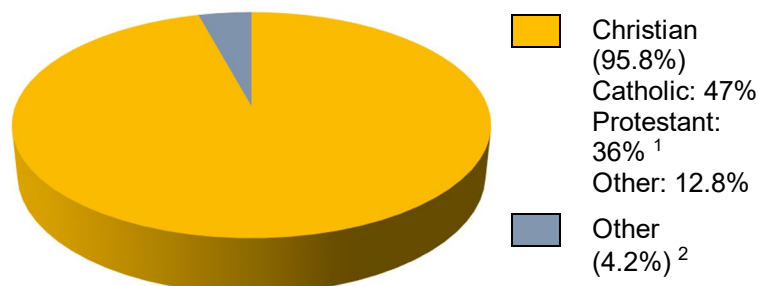


# HONDURAS



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<b>Area:</b> 112,492 km <sup>2</sup>	<b>Population<sup>3</sup>:</b> 7.9 million	<b>Political system:</b> Democracy <sup>4</sup>	<b>Major Language(s):</b> Spanish
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## Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

The constitution guarantees the free exercise of all religions and faiths (article 77) as long as they do not violate the law and public order. Ministers of religion may not hold public office, neither may they engage in political propaganda in any form nor invoke or cite religious motives for that purpose. Only lay people can hold elected public office (articles 198 and 238).

Freedom of association, assembly and demonstration is guaranteed by the constitution without any special reference to religious associations.

Article 151, second paragraph, states that national education will be secular and based on the essential principles of democracy. The rights of parents take precedence in children's education (article 152).<sup>5</sup>

Foreign missionaries must obtain entry and residence permits. Foreign missionaries who use witchcraft or satanic rituals are not allowed into the country. The Government has signed an agreement with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Seventh-day Adventists to facilitate the entry and residence of missionaries from these religious groups.

There are procedures for churches to obtain legal recognition. They can also obