minorities reported continuing hate speech and negative portrayals of their communities, especially on social media, although many observed a reduction in negative commentaries following the end of intensive fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

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: 106,766

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,159

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. Although an autonomous country, 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. Tourism and related industries have continued to grow, and the government is working to attract more diverse industries.

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 8 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: 25,499,884 (2020 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 62,838

Religious Groups: Christian (Roman Catholic 22.6%, Anglican 13.3%, other) 52.1%, Buddhist 2.4%, Muslim 2.6%, Hindu 1.9%, Jewish 0.4% , others 9.6%, no affiliation 30.1% (2016 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.

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. 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 instituted the "People of Australia" initiative to foster cohesiveness and religious tolerance in Australian society. In February 2021, Victoria's Upper House passed a bill banning LGBTIQ+ conversion therapy. Several religious organizations, including Adventists, have expressed concern about the new bill's ambiguous wording that could have unintended consequences.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most faiths have an amicable relationship with each other. The Executive Council of Australian Jewry reports an 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. There were reports that anti-Semitic rhetoric increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Education Department officials interpreted religious conversations and sharing Christmas cards in public school playgrounds to be a threat to inclusive education. With the passage of legislation approving same-sex marriage, the federal government has appointed a panel to review protections for religious freedom. Federal Attorney-General Christian Porter has released a draft package of religious freedom bills, including the Religious Discrimination Bill. These bills were made in response to earlier inquiries into the protection of religious freedom under Australian law. Two Seventh-day Adventist pastors have been appointed by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to serve as chaplains, making a total of five chaplains across the Navy, Army, and Air Force.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 434 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. Students are sometimes required to take exams on the Sabbath, although alternative arrangements can be made.

Freedom to Evangelize: Seventh-day Adventists have typically enjoyed freedom to evangelize. Since the passage of the Racial and Religious Toleration Act of 2001 in the state of Victoria, 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: 9,006,398 (2020 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 4,288

Religious Groups: Catholic 61%, Muslim 7%, unaffiliated between 14% and 23%, 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.” There are 16 religious societies which are officially recognized: the Catholic Church, the Protestant churches (Lutheran and Presbyterian, called the “Augsburg” and “Helvetic” confessions), the Islamic Faith Community, the Old Catholic Church, the Jewish Faith Community, the Eastern Orthodox Church (Russian, Greek, Serbian, Romanian, and Bulgarian), The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), the New Apostolic Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Methodist Church of Austria, the Buddhist Community, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Islamic-Alevi Community, and the Free Christian Churches.

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. Many other religious minority groups complained that the three-tier system that legally recognizes religious groups impeded their legitimate claims for recognition. Also, religious leaders raised concerns about the perceived rise of extremist parties throughout Europe and religious radicalization.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 55 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 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: 10,139,177 (2020 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 487

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%. 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. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev succeeded his father in 2003. He removed Azerbaijan's presidential two-term limit through a referendum in 2009. According to Transparency International, Azerbaijan ranks 129th of 180 countries in terms of corruption. There are 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 2016. Chapter II, Article 18 of the constitution reads: "(I) In the Republic of Azerbaijan religion is separated from the State. All religions are equal before the law. (II) The spread and propaganda of religions (religious movements) which humiliate human dignity and contradict the principles of humanity are banned. (III) The State education system is of secular character." Chapter III, Article 48 reads: "(I) Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience and religion. (II) Everyone has the right to independently define his or her attitude towards religion, to profess religion alone or together with others, or to profess no religion at all, to express and spread religious convictions. (III)

The free conduct of religious rites if it does not violate public order or public morality is authorized. (IV) The violation of the freedom of religion and self-expression is not allowed. (V) No one shall be forced to express (or demonstrate) his or her religious faith and belief, to execute religious rituals or participate in religious ceremonies.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Though the constitution provides religious freedom, traditional religious groups—Muslims, Russian and Armenian Orthodox adherents—and other religious organizations have faced harassment. However, in 2019, religious freedom conditions improved due to the government’s cessation of raids on religious communities and its suspension of fining individuals for unauthorized but peaceful practice of their religion. A presidential pardon, signed on April 6, 2020, released a number of political and religious prisoners over the age of 65 because of concerns about COVID-19’s impact on the elderly. However, government officials continued to manage and limit religious practices through the 2009 Law on Freedom of Religion. 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. The government failed to implement alternative military service for conscientious objectors, even though this was required by the constitution. 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: In 2018, the government granted registration to four non-Muslim religious communities—the New Apostle, Vineyard Azerbaijan, Jehovah’s Witnesses in Baku, and the Seventh-day Adventists in Ganja.

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: Citizens are allowed to evangelize in localities where their religious communion 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: 393,244

Seventh-day Adventists: 21,704

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 law does not require religious groups to register, but they must legally incorporate to purchase land. The government meets regularly with The Bahamas Christian Council to discuss social issues in the country. Religious instruction is provided in public schools, but parents may choose not to have their children participate. Religious groups may establish private schools. Parliament may limit religious practices in the interest of defense, public safety, health, public order, or for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedoms of others. There were no reports of significant societal actions affecting religious freedom. The government continued to include Christian prayer in all significant official events.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Among the various religious groups in the Bahamas there is generally great harmony.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 60 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: 1,701,575

Seventh-day Adventists: 88

Religious Groups: Muslim 70% (Shi'a, Sunni), Christian 14.5%, Hindu 9.8%, Buddhist 2.5%, Jewish 0.6%, Other 2.6% (including Folk Religions, Unaffiliated, Sikhs, and Baha'is). 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.

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: Islam is the official religion, and sharia is a principal source for legislation. The constitution provides for freedom of conscience, the inviolability of places of worship, and the freedom to perform religious rites. Non-Muslim groups are required to register with the Ministry of Labor and Social Development (MOLSD). There are 19 non-Muslim religious groups registered with the ministry. Non-Muslim religious communities, both registered and unregistered, are allowed to maintain identifiable places of worship, organize religious services, and display religious symbols. Security forces reported they continued to monitor religious gatherings and funerals to ensure peace and security. 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 have 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 is one Seventh-day Adventist church.

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.

BANGLADESH

Population: 164,689,383

Seventh-day Adventists: 33,561

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

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. Despite political instability, economic growth is robust, contributed to by exports of textiles. The agricultural sector, which sustains half of the population, has also experienced growth. However, despite progress and the improved availability of food due to increased production, nearly 32 percent of Bangladeshis still live below the national poverty line, according to UN World Food Program. A major human rights issue is the widespread practice of arbitrary detention. According to UN Refugee Agency, an estimated 884,000 Rohingya refugees who had fled Burma since 2017 remained in Bangladesh, where most live in precarious camps that lack basic services. 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 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. It has been increasingly difficult to differentiate between violence perpetrated for religious or political reasons. Conversion from Islam is socially unacceptable. In all public government-accredited schools, religious studies are mandatory and are included in the curriculum for grades three through ten. Private schools are not required to teach religious studies. Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian students receive instruction based on their own religious beliefs.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There were numerous attacks against ethnic and religious minorities throughout the year, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of minority groups—Ahmadiyya Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and Hindus—experience discrimination at the hands of the majority Islamic population. The government maintained law enforcement presence at religious sites, festivals, and events considered possible targets for violence.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 125 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: 287,375

Seventh-day Adventists: 20,314

Religious Groups: Anglican 23.9%, Pentecostal 19.5%, Seventh-day Adventist 5.9%, Methodist 4.2%, Roman Catholic 3.8%, Wesleyans 3.4%, Nazarenes 3.2%, Church of God 2.4 %, no affiliation 20.6%, non-Christian less than 3%

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. In September, the Barbadian government announced that it would remove the monarchy and become a republic by November 2021. Furthermore, Prime Minister Mia Mottley declared that the government would hold a referendum to legalize same-sex civil unions.

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 government does not require religious groups to register but registering endows religious groups with certain legal benefits. The attitude of the government is consistent with the constitutional provision for religious freedom. Religious groups are allowed to establish and maintain private schools and provide religious instruction under the constitution. The public school curriculum includes religious “values education.”

Private Attitudes and Actions: Religious groups generally have amicable relationships with each other. Rastafarians continue to report some discrimination when seeking employment. According to religious leaders, COVID-19 restrictions led to a net increase in online and in-person attendance at worship services compared to pre-COVID-19.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 57 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: 9,449,323 (2020 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 3,748

Religious Groups: Belarusian Orthodox 53%, Roman Catholic 6%, atheist 8%, 22% no affiliation, other (Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, Greek Catholic and Orthodox other than BOC) 2% (2016 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. While Alyaksandr Lukashenka claimed victory in the 2020 presidential elections, the legitimacy of his office has been questioned nationally and internationally. Belarus remains 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 imposes penalties ranging from fines to five years in prison for failing to fulfill mandatory military service, with an exemption for conscientious objectors for religious reasons. Conscientious objectors can opt for alternative civilian service. Police frequently raid Protestant and other minority religions’ places of worship and clergies’ homes. The law permits only registered religious groups that are members of national religious associations to organize extracurricular religious activities at educational institutions. Homeschooling or private religious elementary, junior, or senior high schools are not allowed by law.

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. According to the law, all religious groups are required to obtain permits for events held outside their premises, which include proselytizing and getting permission from the government before they import or distribute religious literature.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 66 Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Seventh-day Adventists church is registered as a national religious association 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: 11,589,623

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,717

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 57.1%, Protestant 2.3%, other Christian 2.8%, Muslim (mostly Sunni) 6.8%, Orthodox Christian 0.6%, Jewish 0.3%, Buddhist 0.3%, atheist 9.1%, “nonbeliever/agnostic” 20.2%, and “other” 0.5%

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. A law referred to as the “burqa ban” that prohibits the use of head coverings in public has been in effect since 2011. The ban on face coverings remained unchanged despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Judges considered that the nationwide prohibition did not violate the rights to private and family life and freedom of religion, or discrimination laws. The constitution requires teaching in public schools to be neutral with respect to religious beliefs. Public schools provide religious or “moral” instruction emphasizing citizenship and moral values.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are some reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Media and NGOs reported incidents of violence, threats, harassment, discrimination, and

hate speech against Muslims and Jews. There were also several incidents against Christians. The media also reported religious hate speech via social media in 2020.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 33 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: 397,628

Seventh-day Adventists: 47,682

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)

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 kindergarten through eighth grade to attend one class of religious instruction per week, no student is forced to attend. These church-run schools also provide separate religious education classes based on their religion. The law requires all religious organizations to register with the Ministry of the Attorney General. Religious organizations may also partner with the state to operate schools, run hospitals and other charity organizations. The law guarantees respect for inmates’ religious beliefs by allowing them to attend religious services in prison. Foreign religious workers need to obtain a visa and a work permit.

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 95 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: 12,123,200

Seventh-day Adventists: 5,859

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 25.5%, Muslim 27.7%, Voodoo 11.6%, no affiliation 5.8%, other indigenous beliefs 2.6%, Celestial Christian 6.7%, 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 (2013 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 and poor governance, however, continue to stymie economic growth for Benin. The country 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: The constitution establishes a secular state, prohibits religious discrimination, and provides for freedom of religious thought, expression, and practice, consistent with public order as established by law and regulations. 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. 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. There were no reports of significant societal actions affecting religious freedom.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 31 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: 62,278

Seventh-day Adventists: 3,982

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%

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: 771,608

Seventh-day Adventists: 841

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 the 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 law requires religious groups to apply for licenses before holding public religious gatherings and restricts religious speech that incites hatred among religious groups. During the year 2020, the Commission for Religious Organizations (CRO) approved 14 religious groups, but none of them were from religious minorities. 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-Buddhists 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 14 Seventh-day Adventist Churches.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

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

BOLIVIA

Population: 11,673,021

Seventh-day Adventists: 123,199

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 77%, Protestant or Evangelical 16%, other Christian 2%, nonbelievers 5%, small number of Muslims and Jews (2012 estimate). Many indigenous communities practice a mix of Catholic and indigenous traditions.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Bolivia is a resourceful, rich country with strong growth attributed to captive markets for natural gas exports—to Brazil and Argentina. However, the country remains one of the least developed countries in Latin America because of state-oriented policies that deter investment. Bolivia is the second largest producer of gas on the continent, but it ranks 150 of 190 in the index of doing business. Bolivian President Evo Morales resigned on November 10, 2019, after nearly 14 years in power, amid turmoil following his disputed re-election. As a result of the October 2020 election, Luis Arce became President on November 8, 2020, with the victory for the political party MAS. The poverty and inequality have continued reducing, however nearly 35 percent of Bolivians remain below the poverty line, according to the World Bank. Indigenous populations experience widespread poverty.

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 follows the constitutional provision for religious freedom. According to the 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. Unregistered religious groups may not organize publicly, own property, raise funds, conduct outreach activities, or import literature. As a result of COVID-19 restrictions, there was a delay in implementing and enforcing the 2019 Law of Religious Freedom, Religious Organizations and Spiritual Beliefs, which placed clear distinctions between nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and religious organizations. 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.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most faith communities have amicable relationships with each other. There were no reports of significant societal actions affecting religious freedom. On August 17, 2021, more than 250 students, parents, and administrators of the Carreño Ortuño Adventist School from Cliza in Cochabamba, Bolivia, participated in an educational march to help prevent abuse and violence of all kinds and towards all genders.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 477 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, 29 high schools, and 37 radio stations. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are difficulties keeping the Sabbath among workers and students alike. The local PARL department representatives were involved in solving these problems.

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

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Population: 3,280,819

Seventh-day Adventists: 594

Religious Groups: Muslim 51%, Serbian Orthodox 31%, Roman Catholic 15%, other (including Protestants and Jews) 3% (2013 census)

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. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges to progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has strained healthcare systems. NATO continue to provide support to the country.

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. While the government has taken steps to promote religious liberty, a weak judicial system inhibits attempts to defend minority rights. There is a national law on religion which provides freedom of conscience and grants legal status to "churches and religious communities." The registration procedures were simplified for religious groups that were recognized prior to the adoption of the law, primarily the Orthodox Church, IC, Jewish Community, Catholic Church, and other Christian groups, including the Evangelical, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Jehovah's Witnesses. The laws allow each officially recognized religious community to designate a representative to teach religious studies in public and private preschools, primary and secondary schools, and universities if there is sufficient demand.

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. Minority religious groups reported continued discrimination by municipal authorities, who often failed to provide government services and protection.

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: 2,351,627

Seventh-day Adventists: 47,611

Religious Groups: Christian 79% (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 15%, indigenous religion 4%, and other religious groups 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. Botswana has made significant progress in its response to the HIV epidemic in recent years. 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 159 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: 212,559,417

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,723,409

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%

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 1985, 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 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. Brazil is a country which enjoys a high level of religious freedom. Restrictions on religious practices are minimal or almost nonexistent. However, one factor that is causing great concern and challenge is the increase in the phenomenon of social hostilities involving religion. Another striking challenge is to make public, and in a more comprehensive way, the knowledge of the constitutional guarantees existing in the country. These are not always known and, consequently, not always respected by some public and private sectors.

Constitutional Provision: Title 2, Chapter 1, Article 5 (VI & VIII) of the constitution states: “(VI) freedom of conscience and belief is inviolable, assuring free exercise of religious beliefs and guaranteeing, as set forth in law, protection of places of worship and their rites . . . (VIII) no one shall be deprived of any rights because of religious beliefs or philosophical or political convictions, unless invoked in order to be exempted from a legal obligation imposed upon all by one refusing to perform an alternative service established by law.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The government allows for freedom of religion and declares itself a secular country which maintains separation of church and state. Religious groups are not required to register and no state or favored religion exists. 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 a Network to Combat Racism and Religious Intolerance in order to assist victims. Religious instruction must be included in public schools under government regulations, however, neither the constitution nor legislation defines the parameters. The law requires that the instruction should be nondenominational and free of proselytizing. A new achievement for religious freedom came on January 3, 2019, when President Jair Bolsonaro sanctioned a law proposed by the National Congress that recognizes students' right to conscientious objection regarding the observance of religious days. The law guarantees the right of students to express their religious beliefs and schools are required to provide them with alternatives, such as taking replacement exams or taking makeup classes. The International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance (IRFBA), a network of 32 countries committed to

opposing religious persecution and advancing freedom of religion or belief for all, was launched in February 2020. Brazil, which is a member of the Alliance, will host the next ministerial event in 2021.

Private Attitudes and Actions: For the most part, varying faith communities have amicable relationships. However, there were more reports of hate speech directed at religious minorities on social media and the internet, especially anti-Afro-Brazilian and anti-Semitic remarks. In Rio de Janeiro, members of the Candomble religion have complained about discrimination and harassment at the hands of local drug traffickers. Alternately, 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. On May 2019, around 7,000 people took part in the Religious Freedom Week, at regional events, and at a major symposium held at the Adventist University Center of São Paulo (UNASP). The celebrations were coordinated by a delegation of religious freedom leaders, led by Dr. Ganoune Diop, director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty for the Seventh-day Adventist world church, and State Congresswoman Damaris Moura. These meetings aimed to raise public awareness of religious liberty challenges and to spark new action. The Sao Paulo Legislative Assembly held the Sao Paulo State Religious Freedom Week in May 2021, a series of virtual meetings to promote freedom of religion and tolerance. In July 2021, Sao Paulo State increased sanctions for engaging in certain acts of religious intolerance.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 9,558 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university with three campuses, five colleges, 166 high schools, 5 clinics, 18 radio stations, five hospitals, and two missionary boats. 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: With the passage of the new conscientious objection protection law for holy days, Sabbath keeping problems for Adventist students are being drastically reduced. However, Seventh-day Adventists still experience difficulties in the workplace and with application

exams for universities. Brazilian courts have been sensitive to these issues and have, in many cases, given the plaintiffs a cause.

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

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Population: 30,231

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,094

Religious Groups: Protestant 70.2% (Methodist 17.6%, Church of God 10.4%, Anglican 9.5%, Seventh Day Adventist 9.0%, Pentecostal 8.2%, Baptist 7.4%, New Testament Church of God 6.9%, other Protestant 1.2%), Roman Catholic 8.9%, Jehovah's Witness 2.5%, Hindu 1.9%, other 6.2%, none 7.9%, unspecified 2.4% (2010 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. COVID-19 has a significant impact on the British Virgin Islands' economy, primarily through the tourism sector, which generates an estimated 45% of the national income.

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 and one 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.

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

Population: 437,479

Seventh-day Adventists: unknown

Religious Groups: Muslim 78.8%, Buddhist 7.8%, Christian 8.7%, other religions including indigenous beliefs 4.7%

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—76 years. 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. Although Brunei enjoys these benefits, poverty is still an issue.

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, the government implemented the first phase of the new code, based on Sharia, but has held off implementing phases two and three, which contain severe penalties for violations, including amputations and death by stoning. The Sharia penal code

includes rules that apply to both non-Muslims and Muslims. 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. The law prohibits teaching or promoting any religion other than Islam to Muslims or persons of no faith. According to the Ministry of Education, schools are required to teach an Islamic religious knowledge course for all Muslim children aged seven through 15. All non-Muslims are exempt from all religious studies requirements and receive moral-behavior instruction; they must, however, take classes on Malay Islamic monarchy (MIB). A 2019 *de facto* moratorium on the death penalty remains in effect.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There has been added social, and at times official, pressure placed upon non-Muslims to conform to Islamic practices. Non-Muslims and Muslims face social pressure to conform to Islamic guidelines regarding behavior. Most citizens of Brunei do not know much about non-Muslim religions because they are forbidden from learning about other faiths. The government continued to enforce strict controls on the import of non-Islamic religious texts such as Bibles and Islamic materials or scriptures intended for sale or distribution.

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: 6,948,445

Seventh-day Adventists: 7,008

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%

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. The European Court of Human Rights urges Bulgaria to halt its deportation of a group of Uyghur Muslims to China.

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. Publication, importation, and distribution of religious media are permitted by law. As part of the core curriculum, public schools are

permitted, but not required, to teach the historical, philosophical, and cultural aspects of religion and introduce students to moral values associated with diverse religious groups. 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 minority religious groups remain an intermittent problem. Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and Muslims have all reported recent episodes of discrimination and harassment in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Council of Religious Communities continued to serve as a platform for major religious groups to organize joint events and advocate for a common position on religious issues.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 117 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: 20,903,273

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,358

Religious Groups: Muslim 61.6%, Roman Catholic 23.2%, traditional/animist 7.3%, Protestant 6.7%, other/no answer 0.2%, none 0.9% (2010 est.). 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. On November 22, 2020, the President of Burkina Faso Roch Marc Christian Kaboré has won re-election. Economic and social development have been assisted by political stability in the country and its sub-region and to its opening to international trade and diversification of exports. According to the UN Refugee Agency, more than 1.3 million people have fled their homes, due to attacks from violent extremist groups throughout the country. Despite extreme poverty, terrorism, and corruption, civil society and the media remain strong forces for democracy and for the respect of civil liberties.

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. Religious education is not allowed in public schools.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious, and there are no reports of significant tension. However, there were numerous targeted killings based on religious identity by both domestic and transnational terrorist groups, according to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Religious groups and human rights organizations expressed concern that religiously motivated attacks threatened the 'traditional peaceful coexistence' of religious groups in the country.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 12 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: 54,409,800

Seventh-day Adventists: 34,341

Religious Groups: Buddhist 87.9%, Christian 6.2%, Muslim 4.3%, Animist 0.8%, Hindu 0.5%, other 0.2%, none 0.1%

Perspectives on Current Issues: Burma is located in Southeast Asia, bordering India, Bangladesh, China, Laos and 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 which were widely considered flawed in 2010, but the new government (largely consisting of former military junta members) has already instituted reforms. In November 2020, Burma held its second general election since the end of full military rule in 2011. In February 2021, the Burmese military seized power in a coup and detained elected leader Suu Kyi and other NLD officials. According to the UN Refugee Agency, there are 980,000 refugees and asylum-seekers from Myanmar in neighboring countries. Their largest exodus began in August 2017 due to a massive wave of violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State, forcing more than 700,000 people to flee Bangladesh. Burma's government is ranked 137th in the world by Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. Myanmar is one of the most disaster-prone countries, exposed to multiple hazards, and ranked second among 187 countries in the Global Climate Risk Index. According to the World Bank, although Myanmar was one of the fastest growing economies in East Asia, an economic decline is expected following the pandemic and the political instability.

Constitutional Provision: The 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. Even though the 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. To obtain official status, secular or religious organizations need to register with the government. 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. Religious education is not included in public schools. 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. There is a similar ban on Christian worship services. Police were reportedly slow to respond to acts of discrimination against Christians and Muslims. In Rakhine state, the government has practiced discrimination against the Rohingya Muslim minority since the late 1970s, generating waves of violence and causing hundreds of thousands of Rohingya to flee to makeshift refugee camps in nearby Bangladesh.

Private Attitudes and Actions: For the most part, individual religious groups have an amicable relationship with each other. Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state are denied participation in civic life, have limited access to health care, and endure social discrimination and harassment. In states with large Christian populations, such as Kachin State, Karen State, Chin State, and Northern Shan, there is ongoing tension, with reports of discrimination and violence against Christians.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 239 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: 11,890,784

Seventh-day Adventists: 188,632

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. There are more challenges in the process of poverty reduction, such as a poor rural economy, strong dependence on development aid, vulnerability to adverse environmental events, strong population growth, and an increase in the political and human rights crisis. The human rights situation in Burundi has deteriorated significantly since 2015, particularly in the capital, Bujumbura where more than 343,000 Burundians have fled the country to places like Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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. However, in July 2020, the government suspended requests to register new religious groups until further notice. 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. Since May of 2019, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Burundi have endured ongoing persecution from the government. On October 24, 2019, pastor Lamec Barishinga, the president of the Burundi Union Mission, was arrested by authorities in the country. In the case of Burundi, the core violation of religious liberty was the refusal of the government to accept the decision of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to elect its leaders in freedom and without interference. However, pastor Lameck Barishinga was released from prison on February 10, 2021. In May 2021, the Seventh-day Adventist Church expressed its appreciation for the free access to worshipping God on Sabbath without any restrictions.

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 475 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: 16,718,965

Seventh-day Adventists: 3,553

Religious Groups: Theravada Buddhist 96.9%, Muslim 2%, other (Baha'i, Jewish, ethnic Vietnamese Cao Dai, other Christian denominations)

Perspectives on Current Issues: Bordering Thailand, Laos 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. In the last two decades, this nation has enjoyed a stable government, but poverty continues. Around 4.5

million people remain near-poor, vulnerable to falling back into poverty when exposed to economic and other external shocks, according to the World Bank. Cambodia is one of the countries most dependent on foreign aid. In recent years, however, the economy of Cambodia has maintained steady growth. Rice exports have provided a significant boost to the economy. Health, nutrition, and education remain important challenges and developmental priorities since inadequate education and poor literacy rates are an impediment to sustainable growth.

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. Non-Buddhist denominations are not allowed to proselytize publicly. The law does not allow non-Buddhist supplemental religious instruction in secular public schools. 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 seven 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: 26,545,863

Seventh-day Adventists: 115,371

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

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. The failure to provide basic education increased the risk of child labor. Cameroon is facing an increasingly challenging situation in its northern regions, where Boko Haram is waging its war.

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

State Attitudes and Actions: The constitution establishes the state as secular. It provides for freedom of religion and prohibits harassment or discrimination on grounds of religion. The law on freedom of association governs relations between the government and religious groups. The Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT) 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. The Ministry of Education require private religious schools to comply with the same curriculum, infrastructure, and teacher-training standards as state-operated schools. However, private schools may offer religious education classes.

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 Cameroon Association for Interreligious Dialogue (ACADIR) organized interreligious seminars and trained leaders from diverse religious groups to promote peace, social cohesion, human rights and mutual understanding among members of different faith-based organizations.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 980 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: 37,742,154

Seventh-day Adventists: 73,006

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%

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. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency's global report, Canada admitted the largest number of refugees who were resettled during 2018 and had the second highest rate of refugees who gained citizenship. Still, this North American country faces a number of challenges including waves of immigrants entering the country predominantly from Asia, health and education systems in need of tuning, and environmental

concerns relating to fossil fuel extraction. Canada continues to struggle to address issues, including discrimination, against indigenous peoples and abuses by Canadian companies operating overseas. 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 partially fund Catholic schools but do not extend public funding to non-Catholic schools. Six of the 10 provinces provide full or partial funding to some religious schools. There have been criticisms from some civil organizations, the media, and even parliamentarians of the application of hate speech laws. In 2013, the federal government established the Office of Religious Freedom, headed by an ambassadorial-rank official, intended to advocate for religious minorities within Canada and abroad. The office was closed in 2016. Private religious schools, which advocate against same-sex relationships, have faced pressure from those who see such a stance as violating anti-discrimination laws. This issue continues to be litigated.

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, hate speech, violence and harassment.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 392 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: 555,987

Seventh-day Adventists: 9,428

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. 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. Some public schools continued to offer an optional Religious and Moral Education Curriculum (EMRC), produced by the Catholic Church.

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 43 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: 65,722

Seventh-day Adventists: 6,527

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 98,000 companies. Cayman Islanders enjoy a very high standard of living and receive

over 2 million visitors per year. Though economic activity was lower than normal because of the worldwide pandemic, recovery is expected.

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: 4,829,767

Seventh-day Adventists: 6,281

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. 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. Based on UN figures, the total number of internally displaced people in the country, reached over 630,834, and the total number of refugees to 632,108, the highest numbers since 2014. Life expectancy is 53 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. According to the United Nations Human Development Index, the Central African Republic (CAR) ranks 188th out of 189, and extremely poor infrastructure inhibits development in education, security, and the economy.

Constitutional Provision: Since March 30, 2016, the Central African Republic is led by a new constitution that replaced the "Charte de la Transition," which led the country as a provisional constitution since July 2013. The new constitution states the secular character of the State and recognizes the "religious and cultural diversity of the Central African people, which contributes to the enrichment of their personalities." Article 10 guarantees "freedom of conscience, religion, and worship" and forbids "all forms of religious fundamentalism and intolerance."

State Attitudes and Actions: It is a legal requirement for religious groups to be registered by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and meet the legal requirement to have at least 1000 members, and have leaders with an adequate religious education, as judged by the ministry. Since the beginning of 2016 there has been a gradual evolution towards political and social stabilization, mainly due to the peaceful and credible legislative that increased stability, reduced violent incidents and inter-religious discrimination. Religious instruction is not part of the public school curriculum, however, the law does not prohibit religious instruction in public or private schools.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Due to the fact that the state fails to impose authority on the whole territory, the actions of the armed groups still affect religious freedom. Armed groups continued to commit serious human rights abuses, expanding their control to an estimated 80 percent of the country. Despite of a series of peace deals between the government and the country's armed groups, the security situation has not improved and both parties have

repeatedly broken them. The country faces a humanitarian crisis, and violent attacks against civilians, including sexual violence, are an acute risk in many areas.

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

CHAD

Population: 16,425,864

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,864

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. While Chad hosts hundreds of thousands of refugees from neighboring countries, Boko Haram attacks and Chad's military response have displaced more than a hundred thousand internally, according to Human Rights Watch. This nation ranks last on the World Bank's Human Capital Index and remains near the bottom of the Human Development Index. The economy of Chad remains vulnerable to significant risks, including changes in oil prices and regional insecurity.

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 Territorial Administration and Decentralized Territorial Collectivities. 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. Military service is obligatory, as stated by the constitution, which means that it prohibits invoking religious belief to avoid this obligation. In 2018, despite opposition warnings that it would undermine democracy, parliament passed a controversial change to the constitution that increased President Deby's powers. In December 2020, the government removed the denominational oath of office that had required senior government officials to take an oath “under God” or “under Allah.”

Private Attitudes and Actions: There were some social-religious problems between Christians and Muslims. Prominent societal leaders, however, took positive steps to promote religious freedom and additional security in places of worship. Christians and Muslims routinely participate in each other's social functions. Despite the tension, Protestant and Catholic churches together with the Islamic community met regularly to promote religious tolerance and to combat prejudice.

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: 19,116,201

Seventh-day Adventists: 104,215 (2019 estimate)

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. Chile is considered the most stable and among the most prosperous countries in South America. Public demonstrations in 2019-20 exposed the vulnerability of the socio-economic system, as protesters called for radical changes in the country's political and social direction.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter III Article 19 (6) of the constitution states: "The Constitution guarantees to all persons: (6) The freedom of conscience, expression of any belief and the free exercise of all religions which are not contrary to morals, good customs or public order. Religious denominations may erect and maintain temples and their dependencies under the safety and hygiene conditions established by the laws and ordinances. Churches, and religious denominations and institutions of any cult shall have the rights, in regard to assets, which the laws currently in force grant and recognize. The temples and their dependencies, used exclusively for the service of a cult, shall be exempt 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. Discrimination based on religion is prohibited, and victims are provided with civil remedies for discrimination. Religious groups are not required to register with the government; however, there are tax benefits for those that do. Once registered, a religious group is recognized as a religious nonprofit organization. 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 instruction curricula created by 14 other religious groups such as

Orthodox and Reformed Jews, Evangelical Christians, and Seventh-day Adventists have been approved by the Ministry of Education.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Several Jewish community leaders expressed concern over the rise in anti-Semitic incidents in the country. Despite these reports of anti-Semitism, most religious groups have amicable relationships with one another. The Chilean Association for Interreligious Dialogue (ADIR), an NGO formed by religious leaders, worked to promote tolerance and open dialogue, and to support religious communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 684 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, 28 high schools, three radio stations, and one clinic. These institutions are 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 still some difficulties in keeping the Sabbath for both students and workers, which are mostly solved with the help of the local PARL department representatives.

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

CHINA

Population: 1,439,323,776

Seventh-day Adventists: 467,516

Religious Groups: Buddhist 18.2%, Christian 5.1%, Muslim 1.8%, Folk Religions 21.9%, Unaffiliated 52.2% (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. With over 1.4 billion citizens, China is

the most populous country on earth. 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 has been facing economic issues that include high inequality, rapid urbanization, challenges to the environmental sustainability and demographic pressure. 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 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 organization, 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. Consequently, religious groups that are not registered are not allowed the same protection as registered ones. Unfortunately, the state 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. Minors are not allowed to participate in religious activities and to receive religious education, even in schools run by religious organizations. According to a report by USCIRF, the government monitors religious minorities by utilizing high-tech surveillance that includes facial recognition and artificial intelligence. There are also reports that the government physically abuses, detains, arrests, tortures, and condemns to prison members of religious groups, both registered and unregistered for activities related to their religious beliefs and practices. 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. Government authorities continue to restrict the printing and distribution of the Bible, the Quran, and other religious literature, and penalize publishing and copying companies handling religious materials. 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. On 29 March 2021, United Nations human rights experts raised concerns about Muslim Uyghur's situation in China who are subject to exploitative working and abusive living conditions that may constitute arbitrary detention, human trafficking, forced labor. United Nations Human Rights experts requested unlimited access to the country to conduct monitoring missions to scrutinize the real situation of human rights.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are more than 1,142 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: 50,882,891

Seventh-day Adventists: 290,343

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

Perspectives on Current Issues: The only country in South America that touches both the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean, Colombia is a unique blend of ethnicities and cultures. As a top producer of various minerals and agricultural products, Colombia has had a growing economy and a strong democracy since 2002. Decades of violence at the hand of guerilla movements had marked the country as a dangerous haven for drug trafficking. Since 1985, there were more than 8.2 million displaced residents caused by violence associated with the conflict, according to Human Rights Watch. However, since 2002 the government has worked to begin negotiations between guerilla groups that once controlled vast stretches of the country. At this point the situation seems to be improved. The government and the country's main guerrilla group continued to implement the 2016 peace accord, but Colombia still faces enormous challenges in consolidating peace and guaranteeing political rights and civil liberties throughout its territory. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights continues to play a key role in defending and promoting human rights in Colombia.

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. The Ministry of Interior is responsible for keeping a public registry of religious entities and for legally recognizing religious denominations, religious federations, and confederations. 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. The MOI drafted a new public policy on religious freedom and worship in an effort to increase coordination with religious groups and updating a 1997 agreement.

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. There are other reports of illegal armed groups and organized crime groups threatening leaders and members of religious groups. Individuals continue to face challenges in obtaining religious exemptions from military service. According to the Ministry of Defense, 85 of 117 applications seeking conscientious objector status had been approved in 2020. On July 4, designated as the National Day of Religious Freedom in the country, the MOI and regional governments organized events to raise public awareness of the holiday and new public policy and to strengthen relationships with religious institutions.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,801 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: 869,601

Seventh-day Adventists: None

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 99%. The several hundred non-Sunni residents include Shia Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Roman Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses and other 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 journalists were subject to harassment. A new constitution was enacted in 2001 as an attempt to keep the islands unified under one national government. Comoros is still facing corruption, poverty, torture, criminalization of same-sex sexual conduct, and human trafficking.

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 July 2019 constitutional referendum makes it more clear that the Sunni branch of Islam constitutes the state religion,

at the expense of the other minority Islamic groups, whose members already fear persecution. For religious groups, there is no official registration process. 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.

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.

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

CONGO, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE

Population: 89,561,403

Seventh-day Adventists: 686,387

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. According to the UN Refugee Agency, there are an estimated 5.01 million internally displaced people and more than 918,000 seeking refuge inside DRC. The DRC ranks 175th out of 189 countries according to the Index of the United Nations Human Development Program.

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. 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 central and eastern Congo, 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, according to some religious leaders, tensions continued to exist between local Christian communities and nomadic Muslim herder communities in the north.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Churches and Institutions: There are 2,172 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, three literature ministry seminaries, one hospital, 28 clinics and dispensaries, and 3 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.

CONGO, REPUBLIC OF THE

Population: 5,518,087

Seventh-day Adventists: 882

Religious Groups: Protestant 41%, Roman Catholic 32%, atheist 11%, other

Christian (Kimbanguist, Salvationist, Jehovah's Witnesses, 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 morals. . . . 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. While religious instruction is allowed in private schools, it is prohibited in public schools.

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. An ecumenical council representing the Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist Churches, have been meeting at least biweekly with the goals of promoting mutual understanding and religious tolerance.

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: 17,564

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,257

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%

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 exists, 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.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 16 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: 5,094,118

Seventh-day Adventists: 50,125

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 63%, Protestant 23% (Pentecostal, Baptist, Lutheran, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Lutheran, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists), 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. Costa Rica has become an upper middle-income country based on steady economic growth over the past 25 years, according to the World Bank. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly 20 percent of the population lives in extreme poverty, and inequality has increased within the country.

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. Public schools are required by law to offer nonsectarian Christian religious instruction. However, a parent may choose to opt out of religious courses on behalf of a child in a written request. 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. The government included support for the Catholic Church and evangelical groups in its annual budget.

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 250 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. The Constitutional Chamber ruled in favor of two Seventh-day Adventists who submitted complaints seeking approval to observe their Sabbath on Saturdays.

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

COTE D’IVOIRE

Population: 26,378,274

Seventh-day Adventists: 10,224

Religious Groups: Muslim 35-40% (Sunni, Shia, Ahmadiyya), Christian (Roman Catholic, Jehovah's Witnesses, 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. Cote d'Ivoire has returned to economic growth after stabilizing its political situation in 2011, becoming one of the fastest-growing African economies. The UN peacekeeping mission departed in June 2017. Life expectancy is 53 years. Violence against women is still widespread.

Constitutional Provision: In October 2016, Cote d'Ivoire's Parliament approved the draft of a new Constitution. The new constitution stipulates a secular state that respects all beliefs and treats all individuals equally under the law, regardless of religion. The Constitution prohibits religious discrimination in public and private workplaces and provides for freedom of conscience, religious belief and worship consistent with the law, the rights of others, national security, and public order.

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. 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. Religious education is often included in private schools, which are affiliated with religious entities, but it is not included in the public school curriculum.

Private Attitudes and Actions: The government included religious leaders such as Muslims, Catholics and other Christians in the process of reconciliation and finding solutions to diminish existing tensions. The government has also held interfaith conferences on tolerance. Local religious leaders stated they agreed to work together to fight the causes of conflicts, one of which they labeled as religious fanaticism.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 92 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: 4,105,267

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,565

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. Croatia was able to join NATO in 2009 and the EU in 2013. Croatia is still facing a low employment rate, corruption, violence, unfavorable demographic trends, and a burdensome investment climate.

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. On July 4, 2003, the Contract on Matters of Common Interest was signed in Zagreb between the Croatian Government and the Seventh-day Adventist Church (together with the Pentecostal and Baptist Churches) according to which relations are specified in the area of child rearing, education, culture, pastoral care for believers in jails, prisons, reform schools, hospitals, health institutions, and institutions for social welfare, as well as for believers who are members of the armed forces and the police, with the intention of creating and maintaining better conditions for religious activities. Article 22 specifies the right of the Seventh-day Adventist believers to observe the seventh day as Sabbath in all above-mentioned areas of social context. This article has been implemented successfully in many instances in Croatia.

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 remained unresolved.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience: Institutional Freedom: There are 68 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: 11,326,616

Seventh-day Adventists: 37,728

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%, Unaffiliated or Other (Jewish, Muslim, Greek and Russian Orthodox, Buddhist, Baha'i) 25–30%

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. In April 2018, the Cuban Communist Party named Miguel Díaz-Canel the president of Cuba after six decades of rule by Fidel and Raúl Castro.

Constitutional Provision: Article 15 of the new constitution published in January 2019 states: "The State recognizes, respects, and guarantees religious liberty. The Republic of Cuba is secular. In the Republic of Cuba, the religious institutions and fraternal associations are separate from the State and they all have the same rights and duties. Distinct beliefs and religions enjoy equal consideration."

State Attitudes and Actions: According to the 2019 constitution, 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. Military service is mandatory, and the law does not exempt conscientious objectors from service. Religious education is not permitted in public schools, and private primary and secondary schools are not allowed to operate. Homeschooling is prohibited.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Private groups continue to have amicable relationships with one another. There have been no reports of significant societal affecting religious freedom. Some religious groups raised concerns that the 2019 constitution significantly weakened the freedom of religion or belief. According to media and religious groups, the government continued to delay requests for registration and to prohibit the construction of new church buildings.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 345 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: 1,207,359

Seventh-day Adventists: 109

Religious Groups: Greek Orthodox 95%, other 5% (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Maronite Catholic Armenian Orthodox, Jewish, Jehovah's Witnesses, 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 Cyprus has made significant progress in recovering from the financial 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. Religious leaders have agreed to allow worshippers to access churches and mosques on either side of the UN buffer zone. Important religious leaders made a joint presentation at the Human Rights Council in Geneva for highlighting their efforts for developing religious freedom in Cyprus. However, some religious minority groups continued to report pressure to engage in religious ceremonies of majority groups.

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: 10,708,981

Seventh-day Adventists: 7,498

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 now 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. The country has lowest unemployment in the European Union.

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 law states that the MOC's Department of Churches is responsible for religious affairs. The law establishes 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 42 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. The government concluded processing restitution claims filed by religious groups in 2012-13 for properties confiscated by the communist regime. There is no special visa category for religious workers.

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 149 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: 5,792,202

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,387

Religious Groups: Evangelical Lutheran 76%, Muslim 4%, other (denominations of less than 1% each, includes Roman Catholic, Jehovah's Witnesses, Serbian Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Baptist, Buddhist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Pentecostal, other non-denominational Christians) 20% (2017 est.)

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 number one least corrupt government in the world. The new

law passed by the Danish parliament that will allow Denmark to deport asylum seekers to countries outside Europe has drawn criticism from the European Commission and the United Nations. 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 448 religious groups. Private religious schools receive state subsidies and students may be exempted from mandatory religious instruction in public schools. Although military service is compulsory, there is an exemption for those citing religious reasons. Those who do not want to serve in the army can choose not to serve or to apply for alternative service in different social and cultural institutions, United Nations-related organizations or church organizations. Since 2016 a number of legislative measures have been introduced to regulate religious bodies. These include: stricter requirements for obtaining a residence permit for foreign clergy, introduction of a public sanction list for foreign religious preachers that can be denied entry to the country, and a criminalization (up to 2 years imprisonment) of certain statements if expressed by a religious preacher, while non-religious people may freely express the exact same statements. In 2017 a section in the Danish Criminal Code that protected religious bodies from mockery was abolished. While it is yet to be seen if this results in less protection against hate speech towards religious minorities, it may serve as a positive example to countries that have repressive blasphemy laws. In 2017, facial masking was outlawed in public. While religious facial veiling like burqa and niqab

are not specified, they are intentionally left out of the several exemptions mentioned in the law.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are 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 37 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a junior college, four schools, a publishing house, 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 2018, a new coherent law about religious denominations outside the Lutheran National Church (Law no. 1533 of December 19, 2017) was introduced. This law specifies requirements for recognized denominations.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are no reports of major problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees. The Equal Treatment Board (Ankestyrelsen), which is a government entity that oversees cases of discrimination, has ruled against a school that fired a teacher for refusing to work on Sabbath. This case shows that the Danish State does provide its citizens protection from indirect discrimination based on religion or belief.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely. Canvassing is not allowed. While this is a general rule for any product, it does mean that traditional literature evangelism is affected.

DJIBOUTI

Population: 988,000

Seventh-day Adventists: Unknown

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 94%, others (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Copt, Ethiopian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Jehovah's Witnesses, 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. Poverty, unemployment and human rights remain a big concern in Djibouti. 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: 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 can 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 law places the government as direct overseer of the country's mosques in an effort to thwart political movement among congregants. It is illegal for any faith to proselytize in public, but the government continued to allow non-Islamic religious groups to host events and proselytize on the groups' private property. In public as well as private schools, a civic and moral education course based on Islam is mandatory for all students.

Private Attitudes and Actions: According to Christian leaders, the government allows registration of non-Islamic groups, including Catholic, Protestant, Greek Orthodox, and Ethiopian Orthodox churches. Representatives of the Catholic, Protestant, and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches have noted an increase in hostility towards non-Muslims in recent years. Christian groups reported discrimination in employment and education against converts to Christianity who changed their names. 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: 71,986

Seventh-day Adventists: 7,406

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 Witnesses, Muslim, Nazarene, Rastafarian, Church of Christ)

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: The government maintains a close relationship with Christian churches and allows for free exercise of religious beliefs. Religious organizations are required to register with the government when seeking non-profit status. According to the constitution, religious groups have the right to establish and maintain private schools and to provide religious instruction. The government subsidizes the salaries of teachers at various Christian schools including Seventh-day Adventist institutions. Members of the Rastafarian community stated their relationship with the government had improved significantly.

Private Attitudes and Actions: 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: 10,847,910

Seventh-day Adventists: 358,414

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 69%, Evangelical Protestant (Assembly of God, Church of God, Baptist, Pentecostal) 18%, other (Seventh-day Adventist, Jehovah’s Witnesses, 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. According to World Bank, the Dominican Republic has made significant progress in improving access to education and healthcare; however, rural poverty rates persist, and women face disproportionate challenges nationwide. 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. All religious organizations are required to register with the government. After registering, religious groups may request custom duties exclusion from the Ministry of Finance. Religious groups that are registered with the Central Electoral Board, have the right to conduct marriage ceremonies, according with the law. Non-Catholic faiths may request tax-free status from the Ministry of Finance, which promises to review applications within fifteen days. The law requires religious studies based on Catholic Church teachings in all public schools, but parents may seek an exemption for their children.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Amicable relationships exist among different religious groups, with no reports of violence or strife.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 939 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: 17,643,054

Seventh-day Adventists: 54,760

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. With a developing economy, Ecuador is considered a middle-income country, highly dependent on petroleum, agricultural products, and commodities. Political and social stability seem to be improving in Ecuador. In 2019, a strong wave of popular demonstrations rocked the country for economic reasons.

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. Although the country declares separation of church and state, the Catholic Church still retains several privileges not offered to other religious groups. A research published by the Pew Research Center, on July 2019, shows that Ecuador has a "moderate" level of government laws that impose restrictions

on 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. The registration process is free. Public schools are not permitted to provide religious instruction. Religious groups may establish a school with no legal restrictions or regulations. An association that brings together almost half of the country's religious entities, CONALIRE - Ecuador Religious Liberty Council, has submitted a proposal to the Government to replace the old and still-in-force Cult Law with a modern Religious Freedom Act. The process is ongoing and has not yet been finalized.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most religious groups have amicable relationships and respect for religious diversity. Some religious leaders also expressed their concerns about the erosion of traditional religious values among youth and an increase in secularism.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 308 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates a technical institute, 10 high schools, three radio stations, and one clinic. 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, mostly solved with the help of local PARL department representatives. A case involving the University of Guayaquil's refusal to accommodate an Adventist student's request to observe Saturday, the Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath, remained pending with the Constitutional Court at year's end. Another Seventh-day Adventist student presented a separate case against the University of Cuenca.

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

EGYPT

Population: 102,334,404

Seventh-day Adventists: 827

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. 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. 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. According to the Human Rights Watch, an estimated 60,000 people had been arrested in Egypt on political grounds. Allegations of torture are widespread. Violence against women has reached epidemic proportions. During recent years, the economy has continued to recover, despite the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a report published by the World Bank in April 2019, 60% population of the country is “either poor or vulnerable”. Poverty remains a key challenge amplified by high inflation.

Constitutional Provision: The 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. Muslim students must take courses on “principles of Islam,” and Christian students on “principles of Christianity” in all grades in public schools. Restrictions on church buildings remain in place. National identity cards issued by the Ministry of the Interior include official religious designations limited to Muslim, Christian, or Jewish citizens. According to law, individuals are permitted to change their religion. However,

the government recognizes conversion to Islam, but generally not from Islam to any other religion.

Private Attitudes and Actions: While incidents of violence directly targeting Christians resulted in fewer casualties than in previous years, they persisted in various forms. According to sources within human rights groups and religious communities, discrimination in private hiring continued to occur.

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: 6,486,205

Seventh-day Adventists: 194,916

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. Homicide is a major problem in El Salvador, which continues to rank among the highest in the world.

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. Since public education in the country is secular, no student can be denied based on religion.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There is generally an amicable relationship among various religious groups. However, some religious leaders say that violence prevents them from reaching their congregations in gang-controlled territories. Religious leaders were among other leaders in civil society who participated with the government-led National Security Council in helping to develop a new security plan for El Salvador.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 800 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: 1,402,985

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,692

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, making him the world's longest serving non-royal head of state. 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 remains among the 10 most corrupt countries in the world. Corruption, poverty, and repression are major issues in the country. 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. Newer groups and denominations may be required to renew their registration annually. 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, including the Reformed Church, Seventh-day Adventists, Assemblies of God, Methodists, Baptists, and other Christians, 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. Human rights organizations are concerned by the deteriorating situation for human rights defenders, and for the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association in Equatorial Guinea.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are nine 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: 3,546,421

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: 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. However, after decades of near total diplomatic isolation, Ethiopia and Eritrea put an end to two decades of conflict. The two countries are said to still be working out the details of their new state of relations, while the situation along the border remains tense. However, recent armed confrontations in northern Tigray region have displaced thousands of people. The most recent global report from the UN Refugee Agency estimate that there are over 500,000 Eritrean refugees worldwide. All media outlets are 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. In 2020, reports offered various estimates of imprisonments, ranging from 800 to more than 1,000 people. 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 the past, the Meherete 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 yet 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. Failure to participate in the militia or national service could result in detention.

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: 1,326,535

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,342

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 7.1%. Around 80,000 people (almost 7% of the population) that are residents in Estonia remained stateless, most of them Russian speakers. Estonia is a member of the European Union and NATO and has adopted the Euro currency. Estonia was elected a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for 2020-2021.

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 without much difficulty. There are more than 550 religious associations registered with the government. Since the fall of Communism, most Estonians have become 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, but there are few reported problems. In primary and secondary schools, schools must offer religious studies if students request it.

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 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 Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely. There have been cases of hindrance to evangelism in Orthodox dominated communities in South-East Estonia.

ETHIOPIA

Population: 114,963,588

Seventh-day Adventists: 207,743

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%

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. Also, the ongoing violence between the government of Ethiopia and forces in its northern Tigray region has forced many people to flee. The 1970s and 80s saw severe drought and famine that affected millions of Ethiopians. According to the UNAIDS, in 2020 there were about 620,000 Ethiopians who were living with HIV/AIDS. Although Ethiopia is the fastest growing economy in the region, it still remains one of the poorest. Ethiopia was a founding member of the United Nations and a key provider of troops in eradicating Islamist extremists in southern Somalia. According to the UN, around 5.2 million people currently need help in the country's northern regions of Tigray, Amhara, and Afar, after the conflict started last November between central Government troops and members of the Tigray People's Liberation Front.

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. The Directorate of Faith and Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Peace controls registration and licensing

of religions. Religious groups must renew their registration at least every five years and must provide annual activity and financial reports. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, considered one of the oldest continuous Christian communities in the world, comprises over 44 percent of the country's population. It 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. In public and private schools, religious instruction is not allowed, but they may host clubs based on shared religious values.

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 government continues to support the Interfaith Peace-Building Initiative, an NGO dedicated to promoting interfaith cooperation with the aim of ending religiously motivated violence. To promote reconciliation among ethnic groups in Ethiopia, Prime Minister regularly meets with religious leaders.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 998 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:

The majority of Seventh-day Adventists are not able to honor their religious convictions in the workplace and in school. It has been reported that most 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.

FALKLAND ISLANDS

Population: 3,480

Seventh-day Adventists: 7

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. However, recently, the Falkland Islands have been excluded from the UK-EU trade agreement. On June 24, 2021, the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization, approved 18 draft resolutions, among which was a request "that Argentina and the United Kingdom resume their negotiations and reach a peaceful resolution of their sovereignty dispute over the Falkland Islands."

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: There is one Seventh-day Adventist church 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.

FII

Population: 896,445

Seventh-day Adventists: 28,147

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 practice 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. Religious groups must register with the government and the law permits noncompulsory religious instruction in schools. The Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, and Seventh-day Adventist Churches, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as well as Hindu and Muslim groups operate numerous schools, including secondary schools, which are also eligible for government subsidies.

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 166 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. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Fiji was locked in a legal dispute with the government following the Church's decision to privatize Vatuvonu Adventist High School. The case was closed on November 22, 2019, with a decision by the High Court of Fiji to return management and control of Vatuvonu Adventist High School to the 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.

FINLAND

Population: 5,540,720

Seventh-day Adventists: 4,613

Religious Groups: Evangelical Lutheran 72%, unspecified 25.3%, Orthodox Church 1.1%, other (Jehovah's Witness, Roman Catholic, Muslim, Pentecostal, Seventh-day Adventist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jewish, Free Church of Finland) 1.6% (2016 est.)

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. According to the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2020, Finland is the third least corrupt country in the world.

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. Since 2018, the government allows conscientious objectors to choose alternative civilian service instead of compulsory military service. Religious groups must register as a religious community in order to be eligible to apply for government funds. Public schools

provide religious teaching in accordance with students' religions and other students who do not belong to a religious group study ethics.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Non-traditional religious groups generally are not subject to discrimination, despite the intolerant attitudes of some members of society. There were several demonstrations by neo-Nazi or nativist groups and some complaints of religious discrimination. Some citizens are not receptive to proselytizing by adherents of non-traditional religious groups, in part because they regard religion as a private matter. Together with government support, groups promoting interreligious dialogue expanded their capabilities.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 59 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: 65,273,511

Seventh-day Adventists: 15,761

Religious Groups: Christian (overwhelmingly Roman Catholic) 52-64%, Muslim 3-9%, Buddhist 0.5-0.75%, Jewish 1-2%, other 1-10%, none 23-28% (2015 est.)

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. Religious groups may apply for official recognition and tax exemption, although the law does not require it. 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. Public schools are secular and religious instruction is not provided, except in the provinces of Alsace-Moselle and overseas.

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. However, there have been continued reports of attacks against Christians, Jews, and Muslims. In 2020, the reported number of anti-Semitic incidents increased by 27 percent, anti-Muslim incidents increased by 54 percent, and also anti-Christian incidents remained at a high level.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 136 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.

FRENCH GUIANA

Population: 298,682

Seventh-day Adventists: 3,121

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 14 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: 280,908

Seventh-day Adventists: 5,355

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 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 44 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: 2, 225,734

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,528

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, Ali Bongo Ondimba, 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. 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. In 2018, the government denied more than 100 applications for registration of religious groups. The constitution states parents have the right to choose their children’s religious education. The state provides for public education based on “religious neutrality.” Catholic, Muslim, and Protestant organizations operate primary and secondary schools throughout Gabon. 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.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 21 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: 2,416,668

Seventh-day Adventists: 317

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. He ruled Gambia for more than 22 years. The current president is Adama Barrow. Most of Gambia's land is arid and though the government continues to search for oil wells, none have been struck to date. Gambia is one of the world's poorest countries with approximately three quarters of the rural population is classified as poor. There are also reports of restrictions to freedom of expression, intimidation, harassment, violence against women, and the arbitrary detention of political opponents of the government.

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. 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. In September 2020, the legislature rejected a draft constitution. Some members of the Christian community expressed concerns about omitting the word "secular" from the draft, arguing that this would create the possibility of minority persecution and the unilateral formation of an Islamic government. President Barrow continued to reiterate his administration's commitment to preserving the religious freedom and tolerance in the country.

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: 3,989,167

Seventh-day Adventists: 347

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 regained independence in 1918. After the Red Army invasion in 1921 it became one of the Soviet republics until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Since then, Georgia has had constant tensions with Russia. Georgia has suffered civil wars sparked by two breakaway regions in the north that benefit from Russian support. Georgia's economy dipped during 1990s, but the country has since been able to develop infrastructure and diversify its oil and gas sources, stabilizing the economy.

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, and do not enjoy the same privileges as the GOC. Authorities registered seven new religious organizations as legal entities during 2018. Many cases of religious discrimination or vandalism have gone uninvestigated by

police. According to the law, students may pursue religious study on school grounds "of their own accord" after school hours only.

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. However, religiously motivated crime has declined because of restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic on public activities. Religious freedom is protected by the Council of Religions, which has the responsibility to protect religious liberty and promote constructive dialogue among religious groups in the country.

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. In 2020, the government refused to change the university admission date scheduled on a Saturday for two Seventh-day Adventists who could not participate in the entrance exams because of their religious beliefs. The court ruled that the government was required to reschedule the examination to accommodate the applicants' religious beliefs. The applicants successfully passed the examinations and were able to enroll at the university. Based on the information provided by the Tolerance Institute, the Equality Department of the Public Defender's Office issued a general proposal to the Ministry of Education recommending to take into account the needs of religious minorities.

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: 83,783,942

Seventh-day Adventists: 34,735

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 29%, Protestant 27%, Muslim 4.4%, Orthodox Christian 1.9%, other 1.7%, none or members of unrecorded religious groups 36% (2015 est.)

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. Germany continues to be one of the most dynamic economies in the world, even though the economic environment remains a challenge in the European Union. The annual average unemployment rate climbed to 5 percent in 2020. Nearly 1.5 million asylum-seekers and refugees were hosted by Germany, most of whom were Syrian. Germany was elected to serve on the UN Human Rights Council from 2020 to 2022.

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. According to the US Department of State, the government officially recognizes 180 religious groups, including the Seventh-day Adventists. 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. Religious instruction is optional for students. The government continued to provide funding to Jewish organizations and communities.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are numerous reports of anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian incidents, including assaults, verbal harassment, threats, discrimination, and vandalism. The government continues to condemn these 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 554 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: 31,072,940

Seventh-day Adventists: 371,400

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 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 Ministry of Education includes compulsory religious and moral education in the national public education curriculum. Students are not allowed to opt out of these courses, which contains perspectives from Christianity and Islam. 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, a Christian, and Vice-President, a Muslim, 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 1,931 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.

GREECE

Population: 10,423,054

Seventh-day Adventists: 471

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 ending 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 was 14.6% in July 2021, and still remains the highest in the European Union. Greece continued to host large numbers of asylum seekers. According to the UN Refugee Agency, around 45.3% of refugees who arrived in Greece by sea in June 2021 came from Afghanistan.

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. There are approximately 30 religious communities officially registered with the government. The constitution recognizes Greek Orthodoxy as the “prevailing religion.” The constitution and law prohibit proselytizing and stipulate that no rite of worship may disturb public order or offend moral principles. The government amended laws that permitted mainly Greek Orthodox religious instruction in public schools. Homeschooling is not allowed.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are some reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. There were some incidents of anti-Semitic, anti-Islamic discrimination and verbal attacks towards Jehovah’s Witnesses. Discrimination and even violent acts were committed against refugees, most of whom are Muslim.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

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

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

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: 112,523

Seventh-day Adventists: 14,647

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. The economy is growing, but poverty remains widespread. Nearly half of all households are headed by females.

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. A religious group must be recognized by government as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in order to receive tax and customs exemptions. 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 continued to contribute to an added sense of harmony among Christian denominations and encourage discussions with other faith-based groups. Minister of Religious Affairs commended religious organizations for making a difference during these very hard times, and advised them to use technology to reach their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 46 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: 400,124

Seventh-day Adventists: 9,631

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: 17,915,568

Seventh-day Adventists: 208,086

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.

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. Poverty, infant mortality, malnutrition, income inequality, foreign debt, gang-related violence, and literacy are important issues in 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. The Ministry of Education continued to consult with religious groups on a national values program called "Vivamos Juntos en Harmonia" (Living Together in Harmony) to promote honesty, fraternity, responsibility, and respect.

Private Attitudes and Actions: While Christian groups generally have amicable relationships with one another, some reports indicate discriminatory treatment of indigenous religious groups. Mayan leaders complained that the government continued to limit their access to some Mayan religious sites.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,042 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 might be 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: 13,132,795

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,489

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.

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. Religious groups are not allowed to own radio or television stations. Religious studies are not included in the primary school curriculum.

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 six 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: 1,968,001

Seventh-day Adventists: 3,842

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.

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. There is no religious instruction in public schools.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups and society are generally harmonious, and there are no reports of significant tensions. However, there has been an increase of verbal attacks in the media by citizens who encourage hatred and ethnic and religious divisions. 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 eight 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: 786,552

Seventh-day Adventists: 65,593

Religious Groups: Christian (Pentecostal 23%, Roman Catholic 7%, Anglican 5%, Seventh-day Adventist 5%, Methodist 1%, other Christian 21%) 64%, Hindu 25%, Sunni Muslim 7%, no affiliation 3%, other 1%

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 39% of Guyanese citizens currently live abroad. Approximately 43.4% of the population of Guyana lives on less than \$5.50 per person, making it one of the poorest countries in South America, according to the World Bank.

Constitutional Provision: Part 1, Chapter III, Article 40 of the constitution states: “(1) 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.” Part 2, Title 1, Article 145 states: (1) Except with his or her own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his or her freedom of conscience, and for the purposes of this article the said freedom includes freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his or her religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with

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

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. Some religious groups, however, 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. Interfaith leaders report that the government has continued to promote religious tolerance and diversity through public messages surrounding religious holidays.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 171 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: 11,402,528

Seventh-day Adventists: 479,848

Religious Groups: Catholic 55%, Protestant 29%, other (Episcopalian, Jehovah’s Witness, Methodist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Muslim, Rastafarian, Scientologist, Voodoo) 7%, no affiliation 5%. 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. Recently, several crises have hit the country. Following the assassination of the country's sitting president in July 2021, Haiti experiences political instability and widespread insecurity, while thousands of people have already been forced to flee before the earthquake due to gang violence and tropical storms. The situation in Haiti remains challenging.

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. There were reports that priests and pastors were among the hundreds of victims of gang-related violence and kidnappings for ransom.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 615 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 some instances of employment problems related to employees wishing not to work on Saturday. The Office of Citizen Protection (OPC) continued to advocate for students' religious freedom. Therefore, the Ministry of Education rescheduled exams for Seventh-day Adventist students on weekdays instead of Saturdays.

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

HONDURAS

Population: 9,904,607

Seventh-day Adventists: 91,008

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%

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. During recent years, the local economy is showing signs of improvement; Honduras is one of the largest producers of coffee in the region and a major producer of textiles. The country, however, has

high levels of violence, inequality and poverty. Approximately one out of 5 Hondurans live in extreme poverty, or on less than US\$1.90 per day, according to the World Bank.

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. 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. All foreigners associated with the group are also banned from the country. Some religious organizations run schools, including the Roman Catholic Church, Seventh-day Adventist, and evangelical Protestant churches. For religious groups that observe Friday or Saturday as their Sabbath, there are no exceptions to the official work week, which runs from Monday to Saturday.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Members from varying religious communities have amicable relationships with one another. There are limited reports of swastikas and other anti-Semitic displays in Tegucigalpa.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 473 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. Even though the Secretary of Education sent

another letter in 2014 excusing members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from Saturday school attendance, there are still reports that some teachers and principals are still expecting Saturday attendance at public and private schools. Seventh-day Adventists continue to be denied the right to observe Saturday as their Sabbath by certain places of employment and schools.

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: 7,496,981

Seventh-day Adventists: 4,438

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 rate was 5.5% percent in July 2021. Of concern, though, are social inequality and air pollution. Since June 2019, Hong Kong has been experiencing constant unrest. Though Hong Kong is generally safe, residents still are concerned about Hong Kong's uncertain future.

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. The government continues to ban Falun Gong, the Guanyin Method religious group and Zhong Gong. Even if religious freedom in Hong Kong was respected up until recently, it is now under threat.

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 18 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: 9,660,351

Seventh-day Adventists: 5,151

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. A 2018 parliamentary amendment to the 2011 religion law entered into force in 2019. The law establishes a four-tier system of, in descending order, “established churches,” “registered churches,” “listed churches,” and “religious associations.” The “established churches” category has 32 denominations, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church. All previously incorporated religious groups retained their status in the first tier of the new system as established churches. Religious groups in all four tiers have “legal personality,” which grants them legal rights, such as the right to own property.

Constitutional Provision: Hungary's Constitution of 2011 with Amendments through 2016 states in Article VII, Sections 1 and 3: “(1) Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include the freedom to choose or change one's religion or other belief, and the freedom of everyone to manifest, abstain from manifesting, practice or teach his or her religion or other belief through religious acts, rites or otherwise, either individually or jointly with others, either in public or in private life. (3) The State and religious communities shall operate separately. Religious communities shall be autonomous.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The state 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.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most religious organizations have amicable relationships with each other.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 113 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates two nursing homes, a publishing house, a theological seminary, a foster-parents network, home care for elderly people, a mother's shelter institution, elementary and kindergarten schools. The Church and its institutions are generally allowed to operate freely and receives state subsidies and tax exemptions.

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: 341,243

Seventh-day Adventists: 469

Religious Groups: Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland (official) 69.9%, Roman Catholic 3.8%, Reykjavik Free Church 2.9%, Hafnarfjorour Free Church 2%, Asatru Association 1.1%, The Independent Congregation 1%, other religions 4% (includes Zuist and Pentecostal), none 6.1%, other 9.2% (2017 est.)

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. According to law, schools must operate in a way that prevents religious discrimination.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most religious organizations have good relations with the government and society in general. 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. 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: 1,380,004,385

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,130,543

Religious Groups: Hindu 79.8%, Muslim 14.2%, Christian 2.3%, Sikh 1.7%, Buddhist 0.7%, Jain 0.4%, Other (including Zoroastrians, Jews, Baha'is, and tribal religions) 0.7%, Religion Not Stated 0.2%

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. India was elected a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for 2021-2022.

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 such as anti-conversion laws. 2019 saw an uptick in restrictions on religious freedom and an increased harassment of religious minorities. 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, that ideology still influences some laws at the local level. There are reports of hundreds of religiously motivated killings, including lynchings for cow slaughter and conversion activities. The violence prompted a supreme court recommendation in 2018 for a law to stop the violence. Inaction, however, led the court to revisit that recommendation in July 2019. Muslims and Christians have been the greatest victims of these attacks. There are laws restricting religious conversions in ten out of 28 states.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Christians in various regions of India continue face harassment, discrimination, and even violence. Religious minorities remained concerned about their safety and security. 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. Supreme court rulings in 2017 strengthened fundamental rights, equal rights for women, and accountability for security force violations. However, security forces continue to commit arbitrary arrests, torture, and extrajudicial killings with impunity. There were reports of religiously motivated killings, assaults, riots, vandalism, discrimination, and other actions limited people’s right to practice and express their religious beliefs.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 4,538 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.

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: Due to the increase in religious intolerance, evangelism has become increasingly challenging.

INDONESIA

Population: 273,523,615

Seventh-day Adventists: 228,563

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. The country faces many challenges, including corruption, gender-based discrimination, violence against women, sex trafficking, and the politicized use of defamation and blasphemy laws. Mass relocation programs implemented in response to overpopulation have led to abuses. Indonesia was elected non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the term 2019-2020.

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. 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. There are six official religious groups recognized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs: Islam, Catholicism,

Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. According to the law, students can request religious instruction in any one of the six official religions. On July 23, 2018, the Constitutional Court rejected a petition challenging the constitutionality of the blasphemy law, declaring that the government could limit religious freedom in order to preserve public order (the third time the court has reaffirmed the law). The blasphemy law prohibits insulting or defaming any officially recognized religious groups. Breaking this law can be punished by five years in prison.

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. Religious groups cooperate on interfaith conferences and events, speaking out against violence. Some religious advocacy groups and NGOs continued to urge the government to remove the information about religion from identity cards because religious minorities face discrimination when religious affiliation is displayed on their KTPs.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,808 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: 83,992,949

Seventh-day Adventists: None

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. Iranian women face discrimination in personal status matters related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody. 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.” According to the law, apostasy from Islam is a crime punishable by death. United for Iran, a nongovernmental organization, reports that at least 60 members of minority religious groups remain imprisoned for their religious activities, 25 individuals on charges of *moharebeh*, and 13 on charges of “insulting the Prophet or Islam.”

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 and they continue to be a major target of violence and social stigma. 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, threatening church members, and imprisoning worshipers and church leaders, routinely on false criminal charges. Christians face a dramatic increase in arrests from previous years, and Muslim converts to Christianity continue to face severe persecution.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no Seventh-day Adventist churches. 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. The penal code specifies the death sentence for proselytizing.

IRAQ

Population: 40,222,493

Seventh-day Adventists: 81

Religious Groups: Muslim 95-98% (Shi'a 64%-69%, Sunni 29%-34%), Christian or other 2%

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 has 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. The Islamic State (ISIS) lost the control of territory in Iraq but continued to carry out attacks on civilians and security installations during 2018. According to the NGO, Transparency International, Iraq ranks 160th of 180 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. The death penalty has been used widely. Violence against women is also common. According to the UN Refugee Agency an estimated 1,191,470 million Iraqis have been displaced across the country since 2014, as of 31 July 2021 and over 250,000 are refugees in other countries. Political and security challenges continued to face Iraq.

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.

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. Non-Muslim minorities say they experience violence, threats, pressure, and harassment from the majority group in the region. According to Christian leaders, there are now fewer than 250,000 Christians in Iraq, down from a pre-2003 estimate of 1.4 million. The religious groups registered with the government are: Muslims, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Assyrian Catholics, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholics, Armenian Apostolic, Armenian Catholics, Roman Catholics, National Protestants, Anglicans, Evangelical Protestant Assyrians, Seventh-day Adventists, Coptic Orthodox, Yezidis, Sabeen-Mandean, and Jews. Nevertheless, violence against religious leaders and places of worship impedes religious minorities' ability to practice their faith freely.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no Seventh-day Adventist churches in Iraq. 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: 4,937,786

Seventh-day Adventists: 700

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. The Irish economy has been growing; however, the risks have intensified, especially those related to Britain's decision to leave the European Union. According to Statista's data, the official unemployment rate in Ireland was 7.6% in July 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ireland was elected a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for 2021-2022.

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. Religious instruction is provided in most public schools, and parents have the right to exempt their children from these classes. The constitution makes blasphemy a punishable offense, with a fine of up to 25,000 euros if material that is "grossly abusive or insulting in relation to matters held sacred by any religion" is published. In a constitutional referendum on October 26, 2018, 65 percent of voters approved the removal of blasphemy as a punishable offense from the constitution. In 2020, the law repealing the constitution's ban on blasphemy went into effect.

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. There were reports that in some national schools, parents were denied the right to exempt their children from religion classes. The Minister for Education has announced new plans aimed at providing more multi-denominational and non-denominational schools across the country, in the context of an increasing demand for multi-denominational education.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are seven 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: 8,655,535

Seventh-day Adventists: 836

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. On December 5, 2017, the United States of America recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital. 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, 23% 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. Recognized religious organizations are exempt from taxation of places of worship. 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. There are separate public schools for Jewish

and Arab children, with instruction conducted in Hebrew and Arabic, respectively. While military service is compulsory for Jews, Christians and Arab Muslims are exempt.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Jewish-Arab tensions have remained 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 14 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: 60,345,382

Seventh-day Adventists: 9,360

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. 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 Anti-Semitism Observatory recorded 224 acts of anti-Semitism in 2020. 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 107 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. Often, recourse to the claim of the right guaranteed by law 516/1988 allows these difficulties to be overcome.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to evangelize freely, according to the provisions of art. 19 of the Constitution and articles 3,4 and 5 of the law 516/1988.

JAMAICA

Population: 2,961,167

Seventh-day Adventists: 322,666

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. The economy grew by 1.5% and the unemployment rate decreased to 8.9 % in the first quarter of 2021. Organized crime and brutal violence, sometimes linked to certain political factions and police, continue to plague the nation. According to statistical research data,

Jamaica's homicide rate was 46.5 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2020. 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. Religious workers, regardless of affiliation, require a work permit from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Members of the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim groups stated that society was tolerant of religious diversity, pointing to their continued involvement, along with other faiths, in the Jamaica Council for Interfaith Fellowship. Members of the Rastafarian group stated that while prejudice against their religion continued, there was increasing acceptance of their practices and more societal respect.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 702 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. Since February 2009, Dr. Patrick Allen, a Seventh-day Adventist, has been the Governor General.

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

the 2014 “flexi-work” law passed by parliament has not solved all these challenges.

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

JAPAN

Population: 126,476,461

Seventh-day Adventists: 14,988

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. Japan, the world’s third largest economy and the world’s 11th most populous country is the world, is also the most heavily indebted rich country, with government debt more than twice as big as the national economy.

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. There are 180,433 religious groups 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 government continued to grant protective status to Falun Gong practitioners, members of the Rohingya Muslim community from Burma, and Uighur Muslims from China.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 97 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: 10,203,134

Seventh-day Adventists: 177

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 102nd out of 189 countries according to the Index of the United Nations Human Development Program. According to the UN Refugee Agency, the country houses more than 756,729 refugees and approximately 180,000 work permits have been issued for Syrian refugees since 2016 up to 2021. 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.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution, Articles 6 and 15, states: "Article 6: (i) Jordanians shall be equal before the law with no discrimination between them in rights and duties even if they differ in race, language or religion. (iii) The State shall ensure work and education within the limits of its possibilities, and shall ensure tranquility and equal opportunities to all Jordanians." Article 14: "The State shall safeguard the free exercise of the rites of religions and creeds in accordance with the customs observed in the Kingdom, if such is not 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 report ostracism, physical and verbal abuse, and as a result they worship in secret. The Shari'a court, which has family law jurisdiction for Muslims, continued proceedings against a convert from Islam. Non-Islamic religious groups must obtain official recognition through registration. Islamic religious groups are granted

recognition through the constitution. Recognized non-Islamic religious groups are tax exempt but do not receive the government subsidies granted to Islamic religious groups. Public schools are required by law to provide Islamic religious instruction as part of the basic national curriculum; however, non-Muslim students are permitted to opt out.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Some religious groups face societal discrimination. Some Muslims who convert to other religions continue to report 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. Some religious leaders have expressed concern about the prevalence of online hate speech targeted at religious minorities and moderates through social media.

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: 18,776,707

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,351

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. Since then, the Kazakhstan government prioritized economic development over political and human rights reforms. However, President Nazarbayev who held power for 30 years stepped down in March 2019, creating an opportunity for the new government to undertake meaningful and tangible human rights reforms. During the past two decades, Kazakhstan has moved from lower middle-class to upper middle-class status, according to the World Bank. The state maintains influence over, and preference for, the 'traditional' Hanafi Sunni school, while Islamic practice that deviates from the mainstream is viewed with suspicion. The country's human rights record is very poor, however according to the most recent annual report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) religious freedom conditions in Kazakhstan continued to improve. According to the NGO, Transparency International, Kazakhstan ranks 94th of 180 countries in terms of corruption.

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. There were 552 administrative prosecutions for religious activity in 2019 according to Committee for Religious Affairs. On January 29, 2019, the government abandoned its proposed amendments to the country's already restrictive 2011 religion law.

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 were incidents of religious discrimination or violence. Some sectors of society express concerns about the potential spread of religious extremism.

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: 53,771,296

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,067,456

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 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 that live together generally in peace. However, sometimes tribal rivalries, armed conflicts, and open wars tend to unleash a plethora of human rights violations and abuses of all kinds. Kenya was elected a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for 2021-2022.

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. In 2019, some 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.

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 have been reported in different regions of Kenya. Individuals who had converted from Islam to Christianity face violence and occasionally are ostracized from society. Political leaders and Interreligious organizations said tensions remained high between Muslim and Christian communities because of terrorist attacks in recent years.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 6,812 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates two universities, 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. However, whenever there are challenges, most Adventist lawyers are willing to offer their legal expertise 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: 119,449

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,930

Religious Groups: Catholic 57%, Kiribati Protestant 31%, 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% (2015 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. The public school does not mandate religious education. 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: 25,778,816

Seventh-day Adventists: unknown

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. No more recent figures were available at the end of the reporting period. 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.

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. Five Russian Orthodox priests served at the Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church to provide pastoral care to Russians in the country. The government allowed some overseas faith-based aid organizations to provide humanitarian assistance, but they are not allowed to

proselytize. There are an estimated 135,000 political prisoners currently languishing in North Korea's notoriously harsh labor camps. It is believed that up to 50,000 of these detainees are Christians.

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. According to Open Doors, North Korea is the first on a list of the worst countries for the persecution of Christians. For the 19th-consecutive year, the UN Human Rights Council has adopted a resolution condemning North Korea's widespread and gross human rights violations. Multiple sources indicated the situation had not changed.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no 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: 51,269,185

Seventh-day Adventists: 259,863

Religious Groups: Buddhist 35%, Protestant 45%, Catholic 18%, other/no affiliation 2% (2016 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 11th in the world and 7th 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. South Korea's experience with the global refugee crisis began in 2018 with the arrival of around 500 Yemeni citizens on Jeju Island through the visa-free entry system.

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, however, the Alternative Service Act, which became effective in January 2020, allows conscientious objectors to fulfill their service requirement by working for 36 months in a correctional facility. Anyone refusing military or alternative service can be imprisoned up to three years. On January 31, 2019, Korea's Supreme Court gave a historic legal victory to a young Adventist student. The almost two-year legal ordeal of Han Ji Man, a Seventh-day Adventist medical student in Korea, ended when the country's Supreme Court upheld his right to take university exams outside of Sabbath hours. The National Human Rights Commission of Korea (NHRCK) determined in January 2020 that the national examination system for nursing assistants, conducted twice a year on Saturdays, constituted an infringement on religious liberty for individuals whose beliefs prevented them from taking the exam on Saturdays. For those who could not participate in the Saturday test, the NHRCK recommended an alternate method to accommodate their religious beliefs. With this ruling, Adventists in Korea hope for a new era of legal protection for Sabbath keepers and other people of faith.

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 673 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: The Korean government has been practicing a five-day work (40 hours) week since November 2011. Nonetheless, some employers and university professors demand that employees and students work or study on Sabbath. Adventists have experienced problems in keeping the Sabbath during compulsory military service. This continues to be a struggle, but some progress has been made.

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

KOSOVO

Population: 1,932,774

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 25%. Aid from other European countries helps to keep the economy afloat.

Constitutional Provision: The 2008 Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo with Amendments through 2016 states in Chapter II, 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. There is no official religion recognized by the law, however, the five "traditional" religious communities like the Kosovo Islamic Community, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, the Hebrew community, and the Evangelical Church, are protected by law and are eligible for waivers of water utility fees and reduced taxes. 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 were reports of assaults directed against the Serbian Orthodox community and property, including threats, thefts, and vandalism. Religious leaders participated in numerous interfaith discussions on property rights, legislative priorities, and local community issues.

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: 4,270,571

Seventh-day Adventists: 200

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 still enjoys a fiscal surplus. It ranks 64th 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. 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. The National Evangelical, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Coptic Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, and Anglican are officially recognized by the state.

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 minority religious leaders and citizens reported strong societal pressure against conversion from Islam. Minority religious groups continue to report limited access to worship facilities and difficulty obtaining permits to build new facilities.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

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

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: 6,524,195

Seventh-day Adventists: 656

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 120th 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 to continue growing. 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. The country is integrated into the Eurasian Economic Union that includes Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan. The trajectory of democratization, corruption, interethnic relations, border security vulnerabilities, and potential terrorist threats are important issues in Kyrgyz Republic. A new version of the constitution was adopted in a referendum following the election of a new president in January 2021. Despite some reforms, human rights organizations remain concerned about several constitutional provisions involving human rights that are not in line with international standards, including the rights to freedom of association and expression.

Constitutional Provision: Chapter II, Article 34 of the 2021 constitution states: “(1) Everyone shall be guaranteed freedom of conscience and religion. (2) Everyone shall have the right to profess any or no religion individually or in association with others. (3) Everyone shall have the right to freely choose and enjoy religious and other beliefs. (4) No one shall be compelled to express or deny their religious or other beliefs.”

State Attitudes and Actions: Though the constitution provides for religious freedom, there are other laws and policies that limit that freedom. The 2009 “Law on Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations” 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. However, throughout 2018, the State Commission on Religious Affairs (SCRA) substantively revised draft amendments to the 2009 religion law. The law requires all religious groups, and religiously affiliated schools, to register with SCRA. According to the law, religion is grounds for conscientious objection to and exemption from military service.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Religion is a regular source of tension in Kyrgyzstan. Society typically frowns upon conversion, especially from Islam. Muslims who convert to other religions are met with harsh societal penalties. In some cases, converts from Islam continued to experience difficulties arranging burials in public cemeteries, which causes great stress to family members. Kyrgyzstan is considered less repressive than other Central Asian states,

although the discrimination against minorities and inter-ethnic tensions are still a reality.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 10 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: 7,275,560

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,561

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. 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. The government officially recognizes four religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and the Baha’i faith. Within Christianity, the government recognizes three denominations—the Lao Evangelical Church (LEC), the Catholic Church, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. 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. Decree 315 is the latest iteration in a series of regulations pertaining to religious practice and observance. This decree requires any religious group operating in the country to register with MOHA. 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.

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. Christian groups still have difficulty building churches. In rural areas, tensions continued between animists, Buddhists, and growing Christian communities, according to government and religious group sources.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are two Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates no institutions. 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. Seventh-day Adventist Church had missionaries in the country, but the government limited their activities.

LATVIA

Population: 1,886,198

Seventh-day Adventists: 3,774

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 21%, Lutheran 37%, Orthodox Christian 19%, 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. More than 200,000 of Latvia's registered residents are stateless persons, most of whom are ethnic Russians. They may not vote, hold public office, work in government offices, or establish political parties. 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, Methodists, Seventh-day Adventists and Jews) and new religions. Parliament has adopted laws that regulate relations between the state and the Lutheran and Russian Orthodox Churches. 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. However, 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. Latvian government officials participate in Holocaust memorial events this year. 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.

LEBANON

Population: 6,825,445

Seventh-day Adventists: 329

Religious Groups: Muslim (Shi'a, Sunni, Druze, Isma'ilite, Alawite or Nusayri) 57.6%, Christian (Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Assyrian,

Chaldean, Copt, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Roman Catholic) 36.8%, and other 5.6%

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. Lebanon's economy was facing extraordinary challenges aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Beirut port explosion on 4 August 2020. Its debt-to-GDP was estimated to have reached 174% by the end of 2020. Following a yearlong political deadlock that has negatively affected its economy, Lebanon has a new government. 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. Religious leaders meet regularly to discuss issues of common concern and to try to attenuate conflicts between religious groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: 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: 2,142,249

Seventh-day Adventists: 10,549

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 Program, 57% of people live below poverty line and 508,125 people are food insecure. Lesotho is still facing a low employment rate, corruption, nepotism, insecurity, and widespread poverty.

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 83% of all primary and 66% of all secondary schools in the country.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious and there are no reports of significant tensions. The Christian Council of Lesotho (CCL), representing the largest Christian group, expressed concern that the government and security agencies might not respect the rule of law during the political transition. Still, the government took no action in response to the CCL statement.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 47 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: 5,057,681

Seventh-day Adventists: 27,092

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) 85.6%, Muslim 12.2%, no affiliation 1.4%, 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, former 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. Liberia ranks 175 out of 189 countries on the 2020 Human Development Index. More than 50,9% of the population live below the national poverty line, according to the World Bank. Liberia still faces issues with endemic poverty, high inflation, corruption, access to education, violence against women, and discrimination.

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. Nonsectarian religious and moral education are part of the standard curriculum in public schools.

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. Some religious groups still pursue a campaign to pass a constitutional amendment that would make Liberia an official “Christian nation.” Leaders from religious communities urged the government to engage religious communities in a proactive dialogue on social issues rather than relying on religious groups for mediation only when problems develop.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 76 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: 6,871,292

Seventh-day Adventists: 57

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 president has declared the implementation of Shari'a law and hopes that the Arab Spring revolution would lead to an era of democracy. This appears 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. 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. Islam is the state religion. 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. According to human rights activists, the Rada Special Deterrence Forces (SDF) have been involved in many arrests and detentions of people for violating Islamic law. 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 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.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

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

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism of Muslims is illegal.

LIECHTENSTEIN

Population: 38,128

Seventh-day Adventists: 9

Religious Groups: Catholic 76%, Protestant 6.5%, Muslim 5.4%, Lutheran 1.3%, Christian Orthodox 1.1%, other 1.8%, no affiliation 5.4%, unspecified 2.5%

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. There is no law requiring the registration of religious groups and all religious groups are exempt from certain taxes. 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. It is mandatory in all primary schools to provide Catholic or Protestant Reformed religious education. Parents may, however, request exemptions.

Private Attitudes and Actions: In contrast with previous years, there were no reports of hostile statements to religious minorities by members of groups

considered to be extremist. 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 Lichtenstein.

LITHUANIA

Population: 2,722,289

Seventh-day Adventists: 731

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%

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 and adopted the Euro currency in January 2015.

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 Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of the non-traditional churches recognized by the government.

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 18 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: 625,978

Seventh-day Adventists: 191

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. There are six recognized religious communities who receive state support: the Catholic Church; the Greek, Russian, Romanian, and Serbian Orthodox Churches as one community; the Anglican Church; the Reformed Protestant Church of Luxembourg and the Protestant Church of Luxembourg as one community; the Jewish community; and the Muslim community.

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. Luxembourg School of Religion and Society (LSRS) organized several conferences and expositions to promote religious freedom and tolerance. The government agreed to implement a national action plan to combat anti-Semitism.

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: 2,083,374

Seventh-day Adventists: 584

Religious Groups: Orthodox 65%, Muslim 33%, other (Catholic, Protestant, Sufi Muslim, Jewish) 2%

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.

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. The government has granted legal recognition to 33 religious organizations. 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.

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. There have been some reports of anti-Semitism and hate speech on social media.

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: 27,691,018

Seventh-day Adventists: 146,084

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 when the people democratically elected president Hery Rajaonarimampianina in January 2014, and president Andry Rajoelina in December 2018. 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.

According to the World Bank, 75% of Malagasy live below the \$1.90 per-day extreme-poverty line. The country has world's fourth highest rate of chronic malnutrition.

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 hope of the international community is to see 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 and some reports of discrimination in employment practices against some religious groups members, based on their religious affiliation, including those who observe Sabbath. 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 1,013 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, 26 secondary schools, 40 primary schools, three hospitals, 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 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.

MALAWI

Population: 19,129,952

Seventh-day Adventists: 608,263

Religious Groups: Protestant 26.9%, Catholic 18.1%, other Christian 41.9%, Muslim 12.5%, other 0.1%, none 0.5% (2015 est.)

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 670,000 children are orphans because of this disease. Malawi also faces widespread poverty. Although modest progress has been made in creating a skilled and educated labor force, literacy rates remain low. Corruption stalls general improvement for Malawi; this nation's government is ranked 129th out of 180 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index, released by Transparency International in 2020.

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. Religious and political leaders regularly express their opinions on political issues, and the media cover their statements.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of societal abuse or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Christians,

Muslims, and Hindus regularly take part in business and other civic organizations together. Rastafarian children continue to be denied enrollment in public school unless they shave their dreadlocks. There have been some incidents related to school dress codes.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,543 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: 32,365,999

Seventh-day Adventists: 57,295

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 were 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. In May 2018, after more than 60 years in power, the ruling UMNO-led coalition, that had governed Malaysia since independence, was defeated in May 2018 by the Pakatan Harapan alliance led by former Prime Minister Mohamad Mahathir, who established a new party and joined political foes to defeat Mohamed Najib bin Abdul Razak.

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. While non-Muslims had little difficulty converting to Islam, Muslims who wished to convert to another religion continued to face persistent legal and administrative difficulties and generally struggled to secure official government recognition of their faith. Religious materials considered offensive or deviant are strictly outlawed and there is a list of words that can be used in Muslim publications alone.

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. Religious leaders and human rights advocates expressed concern about the increasing intolerance of religious diversity in

society. There were numerous cases of religious discrimination against non-Muslims.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 271 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: 540,544

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 95st on the Human Development Index, which places it in the Middle Development category. The country's economy, heavily sustained by tourism, which accounts for 30% of the GDP, has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 Shari’a law. 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. NGOs reported that in 2020, online death threats against people perceived as critical of Islam continued with little response from authorities.

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: 20,250,833

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,979

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 35 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. Malians continue to experience widespread poverty with 49 percent of the population living under the poverty line. 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. Due to the slow implementation of the peace deal, some militant groups still maintain control of areas in northern Mali.

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. Public schools are not permitted to offer religious instruction, but private schools may. 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 were 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. 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. According to the Freedom House, extremist armed groups committed religious freedom abuses in the northern and central regions, attacking individuals who disagreed with their interpretation of Islam. Religious leaders of the Muslim and non-Muslim communities jointly condemned extremist interpretations of Islam.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are five 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: 441,543

Seventh-day Adventists: 28

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.

Constitutional Provision: The constitution states in Chapter I, Section 2, “(1) The religion of Malta is the Roman Catholic Apostolic Religion. (2) The authorities of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church have the duty and the right to teach which principles are right and which are wrong. (3) Religious teaching of the Roman 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, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity 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. The law mandates Catholic religious education in state schools, but allows students to opt out of the classes. Christian groups and NGOs expressed concern about the two draft bills prohibiting discrimination and promoting equality, pending in parliament since 2019.

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: 59,190

Seventh-day Adventists: 919

Religious Groups: United Church of Christ 54.8%, Assembly of God 25.8%, Roman Catholic 8.4%, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2.1%, Assembly of God Part Two 2.8%, other (Full Gospel, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Baha'i, Jehovah's Witness, Jewish, Ahmadi Muslim) less than 5%

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. The country faces problems such as corruption, domestic violence, gender discrimination, and human trafficking.

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: 375,265

Seventh-day Adventists: 16,281

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: 4,649,658

Seventh-day Adventists: 74

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. Slavery has declined but has not been eliminated entirely, according to Human Rights Watch in 2020 world report. 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.

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 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. Islamic classes remain part of the educational curriculum, but class attendance is not mandatory and not required for graduation.

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 government continued to prohibit any expression of religion outside of Islam in public settings.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are two 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: 1,271,768

Seventh-day Adventists: 5,269

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. The country ranks 52nd of 180 countries according to Transparency International's index of perceived corruption.

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. The Council of Religions hosted regular interfaith religious ceremonies and celebrations to encourage dialogue and cooperation amongst all religious groups. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions, most events were postponed.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 35 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: 128,932,753

Seventh-day Adventists: 774,296

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 billion-dollar drug trafficking industry. Mexico was elected a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for 2021-2022.

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. On the other hand, the Catholic Multimedia Center reported that religious leaders continued to be targeted and subjected to death threats. A variety of non-governmental organizations reported attacks, kidnappings, and threats against religious leaders throughout the year, including the killings of two evangelical Christian pastors. According to the General Directorate for Religious Affairs (DGAR), the government continued to engage with religious actors to ensure religious freedom and resolve disputes involving religious intolerance

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 4,734 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: 548,914

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,815

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 55%, Protestant (United Church of Christ, Baptist, Assembly of God, The Salvation Army, Seventh-day Adventist) 42%, 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 \$130 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. Among the challenges that persist include the underreporting of domestic violence and the exploitation of migrants.

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: 4,033,963

Seventh-day Adventists: 8,567

Religious Groups: Orthodox 94%, other (Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Seventh-day Adventist, Jehovah's Witness, Baptist, Jewish, Evangelical Christian) 1%, 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. In November 2020, pro-European candidate, Maia Sandu, won the election to become the first woman president of Moldova.

Constitutional Provision: Title II, Chapter I, Article 31 of the constitution states: "(1) The freedom of conscience shall be guaranteed and its manifestations should be in a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect. (2) The freedom of religious cults shall be guaranteed and they shall organize themselves and operate according to their own statutes under the rule of law. (3) In the relationships between the religious cults any manifestation of discord shall be forbidden. (4) The religious worship shall be autonomous, independent from the State and shall enjoy the latter's support, including by facilitating the religious assistance in the army, hospitals, penitentiaries, nursing homes and orphanages."

State Attitudes and Actions: The government generally respects religious freedom in practice, however, the law recognizes the "exceptional importance" of Orthodox Christianity. The law exempts registered religious groups from land taxes, property taxes and allows them to own land, build churches, publish or import religious literature or employ staff. Two types of courses are available in the religious curriculum: one for Orthodox denominations and Roman Catholics, and the other for evangelical Christians and Seventh-day Adventists. In Transnistria, authorities generally respect the rights of registered groups, but continue to restrict the activities of minority religious groups and monitor their activities. 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. Leaders of the Jewish community reported an increase in acts of vandalism; however, Islamic leaders have affirmed that societal attitudes toward Muslims in Moldova has improved in recent years.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 140 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: 39,242

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: 3,278,290

Seventh-day Adventists: 3,066

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 widespread corruption, 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. However, christian groups raised concerns about the content of TV programs that negatively portrayed non-Buddhist religions. 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. Although a negative public perception of “foreign” religions seems to be widespread, a variety of religious leaders reported they generally experienced little difficulty practicing their faith.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are six 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: 628,066

Seventh-day Adventists: 229

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. However, the UN Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children has recently reported that Montenegro made significant steps to strengthen the legal, policy, and institutional frameworks for effectively preventing and protecting children and women from violence and exploitation. 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 21 religious organizations officially recognized in Montenegro. The law exempts conscientious objectors from military service, including those objecting for religious reasons.

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. Tensions are high between the two Orthodox Churches, the SOC and the MOC. They continue to struggle over property and standing, with both claiming to be the “true” Orthodox Church in the country. Government ownership of religious properties and the transfer of cemetery ownership to municipalities and other entities continue to be contested by religious groups. The newly elected parliament approved amendments to the law that would eliminate the requirement of proof of property ownership and allow existing religious groups to get legal status without registering.

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: 4,992

Seventh-day Adventists: 605

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: 36,910,560

Seventh-day Adventists: 37

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. In January 2017, Morocco was readmitted to the African Union after spending 33 years without membership.

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. Some religious minority groups said they needed to practice their religion discreetly, without formal registration, because the government rejected their registration requests.

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. Leaders of various Christian groups said authorities have continued to make telephone and house calls to demonstrate they are monitoring Christian activities.

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: 31,255,435

Seventh-day Adventists: 374,656

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. The 2009 elections have been considered fraudulent and 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 about 80% of population continues to live on less than two dollars per day. According to the UN Refugee Agency, the conflict in northern Mozambique has left tens of thousands of people dead or injured and forcibly displaced more than 700,000 people.

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 859 religious denominations and 219 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. The law forbids religious instruction in public schools. The Greek Orthodox Church continued to seek the return of lands previously seized by the government.

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. Despite these differences, there are signs that tension is lessening as younger Muslims seem to recognize the need for dialogue to reconcile their differences. Leaders of religious communities emphasized the need for religious tolerance and expressed concern about religion's use to promote violence.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,047 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: 2,540,905

Seventh-day Adventists: 23,849

Religious Groups: Lutheran 50%, Roman Catholic 20%, other (Anglican, Adventist, Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Evangelical and Charismatic, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Dutch Reformed Church of Namibia) 27%, non-Christians 3%

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. Despite radical improvements, there are still reports of torture, violence against women and girls, and restrictions on freedom of expression. 8,3% 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. All religious workers must obtain a work visa.

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 125 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: 10,824

Seventh-day Adventists: 98

Religious Groups: Protestant 65%, Catholic 32%, other (Confucian, Buddhist, Taoist, Christian, or no affiliation) 3%

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 the smallest United Nations member state. According to the NGO Freedom House, corruption is a serious problem in the country. Nauru has the highest food poverty rate, with one in four people living below the basic needs poverty line and the shortest life expectancy of any country in the Pacific, according to UNSDG.

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. 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. The Catholic Church, Nauru Congregational Church, Assemblies of God, Nauru Independent Church, and Seventh-day Adventist Church are officially registered with the government.

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: 29,136,808

Seventh-day Adventists: 9,228

Religious Groups: Hindu 81.3%, Buddhist 9%, Muslim 4.4%, Christians 1.4%, 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. The agricultural sector has enjoyed growth of 4.1%. In 2015, Nepal was devastated by a massive earthquake that claimed the lives of at least 7,000 people. Violence against women and girls seems to be widespread and unabated. Human trafficking for sexual and labor purposes is widespread. There are allegations of police brutality. Human rights abusers of the earlier regime have not been brought

to justice. 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 constitution of 2015 states: “Each person shall be free to profess, practice, and preserve his/her religion according to his/her faith.” The Article goes on to state: “While exercising the right as provided for by this Article, no person shall act or make others act in a manner which is contrary to public health, decency and morality, or behave or act or make others act to disturb public law and order situation, or convert a person of one religion to another religion, or disturb the religion of other people. Such an act shall be punishable by law.”

State Attitudes and Actions: The constitution declared Nepal to be a secular state. Proselytism is illegal and those guilty of it can face fines and imprisonment. However, a new criminal code reduces the punishments for “convert[ing]... the religion of another person” or for engaging in any act that undermines the religion, faith, or belief of others from six to five years’ imprisonment. 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. Human rights advocates and religious minority leaders have expressed concern that conversion bans in the constitution and criminal code could subject religious minorities to legal prosecution for the activities carried out during their normal religious practice. Human rights experts also have raised concerns that a provision in the criminal code prohibiting speech or writing that hurts others' religious feelings could be used arbitrarily to target religious minorities.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 26 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one hospital.

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: 17,134,872

Seventh-day Adventists: 5,990

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 23%, Reformed 7%, Calvinist 6%, other Protestant denominations 3%, Muslim 5%, other (Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist) 6%, no affiliation 51% (2017 survey)

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 8th least corrupt government in the world, according to Transparency International, and has one of the lowest unemployment rates within the EU - 3.1%, according to Eurostat 2021.

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. According to the law, employees can refuse to work on Sundays for religious reasons, but employers may refuse to allow such an exception depending on the nature of their job. Members of other religious communities for whom the Sabbath is not Sunday may also request such an exemption. The law permits religious education in public schools and the government provides funding to religious schools and other religious educational institutions.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are 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 58 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: 285,498

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,064

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. While New Caledonia enjoys a high degree of autonomy, it depends mostly on France when it comes to matters such as defense and education. The country has elected its

first pro-independence President ahead of the independence referendum scheduled in December 2021.

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: 4,822,233

Seventh-day Adventists: 13,412

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 least corrupt among the 180 nations assessed by the NGO Transparency International. Native Maoris make up slightly over 15% of the population. The government is 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. The Ministry of Education issued guidelines for religious instruction in state primary and intermediate schools to help trustees implement effective methods for religious instruction in compliance with the new Education and Training Act. 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 87 complaints of discrimination on religious grounds for 2018-19. Various reports of anti-Semitic graffiti and other messages have also been recently reported. The HRC openly condemned these actions. On March 2019, 51 people were killed and 49 others were wounded in shootings attacks at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, after a gunman opened indiscriminate fire at Muslim worshippers. Authorities in New Zealand sentenced the perpetrator to life in prison without parole and took actions to combat extremist ideologies and improve community harmony.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 86 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: 6,624,554

Seventh-day Adventists: 46,266

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. On September 13, 2021, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern about the deterioration of civil and political rights in the context of Nicaragua's general elections.

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. 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 some reports of religious discrimination among the various communities in Nicaragua.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 287 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: 24,206,644

Seventh-day Adventists: 1230

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. Issoufou Mahamadou was re-elected in March 2016. 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. According to World Bank, despite significant progress, the country's extreme poverty rate remained at 42.9% in 2020, affecting more than 10 million people. 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. In February 2021, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported 241,321 refugees and 300,320 displaced persons on its territory.

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. There is no religious education in public schools.

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 meet 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: 206,139,589

Seventh-day Adventists: 244,103

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 recently. Violence targeting groups and individuals due to their religious identity continued in 2021. The main challenges Nigeria faces are corruption, security challenges, including the threat posed by Boko Haram militant group, kidnappings, and communal and sectarian violence in the Middle Belt region, according to NGO Freedom House. Human rights abuses include all imaginable violations. According to the UN data, 43 percent of Nigerian women between 20 and 24 years old were married before age 18, and 18 percent before age 15.

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. There is no official state religion. 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, employment or access to education.

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. Boko Haram attacks have resulted in the deaths of 1,200 people and the displacement of nearly 200,000 in the northeast, according to World Report 2019 of Human Rights Watch. The Nigerian government has been largely ineffective against this terrorist group.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,183 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. On August 8, 2021, Yemi Osinbajo, vice president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, delivered a special address at

Babcock University's 33rd Inaugural Lecture, a Seventh-day Adventist university in Ilishan-Remo, Ogun 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.

NIUE

Population: 1,626

Seventh-day Adventists: 27

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. The economic challenges Niue faces are related to its geographic isolation, small population, and limited natural resources.

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: 5,421,241

Seventh-day Adventists: 4,535

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. According to the Human Development Index, the country has the highest level of the Human Development Index (HDI) worldwide. 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 was the state religion of Norway from 1537 to 2012. Norway was elected a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for 2021-2022.

Constitutional Provision: Norway's Constitution of 1814 with Amendments through 2016 states in Part B, Article 16: "All inhabitants of the Realm shall have the right to free exercise of their religion. The Norwegian church, an Evangelical-Lutheran church, shall remain the Norwegian National Church and will as such be supported by the State. Detailed provisions as to its system shall be laid down by law. All religious and philosophical communities were to be supported on an equal footing."

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, the constitutional amendment of 2012 establishes the separation of church and state. The Norwegian government has taken substantial steps to ensure cultural integration of all groups. Ms. Hadia Tadjik was appointed Minister of Culture in September 2012 and served in that position until a new government was elected in September 2013. Ms. Tadjik, 29 years of age at the time of her appointment, was the youngest person ever to serve as a Minister in the Norwegian government, and the first Muslim. The government continued to ban the wearing of religious symbols, including religious headwear, with police uniforms. Faith and life stance organizations will no longer need to register with local municipalities under a 2020 amendment to the Law on Faith and Life Stance Communities. However, religious groups that do not register are not eligible for government grants,

Private Attitudes and Actions: Attitudes towards immigration and integration have become more positive, according to a new survey. The government continued to implement an action plan to combat anti-Semitism, which included a strategy that addressed anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim hate speech through a combination of education, engagement with civil society organizations, and increased support for investigating and prosecuting hate crimes.

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 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.

OMAN

Population: 5,106,626 (55% are citizens)

Seventh-day Adventists: 70

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, 45% 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. All religious organizations must register with the government. In public schools, Islamic studies are mandatory for Muslim students. However, attendance is not compulsory for Non-Muslim students if they notify school administrators. The government has inconsistently enforced laws regarding public worship and assembly. Proselytizing in public is illegal.

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. According to some minority communities, conversion from Islam is viewed very

negatively among the Muslim community, even though it is not prohibited by law. There have been some interfaith dialogues to foster religious tolerance.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

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

Government recognition: Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not an officially recognized religious group, Adventists have been able to hold meetings at a government-designated location.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

Freedom to Evangelize: Officially weekends are Friday and Saturday. Generally, the private sectors operate on Saturday.

PAKISTAN

Population: 220,892,340

Seventh-day Adventists: 14,315

Religious Groups: Muslim 96.28% (Sunni 85-90%, Shi'a 10-15%, Ahmadiyya Muslim 0.22%), Christian 1.59%, Hindu 1.60%, other < 1%

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 taken steps to mend the precarious relationship. The economic situation in Pakistan is negatively influenced by ethnic and religious violence. Poverty affects 31.2% of the population and the Index of Human Development ranks the country 154th out of 189 countries assessed. Public debt is equivalent to approximately 80% of the GDP. 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. Early marriage remains a serious problem, with 21 percent of girls in Pakistan marrying before the age of 18, and 3 percent marrying before age 15. 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. 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. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCPP), a national NGO, the number of blasphemy cases against religious minorities has increased, stating that more than 40 cases registered under the blasphemy law in August alone.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There has 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. According to human rights activists, there have been numerous reports of societal violence related to allegations of blasphemy, attempts made by individuals to force religious minorities to convert to Islam, as well as discrimination, societal harassment, and violence threats against religious minorities. NGOs and representatives of religious minorities continued to raise concerns about the failure of lower courts to adhere to basic evidentiary standards in blasphemy cases and the long process of deciding these cases, which caused some suspects to be detained for years. In June 2021, the Lahore High Court acquitted a Christian couple in a blasphemy case after almost eight years in prison.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 120 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: 18,094

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,352

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 45%, Evangelical 26%, Seventh-day Adventist 7%, Mormons 2%, Modekngel (combination of animist and Christian) 6%, Muslims 3%, Baptists 1%, members of the Assembly of God 1%, other 10%

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 four 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: 4,314,767

Seventh-day Adventists: 93,844

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. Panama has made significant progress in reducing poverty in recent years.

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 Interreligious Institute of Panama, an interfaith committee, continued to meet regularly.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 377 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: 8,947,024

Seventh-day Adventists: 355,016

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. The Covid-19 pandemic exposed ongoing challenges, including government corruption, poor economic management, and a poor health care system. However, in 2020, Papua New Guinea implemented legal reforms to combat corruption.

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 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. In 2020, media reported that at least one Seventh-day Adventist missionary had been killed after a group of unknown gunmen attacked 15 missionaries in the Eastern Highlands. Also, in Enga, in a separate incident, a Seventh-day Adventist deacon and two companions were killed in tribal violence.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,071 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.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is officially recognized by the state. Seventh-day Adventist James Marape was elected Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea on May 30, 2019.

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: 7,132,538

Seventh-day Adventists: 13,090

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%

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. The fight against organized crime and corruption are two major challenges to be overcome.

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 schoolteachers’ 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. 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 66 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one University, three high schools, two sanatoriums and two radio stations. These institutions are 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.

PERU

Population: 32,971,854

Seventh-day Adventists: 400,117

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. In July 2021, Pedro Castillo became the President of Peru. A critical question raised by the election is the future of Peru's fight against endemic corruption.

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. Some religious minority groups continued to state the law treated them unequally. 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. Nevertheless, Peru has an active Secretary of Worship linked to the Ministry of Justice, which seeks to reduce and adjust inequalities between religions. Peru is one of the few countries in South America that has a Religious Freedom Act, dated 1915. Religious groups and interfaith organizations worked closely with the government and other international organizations to offer humanitarian assistance to over one million displaced Venezuelans who entered the country since 2017.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Ministry of Justice officials reported no increase in anti-Semitic activity in this reporting period. The Interreligious Council continued to engage in activities that promote respect, tolerance, and dialogue among religious groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 2,576 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university with three campuses, 71 high schools, three hospitals, and 2 radio stations. These institutions are allowed to operate freely.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: There are some reported problems regarding Sabbath-keeping for Adventist students or employees, especially for students at universities. The local PARL department representatives were involved in solving these problems.

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

PHILIPPINES

Population: 109,581,078

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,215,572

Religions: Roman Catholic 81%, Muslim 6%, 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]) 9%, no affiliation 4%

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 collapse 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. The government reached a peace agreement with the MNLF and has granted greater autonomy to the region they inhabit. Throughout the year, killings, bombings, and kidnappings by ISIS-affiliated and other terrorist groups continued. The Philippine government continued to sustain military, law enforcement, and counterterrorism operations against terrorist groups.

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 by promoting religious freedom, dialogue and peace, and organizing different events.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most faiths have amicable relationships with each other. However, some religious leaders reported tensions between different religious and ethnic groups, especially in conflict-affected areas such as Marawi City and Sulu Province. Muslims have complained of discrimination at the hands of Christian employers who are reluctant to hire them because of their religion. Various religious communities continued to engage in interreligious efforts to ease tensions, promote dialogue, and address discrimination.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 4,940 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: 50

Seventh-day Adventists: 35

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: 37,846,611

Seventh-day Adventists: 5,830

Religious Groups: Catholic 86%, 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. In Poland, Sunday trading ban legislation went into effect in March 2018 and is being implemented gradually over three years. In 2021, there are 45 Sundays with the trading ban. The decision to ban trading on Sundays triggered a wide debate about its reasons and results.

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 116 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: 10,196,709

Seventh-day Adventists: 10,012

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. Poverty and social exclusion indicators continue to improve on the back of the employment recovery.

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. In March 2021, President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa participated in the celebration of 20 years under the Religious Liberty Law in Portugal, thanking religious representatives for their social contributions.

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. President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa has promised to be a guarantor of religious freedom and cited the right to freedom of worship in the constitution. High Commission for Migrations (ACM) held various online events, including a conference “Religious Freedom and Interreligious Dialogue: New Challenges in Times of Uncertainties,” organized with the Interfaith Working Group (GTIR), and the Religious Freedom Commission (CLR).

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 94 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: 2,860,853

Seventh-day Adventists: 33,493

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. Economic instability, an aging population, unemployment, and a poor public health system have been problems in Puerto Rico for years. Also, since the pandemic began, food insecurity has increased in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico is a major tourism destination, receiving nearly four million tourists annually. The tourism industry in Puerto Rico has shown remarkable resilience despite ongoing challenges.

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. In December 2017, the Puerto Rico Senate approved a religious freedom bill which is known as the Law for the Protection of Religious Liberty.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 312 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: 2,881,053 (12% citizens)

Seventh-day Adventists: 346

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. There are currently 87 different nationalities living in Qatar. While there have been positive steps made by the government of Qatar, according to human rights advocates, migrant workers face widespread discrimination and ill treatment. Detentions of political activists are reported, and 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. Religious groups must register with the government to acquire property, raise

funds, or hold bank accounts. Public Christian worship and the observance of specific holidays are tolerated. The study of Islam is compulsory in public schools, for Muslim and non-Muslim students. There are only eight Christian denominations registered religious groups.

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 are no Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Government recognition: Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not an officially recognized religious group, Adventists have been able to hold meetings at government-designated locations.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Officially weekends are Friday and Saturday. Generally private sectors operate on Saturday.

Freedom to Evangelize: Christians proselytizing to Muslims is illegal.

REUNION

Population: 902,460

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,288

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 17 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: 19,237,691

Seventh-day Adventists: 62,934

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. Access to education and health care remains a major concern for the Roma community.

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. 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. During 2020, the government approved 83 restitution claims for confiscated religious properties and rejected 500. The law recognizes 18 religious denominations as having religion status and being eligible for state support. The Seventh-day Adventist Church reports improvement in areas of discrimination against religious minorities and freedom of religion. A law that went into effect in July 2018 counters anti-Semitism and criminalizes the promotion of anti-Semitic ideas and the establishment of anti-Semitic organizations.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are reports of societal abuses or discrimination against religious minorities, including vandalism in Jewish cemeteries and media articles referring to Islam and Muslim migrants. The Prosecutor’s Office reported 18 anti-Semitic incidents in 2020, compared to 16 in 2019. There were incidents in which the Romanian Orthodox Church showed hostility toward non-Orthodox churches and criticized proselytizing by Protestant and other religious groups. However, the Church also reported a decrease in defamatory articles in local newspapers regarding Adventists.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,074 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one university, two colleges, five high schools, a television station, 45 local radio stations, 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. Following a decision of the National Council for Combating Discrimination, confirmed by the High Court of Cassation and Justice in June 2020, students of the Faculty of Medical Science and Pharmacy in Iasi were exempt from taking exams Saturday. However, the Seventh-day Adventist Church reported that Romania's Body of Expert and Licensed Accountants still scheduled exams on Saturdays without allowing Seventh-day Adventist students to take them on another day.

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: 145,934,462

Seventh-day Adventists: 41,808

Religious Groups: Russian Orthodox 68%, Muslim 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. According to the World Bank, there has been a significant improvement in Russia's child protection system, but there is still much more to do. 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. Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism are listed by the law as the country's four "traditional" religions. But the Russian Orthodox Church is recognized as having a special role in the Russian history. The 2016 anti-terrorism law prohibits all extremist activities. The law includes special requirements for network operators to store all communications data for six months and all metadata up to three years for potential access by security services. There are reports indicating that hundreds of Jehovah's Witnesses had fled the country in fear of persecution.

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. Many religious congregations have expressed the desire to pursue ties with other faith communities.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 635 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 anti-terrorism law increases regulation of evangelism, including a ban on the performance of "missionary activities" in non-religious settings and it requires every believer to have a special permit to spread his or her beliefs, as well as hand out religious literature and material outside the places of worship.

RWANDA

Population: 12,952,218

Seventh-day Adventists: 972,966

Religious Groups: Catholic 44%, Seventh-day Adventist 11.9%, other Protestant 37.9%, Muslim 2%, no affiliation 2.5%, 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 61 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.

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. The government has streamlined the registration process for religious groups and has officially recognized the Jehovah's Witness organization. The government recently amended the law so that civil servants and teachers no longer have to swear an oath of loyalty to the nation when applying for a job. Jehovah's Witnesses students occasional encountered difficulties with respect to military and patriotic activities and some religious services at school. All students in public primary school and the first three years of secondary education must take a religion class on various religions. Foreign missionaries must have a temporary resident permit and a foreign identity card. In 2018, a new law requires faith-based organizations (FBOs) to obtain legal status before beginning operations.

Private Attitudes and Actions: A variety of faith-based associations and groups help foster greater understanding and tolerance, conducting activities through an interfaith religious leaders' forum and working towards community development. Additionally, the Interfaith Commission for Rwanda promotes unity and reconciliation through supporting programs that reconcile genocide survivors, released genocide prisoners, and genocide detainees' families.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,881 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. However, Seventh-day Adventist students who attend Catholic-affiliated public schools have faced problems because of their Sabbath observance.

Freedom to Evangelize: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is generally allowed to share its religious convictions freely.

SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

Population: 53,199

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,444

Religious Groups: Anglican 17%, Methodist 16%, Pentecostal 11%, Church of God 7%, Roman Catholic 6%, (Baptist, Moravian, Seventh-day Adventist, and Wesleyan Holiness) 5% each, (Brethren, evangelical Christian, and Hindu) 2% each; (Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslim, and Rastafarian) 1% each, and (Baha'i, Presbyterian, and Salvation Army) less than 1% each, no religious affiliation 9%, other 4% (2011 census)

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 continued to face occasional societal discrimination in schools and hiring practices.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 12 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: 183,627

Seventh-day Adventists: 24,143

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. St. Lucia's heavily tourist-dependent economy suffered significantly from the COVID-19 outbreak.

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.

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 44 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: 5,794

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: 110,940

Seventh-day Adventists: 16,082

Religious Groups: Pentecostal 27.6%, Anglican 13.9%, Seventh-day Adventist 11.6%, Baptist 8.9%, Methodist 8.7%, Roman Catholic 6.3%, others (Rastafarian, Muslims, and Hindus) less than 5%, no affiliation 7.5% (2012 census)

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. Although Rastafarians still face some discrimination, however, they reported that society has started to accept them, and in general, residents are becoming more tolerant of their lifestyle.

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 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.

SAMOA

Population: 198,414

Seventh-day Adventists: 9,203

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.” In 2017, a new clause was added to the first article of the constitution: “Samoa is a Christian nation founded on God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” 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. Some denominations continue to own and operate television stations through which other religious groups and non-religious organizations can broadcast their messages.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience. Institutional Freedom: There are 36 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: 33,931

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: 219,159

Seventh-day Adventists: 7,195

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 Tome 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, and 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. There are two religious schools, one Catholic and one Seventh-day Adventist, which provide a general education along with religious instruction. The Ministry of Education oversees the curriculum, and both schools are open to church members and non-members.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Relationships between religious groups are generally harmonious, and no significant tensions are reported. Religious leaders, including Seventh-day Adventists, took part in government COVID-19 awareness campaigns and provided television and radio messages to support prevention efforts.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 22 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: 34,813,871

Seventh-day Adventists: 494

Religious Groups: Sunni Muslim 85-90%, Shi'a Muslim 10-15%. The 12 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. However, 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. Blasphemy against Islam is legally

punishable by death. In November 2020, Saudi Arabia hosted Group of 20 (G20) summit amid human rights criticisms and the Coronavirus pandemic

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. Anti-Semitic comments continued to appear in the media. Christian churches in Saudi Arabia are continuously targeted.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are no Seventh-day Adventist churches or institutions in Saudi Arabia, but there are several hundred Adventist foreign workers in the country.

Government Recognition: Only Sunni-Islam is recognized in Saudi Arabia.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Officially weekends are Friday and Saturday. Generally private sectors operate on Saturday.

Freedom to Evangelize: It is illegal to publicly practice any faith other than Sunni-Islam. Home churches/meetings are illegal. Conversion from Islam to another faith may result in imprisonment, deportation or death.

SENEGAL

Population: 16,743,927

Seventh-day Adventists: 689

Religious Groups: Muslim 96.1%, Christian (Roman Catholic, Protestant) 3.8%, indigenous belief or no affiliation 0.1%

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 parts 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. The current life expectancy for Senegal in 2021 is 68.31 years, an

increase of 0.41% over 2020. 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 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. On the other hand, 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 60,000 students. Religious groups are free to speak about social and political issues, most recently focusing on political violence and the HIV/AIDS crisis. The government continued to provide financial and material assistance to religious groups in order to maintain or rehabilitate places of worship and to underwrite special events to fund schools operated by religious groups.

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.

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: 8,737,371

Seventh-day Adventists: 5,642

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. The constitution protects the right of conscientious objection based on religious beliefs. The law grants special treatment to seven religious groups that are defined as “traditional.” The Serbian government officially recognized 22 “nontraditional” 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, 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 government reported returning about 74 percent of land and 24 percent of buildings claimed by churches and religious groups.

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: 98,347

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,105

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 76%, Anglican 6%, other Christian (Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Assembly of God, Pentecostal, Nazarete, 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. While the constitution prohibits mandatory religious education, non-Catholic students at some public schools providing Catholic instruction were not provided with alternative activities, according to parents. 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 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.

SIERRA LEONE

Population: 7,976,983

Seventh-day Adventists: 12,044

Religious Groups: Muslim 60%, Christian (Protestant, Roman Catholic, others) 30%, Animist 10%. 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 55 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. Before the recent Ebola epidemic, Sierra Leone was one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. Although the road to complete recovery will take longer, the economy continued to develop.

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. Religious leaders and organizations reported that dialogue with the government remained limited. Intermarriage among Christians and Muslims is common.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 53 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: 5,850,342

Seventh-day Adventists: 3,165

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 on 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. In private schools, religious instruction is permitted. However, for primary schools, only seven private schools are allowed to offer religious education to students - six Sunni madrassahs and one Seventh-day Adventist school. The law doesn't exempt conscientious objectors from military service, including those objecting for religious reasons.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most faiths have an amicable relationship with one another and there are no reports of violence or discrimination. The government continued to ban religious content from broadcasts on television in order to maintain a secular broadcast system. The government, civil society organizations and religious groups continued to promote religious liberty and tolerance.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are eight 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: 5,459,642

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,218

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 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. In 2021, Slovakia will celebrate 20 years of serving as a peacekeeping force for the UN in Cyprus.

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 create a disadvantage for smaller religious groups because only groups with at least 50,000 adherents may register, according to the law approved by the Parliament in November 2017. 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. Some organizations said they perceived that anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment increased in society. The Ecumenical Council of Churches continued to be the only government-recognized association for interreligious dialogue.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 43 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: 2,078,938

Seventh-day Adventists: 563

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. Slovenia is holding the EU Council presidency in the second half of 2021, after thirteen years in this position.

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. There are 54 registered religious groups, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The government permits religious organizations to offer religious instruction in their faiths in public schools and preschools outside of school hours. Various government officials 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. Some minority religious communities still face challenges in offering spiritual support to their members in hospitals, the military, and other public institutions. 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 15 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: 686,884

Seventh-day Adventists: 55,202

Religious Groups: Anglican 32%, Roman Catholic 20%, South Seas Evangelical 17%, Seventh-day Adventist 12%, 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. Some members of minority faith communities complained that members of dominant religions ridiculed their beliefs and humiliated them in public. 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 203 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: 15,893,222

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. In 2017, former Prime Minister Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed was elected president. According to Transparency International, Somalia ranks 179th of 180 countries in terms of corruption. Around 2.6 million people are internally displaced (IDPs), according to Human Rights Watch. The COVID-19 pandemic, insecurity, lack of government protection, and ongoing armed conflict made Somalis vulnerable to abuse.

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. The terrorist group al-Shabaab continued to threaten to execute anyone suspected of converting to Christianity. No places of worship exist for non-Muslims in Somalia. Christians and members of other non-Muslim religious groups continued to report their inability to practice their faith due to fear of societal harassment. According to Open Doors, Somalia is the third on a list of the worst countries for the persecution of Christians.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience: There are no reported Seventh-day Adventist members or churches in Somalia.

SOUTH AFRICA

Population: 59,308,690

Seventh-day Adventists: 144,202

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. Although South Africa has made progress in reducing poverty, nearly 55.5 percent (30.3 million people) of the population lives in poverty at the national upper poverty line, according to the World Bank. South Africa also struggles with the second-highest number of HIV/AIDS patients in the world and unemployment reached a record 32% in the first three months of 2021, partly as a result of COVID-19.

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. Some 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.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,182 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: 11,193,725

Seventh-day Adventists: 49,435

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. According to the World Bank, South Sudan faces a severe humanitarian crisis as more than 6 million (about half of the population) suffer from food insecurity. Almost 4 million people remain displaced by the humanitarian crisis, with

nearly 1.6 million displaced internally and 2.2 million refugees in six neighboring countries. Children and women continue to be the most affected.

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. Religious groups are required to register with the state. Governments did not mandate religious education, but it was usually integrated into public secondary school and university curricula. Religious private schools set their own curriculums without government regulation. President Kiir has publicly 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. 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 of Christian and Muslim faiths regularly communicated and coordinated activities, especially around tolerance, humanitarian aid and the COVID-19.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 84 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.

SPAIN

Population: 46,745,778

Seventh-day Adventists: 17,296

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." Religious groups are not required to register with the government, but registering provides certain legal benefits to religious groups. 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. In January 2021, the government transferred authority for religious freedom issues and registration of religious groups from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of the Presidency.

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. There were some incidents of assaults, threats, incitement to violence, other hate speech, and vandalism against Christians, Muslims and Jews. Some regional and municipal government offices provided guidance and funding to religious communities and developed programs that promoted religious diversity.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 110 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: 21,413,249

Seventh-day Adventists: 3,317

Religious Groups: Buddhist 69%, Hindu 15%, Muslim 8%, Christian (Roman Catholic 8%, Anglican, Seventh-day Adventist, Jehovah's Witness, Methodist, Assembly of God, Baptist, Pentecostal, Dutch Reformed, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) 8%

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. The law recognizes four religions: Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity. Religion education is mandatory in public and private schools at the primary and secondary levels. Parents may choose for their children to study Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, or Christianity, provided that there is sufficient demand (at least 15 students) for the chosen subject. 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. There were reports of restrictions on religious minorities' freedoms to exercise their faith, including proselytization, conversion, and building places of worship, as well as attacks against churches and obstructions of the worship services.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 35 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: 43,849,260

Seventh-day Adventists: 562

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 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. In spite of the country's considerable natural resources, poverty is widespread. There are almost 3 million internally displaced people. As of July 2021, the UN Refugee Agency reported that Sudan hosts over 1.1 million refugees from South Sudan, Eritrea, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, and other countries. The International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague has accused the former Sudanese president, Omar al-Bashir, of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur. Omar al Bashir ruled Sudan for thirty years, surviving civil wars and even the International Criminal Court indictment. He was taken down in April 2019 by peaceful protests provoked by anger about the state of the economy and decades of repression. The country is now ruled by a civilian government, although the military still retains a significant influence. The religious freedom situation in Sudan has improved considerably, but it still faces significant challenges.

Constitutional Provision: The 2019 Interim Constitutional Declaration includes several provisions protecting the right to freedom of religious belief and worship "in accordance with the requirements of the law and public order." Contrary to the former constitution, there is no mention of "Sharia" or Islamic religious law as a source of law.

State Attitudes and Actions: In September 2020, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and General Abdelaziz Adam Alhilu signed a declaration of principles that included the separation of religion and state. The constitutional declaration requires that political parties be tolerant to citizens of all religions and allowing all "ethnic and cultural" groups to have the right to "exercise their beliefs" and "observe their religions or customs." Additionally, the constitutional declaration provides for access to education without regard to religion. Non-Muslims are not required to attend Islamic education classes, but public schools must provide other religious instruction if at least 15 Christian students enroll in a class. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments (MRA) regulates Islamic religious practice, supervises churches, and ensures equal protection for all religious groups. Religious groups must register at the state level with the MRA in order to gain government recognition.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Although the Miscellaneous Amendments (Fundamental Rights and Freedoms) Act of 2020 (MAA) abolished the death

penalty for apostasy, minority religious groups raised concern that they might be accused of apostasy if they expressed religious views that differed from those of the Sunni majority. MRA Minister Mufreh said the new constitution declaration guarantees religious groups the right to worship, provided their activities do not infringe others' rights or incite hatred. Throughout the year, the MRA Minister organized events with debates about coexistence and tolerance with religious leaders and members of civil society.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: The church operates one vocational training academy and a Bible correspondence school. On May 24, 2021, Sudanese government leaders, including minister of Religious Affairs and Endowments Nasr-Eddin Mofarah, visited Adventist Church Headquarters and discussed cooperation and the importance of religious tolerance in Sudan.

Sabbath keeping for Students and Employees: There have been no reports of difficulties or discrimination. The changes in Sudan have given religious minorities hope that religious plurality would be better protected in the future.

Freedom to Evangelize: The church is allowed to evangelize in Sudan.

SURINAME

Population: 586,632

Seventh-day Adventists: 5,442

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 22%, Hindu 22%, Protestant (Moravian, Lutheran, Dutch Reformed, Evangelical, Baptist, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) 26%, Muslim 14%, indigenous beliefs 3%, other (Baha'i, Jewish, Buddhist, Brahma Kumari, Hare Krishna, Rastafarian, ancestor worship, indigenous beliefs) 13%. 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. A new government was elected in 2020, and the new leaders have promised to stand up against corruption and abuses of power.

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. High-level government officials continued to emphasize the significance of religious freedom, respect for religious diversity, and their commitment to protecting minorities.

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 (ESWATINI)

Population: 1,160,164

Seventh-day Adventists: 9,476

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 human rights concerns for this country are inadequate healthcare, political prisoners or detainees, severe limitations on freedom of expression and the press. Life expectancy is 60 years. Swaziland faces poverty and several health issues, including HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. Violence against women is reportedly widespread. In July 2021, the UN human rights office (OHCHR) expressed deep concern over the reported deaths of protesters in Eswatini during protests calling for democratic reforms and called the authorities to uphold human rights principles.

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 26 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: 10,099,265

Seventh-day Adventists: 2,919

Religious Groups: Lutheran 63%, other Christian (Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Missionary (or Missions) Church, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) less than 7%, Muslim 4.5%, 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 third least corrupt nation in the world according to Transparency International. Sweden has become a refuge for refugees and asylum-seekers; nearly 19% 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. In the last couple of years, the government has been working to restrict the number of religiously affiliated schools, which previously was encouraged in the Swedish system of government. Education authorities have become stricter regarding the implementation of and compliance with the state curriculum in religiously affiliated independent 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. The government provided grants to religious groups for work in the healthcare sector and religious education.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 32 Seventh-day Adventist churches and two planted churches. The church operates a junior college, and a publishing department. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely, even though religiously affiliated independent schools have come into question in the last couple of years.

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: 8,654,622 (2020 estimate)

Seventh-day Adventists: 4,804

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 25% 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 apologized for collaborating with the Nazis on financial matters and keeping out Jewish refugees during World War II. Global human rights organizations expressed their deep concern and opposition to the new anti-terrorism law, as it expands the definition of terrorism to any activity involving the “spreading of fear.” Human rights experts worry the law could put people at risk of torture abroad and harm children.

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 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

government continued supporting projects to combat racism and anti-Semitism and reducing hate crimes, including those motivated by religion. Leaders of the religious community continued to organize interfaith events to promote religious liberty and tolerance.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 57 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates two schools, three retirement homes, and a publishing house. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an association under Art. 60 of the Swiss Civil Code. It is an independent private legal entity not under government recognition.

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

SYRIA

Population: 17,500,658

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 has deeply

deteriorated amid the ongoing conflict that began in 2011, declining by more than 70% from 2010 to 2017. As a consequence of the country's ongoing civil war, more than 500,000 people have died and more than 12 million people have been displaced, including 6.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and approximately 5.6 million refugees. Over 80% of the Syrian refugees lives below the poverty line without access to basic services, education or employment. Although the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) ostensibly faced near-complete defeat in its control of territory in Syria and Iraq in 2017, the group maintained a visible presence in several parts of Syria.

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. ISIS was reduced to a small area in the eastern part of the country by the end of 2018 and was limited in its ability to subjugate religious groups and subject them to harsh treatment.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There continued to be reports of sectarian violence due to tensions among religious groups, amplified by government actions, cultural rivalries, and sectarian rhetoric. Social conventions and religious proscriptions make conversion relatively rare, especially Muslim-to-Christian conversion, which is technically illegal. Terrorist organizations such as ISIS and al-Qa'ida-linked Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) 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: 23,816,775

Seventh-day Adventists: 6,928

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%

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. In 2020, Taiwan has reelected Tsai Ing-wen as its first female president. In the past few months, relations between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan have become extremely tense.

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 58 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: 9,537,645

Seventh-day Adventists: 239

Religious Groups: Muslim more than 90%, Other (Russian Orthodox, Protestants, Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, Buddhists, Jews, and Baha'is) 10%

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. In January 2018, amendments to the 2009 law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Unions set rigorous new requirements for reporting mosque income, property, staff, salaries, and worshippers' personal data. This law has made things especially difficult for the majority Muslim population. The law requires all institutions or groups wishing to provide religious instruction to obtain CRA permission, but in practice such permission is not granted. Small Protestant and other groups cannot obtain legal status under the registration requirements. 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. The government continued to restrict distribution 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. According to NGO Open Doors 2021, Christians who have converted from Islam faced criticism from family, friends, and other community members.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience: Government Recognition: There are three 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: 59,734,218

Seventh-day Adventists: 799,598

Religious Groups: Christian (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal, Seventh-day Adventist, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witness) 61%, Muslim 35%, other (Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Baha'i), 4% (2010 survey). Zanzibar: Muslim 99%

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. 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: 1.6 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. In March 2021, Samia Suluhu Hassan became Tanzania's first female president after the sudden death of President John Magufuli.

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. The president and the prime minister support interfaith initiatives and promote peace and religious tolerance.

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. Vigilante killings of persons accused of practicing witchcraft continued to occur.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 3,362 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. The Seventh-day Adventist Church operates schools and dispensaries, but these are not recognized as proselytizing institutions.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Generally, religious freedom is respected and the country is peaceful. However, in the Tanzanian mainland, there have been a few cases in the ministry of education in schools, colleges, and universities where Seventh-day Adventists are denied the freedom of worship. Every year, some students are suspended because they do not attend classes, take exams, or attend meetings on Sabbath. The constitutional protection, in practice, for religious freedom is often poor. In the Isles (Zanzibar and Pemba) where the majority are Muslims, Christianity is a vulnerable religious minority.

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

THAILAND

Population: 69,799,978

Seventh-day Adventists: 14,859

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. The flooding of September 2011, the worst in half a century, impacted even the industrial heart of the kingdom. Two thirds of the population live in rural areas. More than one tenth of the Thai population is still living 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. Although some Rohingya refugees have been able to settle in Thailand, many refugees and asylum seekers in the country fled persecution in their countries of origin due to religious reasons, according to human rights groups.

Constitutional Provision: The 2017 Constitution, Section 31 states: "A person shall enjoy full liberty to profess a religion, and shall enjoy the liberty to exercise or practice a form of worship in accordance with his or her religious principles, provided that it shall not be adverse to the duties of all Thai people, neither shall it endanger the safety of the State, nor shall it be contrary to public order or good morals."

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. The law officially recognizes five religious groups: Buddhists, Muslims, Brahmin-Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians. 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.

Private Attitudes and Actions: For the most part, members of differing faiths live peacefully. According to human rights and civil society groups, more than a decade of continuing violence had decreased interaction between the Muslim

and Buddhist communities. Both Buddhist and Muslim religious leaders, however, stated the majority of their communities continued to advocate for interfaith dialogue and cultural understanding.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 54 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: 1,318,445

Seventh-day Adventists: 639

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 97.6%, Protestant (Assembly of God, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Jehovah's Witness, Christian Vision Church) 1.96%, Muslim less than 1% (2015 census). Many citizens also retain animistic beliefs and practices along with their organized religious affiliation.

Perspectives on Current Issues: Timor-Leste was internationally recognized as an independent state on 20 May 2002. 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 141st of 189 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. In 2017, Timor-Leste celebrated its 15th year as a sovereign nation. Francisco Guterres, the president of Timor-Leste, pledged to boost health and education. COVID-19, malnutrition, and food affordability are

among the concerns emerging in Timor-Leste after it experienced the worst floods in decades.

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, there have been some reports of religious discrimination and violence against non-Catholics. Leaders of the Catholic, Protestant and Muslim communities reported good cooperation and relationships among religious groups.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There is one Seventh-day Adventist church.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: After being expelled from a public school for absenteeism on Saturdays, a Seventh-day Adventist student had to relocate to a school in Dili, which provided more flexibility for his observance of the Sabbath.

TOGO

Population: 8,278,724

Seventh-day Adventists: 9,688

Religious Groups: Traditional animist 33%, Roman Catholic 28%, Sunni Muslim 14%, Protestant 10%, other Christian 10%, no affiliation 5%

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 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 government continued to meet with religious leaders during the year.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 71 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: 105,695

Seventh-day Adventists: 3,728

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. Religious groups may operate schools. In public schools, where religious education is provided, students are required to attend the program led by the representative of their respective denomination. 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. Foreign missionaries were active in the country and operated freely.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are no reports of religious strife or tension among the various religious groups in Tonga. The Seventh-day Adventist Church's Women's Ministries Department of Tonga Mission organized a prayer breakfast on November 18, 2017, and the Queen of Tonga attended as a special guest.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 16 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one high school and one bookstore. These institutions are generally allowed to operate freely. 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: 1,399,488

Seventh-day Adventists: 68,647

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 continued to limit 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.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Members of various religious communities have amicable relationships with one another. Government officials have regularly attended and spoken at religious holiday celebrations of various religious groups, emphasizing tolerance and religious freedom.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 165 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: 11,818,619

Seventh-day Adventists: 51

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 Rate in Tunisia averaged 15 percent from 2005 until 2019, 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 from partisan instrumentalization. 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. Christians and other religious minorities in the country are “cautiously optimistic” about the future of religious freedom. There is no legal prohibition of proselytism, but the law criminalizes forced conversions. It is mandatory for students in public schools to attend courses on the principles of Islam approximately one hour per week. However, non-Muslim students can seek an exemption.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most religious organizations have amicable relationships and tolerate one another. Muslims who convert face social ostracism. Members of the Christian community said that there was strong governmental and societal pressure not to publicly discuss church activities or doctrine. The government allowed churches to operate within certain guidelines and provided security for their services.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

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

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Unknown.

Freedom to Evangelize: Evangelism of Muslims is illegal.

TURKEY

Population: 84,339,067

Seventh-day Adventists: 491

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. Turkey continued to be the country that hosted the most refugees, with just under 4 million, mostly Syrians.

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. Only students who marked “Christian” or “Jewish” on their national identity cards may request an exemption from religion classes. 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. In 2017, some female Members of Parliament wore headscarves to parliamentary sessions for the first time. According to the UN Refugee Agency, Turkey continues to host the largest number of refugees worldwide, with a total of 3.6 million registered Syrian refugees.

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: The Taksim Seventh-day Adventist Church celebrated its reopening on February 16, 2019. The Taksim Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Istanbul has reopened after solving years of problems that resulted from Turkey’s confusing and complicated church laws.

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: 6,031,200

Seventh-day Adventists: 96

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 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. In terms of natural gas reserves, it is ranked 4th in the world. 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. The 2016 Law on Religious Organizations and Religious Freedom requires all religious organizations, including those already registered under the previous law on religion, to re-register with the Ministry of Justice. Turkmenistan law requires religious groups to register under intrusive criteria, strictly controls registered groups' activities, and bans and punishes religious activities by unregistered groups. Minority religious groups have experienced difficulty regarding the registration. There is no religious instruction in public schools.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Leaving one's religious tradition, especially if Islamic, can result in ostracism. There is a general distrust of foreign religious

influences. Members of registered Christian religious organizations reported hostility due to their religious affiliation.

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: 11,792

Seventh-day Adventists: 365

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: 45,741,007

Seventh-day Adventists: 423,229

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 39%, Anglican 32%, Muslim 14%, Pentecostal 11%, other (Seventh-day Adventists, adherents of indigenous beliefs, Baptists, Orthodox Christians, Hindus, and those with no religious affiliation) less than 5%

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. 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. In January 2021, Uganda's elections, which were won by President Yoweri Museveni, in power since 1986, were marred by widespread violence and repression, Human Rights Watch said. 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 requires religious groups to register to obtain legal entity status. Larger religious groups, including the Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox, and Seventh-day Adventist Churches, and the UMSC are exempt, and the government does not require them to obtain an operating license.

Private Attitudes and Actions: According to the Muslim Center for Justice and Law, there were several situations when Muslim women were not hired because they refused to remove their hijabs. Born Again Faith Uganda (BAFU) reported members of opposing faiths complaining of noise pollution from churches to local leaders, who then evicted churches from the communities.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,225 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: Sabbath keeping is the major challenge for both students and employees. Most employers and educational institutions do not consider Adventists' right to observe the Sabbath.

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

UKRAINE

Population: 43,733,762

Seventh-day Adventists: 46,625

Religious Groups: Orthodox 65.4%, Greek-Catholic 6.5%, Roman Catholic 1%, Protestant 1.9%, Muslim 1.1%, Jewish 0.2%, Christian 7.1%, no affiliation 16.3% (2016 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. Racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination are reported. Frequent reports of domestic violence are a major source of concern. Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, leading to an ongoing territorial dispute with Ukraine.

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." Also, Article 35 states: "Everyone shall have right to freedom of beliefs and religion. This right shall include the freedom to profess any religion or profess no religion, to freely practice religious rites and ceremonial rituals, alone or collectively, and to pursue religious activities. The exercise of this right may be restricted by law

only in the interests of protection of the public order, health and morality of the population, or protection of the rights and freedoms of other persons. The Church and religious organizations in Ukraine shall be separated from the State, and school shall be separated from the Church. No religion shall be recognized by the State as mandatory. No one shall be exempt from his duties to the State or refuse to abide by laws on religious grounds. If the performance of military duty contradicts the religious beliefs of a citizen, the performance of this duty shall be replaced by alternative (non-military) service.”

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, the law restricts some of the actions of the 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. After huge national protests called the Maydan Revolution, some recent amendments to the law were made, that require religious groups to seek permission from local government officials before holding religious ceremonies in public spaces. Other restrictions for religious freedom were also canceled. A majority of religious organizations recognized under Ukrainian law continued to be unable to reregister because of stringent legal requirements under Russian law, according to the OHCHR.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There were some acts of violence against persons and property based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Some human rights activists expressed their worries about the impunity of hate crimes, including acts of anti-Semitism. The government continues to promote interfaith understanding via the All Ukraine Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (AUCCRO). The All-Ukrainian Council of Religious Associations (AUCRA) and AUCCRO continued to hold meetings to talk about issues affecting the country, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the religious situation in the temporarily occupied territories, and peacemaking.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 829 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates one college, one media center, and one publishing house. These

institutions are generally allowed to operate freely. According to Ukrainian laws, religious organizations may establish schools.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an officially recognized denomination, however, on November 16, 2016, a group of so-called Donetsk People's Republic representatives seized an Adventist church building in Horlivka, claiming that the congregation failed to share church ownership documents with the state's officials. In 2018-2019, the church lost their official registration and some properties in territories not controlled by the government in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Adventists don't have big difficulties with Sabbath keeping and employment, but sometimes there are problems with final exams in higher educational institutions.

Freedom to Evangelize: Adventists can hold public events on all territories, except in occupied and not-controlled ones where there are high restrictions on religious freedom and any form of evangelization.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Population: 9,890,402 (89% are non-citizens)

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,231

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 24 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 constitution enshrines Islam as the official religion of the state. 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. In public schools, the government does not provide instruction in any religion other than Islam. Private schools do not require non-Muslim students to attend Islamic study classes. Proselytizing and publicly distributing non-Islamic religious literature are prohibited.

Private Attitudes and Actions: According to non-Muslim religious groups, there was a high degree of tolerance within society for minority religious beliefs and traditions, 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 government has established a new Ministry of Tolerance for supporting religious tolerance and diversity.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 11 Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Government Recognition: The church is officially recognized in the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, allowing it to operate throughout the whole UAE.

Sabbath-keeping for Students and Employees: Official weekends are Friday and Saturday. In general, the private sectors operate on Saturday.

Freedom to Evangelize: Christians proselytizing to Muslims is illegal.

UNITED KINGDOM

Population: 67,886,011

Seventh-day Adventists: 38,850

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. In 2016, the Labour party's candidate, Sadiq Khan, became London's first Muslim mayor.

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 2020, the government provided \$19 million via a nongovernmental organization to ensure security at Jewish institutions, and in 2021, the Scottish government announced it would spend \$683,000 to ensure safety at places of worship.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are numerous 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 in 2020, over 6,822 hate crimes linked to religion took place. This was the first time since 2013 when religiously motivated crimes declined by 5 percent. A majority of these crimes were against Jewish or Muslim groups or perpetrated by British nationalists. As part of the "Curriculum for Wales Framework," the Welsh government announced relationships, sexuality, and religion will be compulsory in schools by 2022 for all children over the age of five. Many religious groups expressed concern about teaching children values in opposition to the beliefs or religion of their parents, eroding parental rights.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 288 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: 331,002,651

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,180,222

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 mandating the inclusion of contraceptives in employee health coverage plans has brought attention to the concept of religious freedom rights for privately held companies. A perceived clash between religious freedom rights and anti-discrimination law continues to play out in litigation around the issue of same-sex relationships. Advancing the principle of religious freedom continues to be a goal of US foreign policy. The US State Department has an Office of International Religious Freedom headed by an Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. On February 25, 2021, the US House of Representatives passed the Equality Act, a bill that would protect LGBTQ people from discrimination in housing, the workplace, public accommodations, and other settings. There are concerns that this legislation would further erode the religious liberty of faith communities and their members who hold traditional views of marriage and gender. On June 28, 2021, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet urged

the United States to make "transformative change for racial justice and equality," reforming its criminal justice system.

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. The court rulings on same-sex marriage have ignited public debate regarding the scope of religious freedom protections under US law. On December 7, 2020, the House of Representatives passed Resolution 512 against blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy. The resolution calls on the US government to make the repeal of blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy laws a priority, urging the release of all prisoners detained under these laws.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 5,197 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, there are still many situations in which they lose their jobs because of their Sabbath beliefs, and others find it difficult to get a job.

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

UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

Population: 104,425

Seventh-day Adventists: 9,243

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: 3,473,730

Seventh-day Adventists: 7,158

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. Uruguay is the only country in South America that calls itself an atheist country.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Generally, members of various religious communities have amicable relationships with one another. However, Jewish leaders continued to report the incidence of anti-Semitic remarks and Holocaust denial in media and on social media. According to some religious groups, government agencies gave less attention to monitoring religious discrimination, rather focusing on what they considered other more urgent human rights issues. The religious community mentioned the lack of formal communication channels for raising general concerns about religious freedom and encouraged establishing a government institution to address religious issues and facilitate communication between religious groups and the state.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 60 Seventh-day Adventist churches. The church operates two high schools and two radio stations. These institutions are 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.

UZBEKISTAN

Population: 33,469,203

Seventh-day Adventists: 694

Religious Groups: Muslim 93% (Sunni Muslim 92% and Shi'a Muslim 1%), Russian Orthodox 4%, other (Baha'i faith, Buddhist, Hare Krishna, Jehovah's Witness, Jewish, Protestant, and Roman Catholic) 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. In recent years, however, the government has made efforts to improve human rights in the country.

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. By the end of 2020, there were 2,293 religious organizations registered in the country, representing 16 different faiths, according to the Committee on Religious Affairs (CRA). In 2020, the government registered eight new churches, including a Seventh-day Adventist Church in Samarkand. In 2021, the government has adopted a new Religion law. However, while the law has some positive changes for religious freedom, it also maintains the most severe restrictions on freedom of religion or belief from the previous law, according to USCIRF.

Private Attitudes and Actions: There are relatively harmonious relations among the various religions, but proselytism is highly frowned upon. Societal pressure continued against conversion from Islam, according to human rights organizations. Civil society organizations have expressed concerns that the law's definition of extremism is too broad and fails to differentiate between nonviolent religious beliefs and violent ideologies.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 10 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: 307,145

Seventh-day Adventists: 26,838

Religious Groups: Presbyterian 28%, Anglican 15%, Roman Catholic 12%,

Seventh-day Adventist 12%, 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. The Ministry of Health continued to cooperate with several churches, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church, providing health, educational, economic, and disaster response assistance to communities in need.

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. In January 2021, Prime Minister Bob Loughman gave opening remarks at the Seventh-day Adventist Church's 24th Quinquennial Session summit, congratulating them for training up national leaders. During this meeting, he reaffirmed his office is working with churches to address secularism in the country.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 90 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: 28,435,940

Seventh-day Adventists: 358,190

Religious Groups: Roman Catholic 96%, Protestant (Evangelical, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witness) 4% (2016 estimate)

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. According to statistical research data,

Venezuela's homicide rate was 45.6 homicides per 100,000 residents in 2020. The country's severe economic crisis has left millions struggling to meet basic needs, and driven mass emigration. Other concerns include brutal policing practices, poor prison conditions, impunity for human rights violations, lack of judicial independence, and harassment of human rights defenders, according to Human Rights Watch's World Report 2021.

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.

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. Religious communities and religious leaders expressed concern about acts of vandalism, human rights abuses and violent crimes. Representatives of religious groups and other social organizations, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church, established in 2020 the Venezuelan Interreligious Social Council as a platform for building consensus

and dialogue based on respect for human rights, democratic institutions, and the rule of law.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 1,232 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.

VIETNAM

Population: 97,338,579

Seventh-day Adventists: 13,817

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. The government has taken positive steps to improve religious freedom conditions in the country.

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. On January 1, 2018, a new Law on Belief and Religion went into effect. The law obliges the government to protect religious freedom and, for the first time, gives religious organizations the right to legal personhood. However, religious groups must register with the Government Committee for Religious Affairs (GCRA) and report on routine activities like festivals and conferences. For unrecognized groups, the law criminalizes activities not approved in advance by the government. Religious leaders, especially those representing groups without recognition or certificates of registration, reported various forms of government harassment and denials or no response to requests for registration and/or other permissions. The government recognizes 38 religious organizations, affiliated with 16 distinct religious traditions. The government does not permit religious instruction in public and private schools. In the military, there are no explicit regulations regarding religious expression, which gives unit commanders the freedom to exercise significant discretion.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Most religious groups tolerate one another. Religious leaders of unregistered congregations reported increased harassment by local police in the rural areas. However, religious followers in urban, and more developed areas usually are able to exercise their religion or belief freely, and openly. There are a number of Christian believers imprisoned in Vietnam on charges related to their faith. In response to the program “Millions of solidarity gift sets to assist Southern countrymen in overcoming Covid-19 pandemic,” the Seventh-Day Adventist Church of Vietnam called its members to support disadvantaged people and faithful in Ho Chi Minh City and southern provinces.

The Seventh-day Adventist Experience:

Institutional Freedom: There are 18 Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Government Recognition: The Seventh-day Adventist Church received state recognition in 2006 and is 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: 11,239

Seventh-day Adventists: 18

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. The current concern is an aging population with consequent economic development issues.

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 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.

YEMEN

Population: 29,825,964

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 Qaeda 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. Corruption is seen as a major problem; according to the NGO Transparency International, Yemen ranks 176st of 180 countries. The humanitarian crisis in Yemen remains the worst in the world. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), at least 235 civilians were killed or injured in September 2021, the second highest monthly number in two years. By mid-2021, the armed conflict in Yemen had already caused an estimated 233,000 deaths, while more than 20 million people need humanitarian assistance and protection, including 12 million in acute need. 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. There is no provision for the registration of religious groups. All public schools must offer instruction in Islam, but not in any other religion. Although the government had no effective control over much of the country's territory, it publicly condemned religious persecution by the Houthis, who continued to control approximately one-third of Yemeni territory and nearly 80 percent of the population.

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. According to the United Nations, nongovernmental organizations and media, Houthis continue to attack places of worship and religious institutions, causing serious harm.

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: 18,383,955

Seventh-day Adventists: 1,363,682

Religious Groups: Protestant (Anglican Church and evangelical and Pentecostal) 75.3%, Catholic 20.2, Muslim 2%, with smaller numbers of Baha'i, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Sikh, other (indigenous beliefs and no affiliations) 1.8%. 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 64 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. Religious groups are required to register through the Chief Registrar's Office in the Ministry of Home Affairs. 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. On August 16, 2021, in his inaugural speech, Zambia's new president Hakainde Hichilema, a baptized member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, promised to put human rights, the rule of law, press freedom, and economic growth at the center of their administrations goals.

Private Attitudes and Actions: Leaders of the various ecumenical movements, including the Christian Council of Zambia and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia, continue to 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 3,239 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: 14,862,924

Seventh-day Adventists: 989, 282

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 61 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. Endemic corruption, weak rule of law, and poor protections for workers are important issues in Zimbabwe.

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 2,450 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:

Information presented in this World Report is based on information from Public Affairs and Religious Liberty directors in the divisions, along with information provided by a wide range of news agencies, non-governmental organizations, and government sources. These include:

Seventh-day Adventist Church, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2021*. Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2021

Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR). 2021 *Annual Statistical Report* Volume 3. Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' 2020 Statistics

University of Michigan Document Center, *Foreign Governments, Constitutions, Laws and Treaties*, lib.umich.edu/govdocs/forcons.html

U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/bg.html

U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, *2020 Report on International Religious Freedom*, state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/

U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, *2021 Annual Report*, <https://www.uscirf.gov/annual-reports>

Worldometers 2021, worldometers.info/world-population/

Other online sources include:

Adventist News Network (news.adventist.org); Answers for the Faith (answersforthefaith.com); Asia News (asianews.it); Blog Catalog (blogcatalog.com); Bos News Life (bosnewslife.com); British Broadcasting Corporation (newsvote.bbc.co.uk); China Aid (chinaaid.org); China Post (christianpost.com); Christian Broadcasting Network (cbn.com); Christian Freedom (christianfreedom.org); Compass Direct (compassdirect.org); Daily Star, Lebanon (dailystar.com.lb); GMA News Online (gmanews.tv); Human Rights Watch (hrw.org); International Christian Concern (persecution.org); Migration Policy Institute (migrationpolicy.org); Mission Network News (mnnonline.org); Mizzima News from Myanmar (mizzima.com); Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (adventiststatistics.org); Open Doors (opendoorsusa.org); Religion and Politics (religionandpolitics.org); Reuters, India (in.reuters.com); Taiwan News (etaiwannews.com); The Hindu (hindu.com); The Jakarta Post (thejakartapost.com); The Jordan Times (jordantimes.com); The New York Times (nytimes.com); The Sri Lanka Sunday Times (sundaytimes.lk); The Straits Times, International Edition (straitstimes.com); The Tehran Times (tehrantimes.com); The United Nations Refugee Agency (unhcr.org); The Wire (thewire.in); Transparency International (transparency.org); UNDP Human Development Reports (hdr.undp.org); United Nations AIDS (unaids.org); United States CIA (cia.gov); US Department of State (state.gov); Voice of America (voanews.com); Washington Post (washingtonpost.com/world); World Bulletin News (worldbulletin.net); World Wide Religion News (wwrn.org); Worldometers (worldometers.info).

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH & RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Organized on May 20, 1863, in Battle Creek, Michigan, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has more than 21 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. The 2021 Annual Statistical Report reveals that the church employs 322,120 people worldwide. The Adventist Church operates 1,976 healthcare institutions, including 229 hospitals and sanitariums. The Adventist Church also operates over 9,400 schools, colleges and universities, with over 113,600 teachers and 2,023,844 students.

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*. Special thanks to Dr. Nelu Burcea for his extensive work in the acquisition and formulation of content.

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

Jennifer Gray Woods, JD, MPH

Congressional Relations

Associate Director PARL

woodsje@gc.adventist.org

Nelu Burcea, Ph.D.

United Nations Relations

Associate Director PARL

burcean@gc.adventist.org

Serena Thummalapalli

Senior Communication Assistant

ThummS@gc.adventist.org



Seventh-day
Adventist® Church

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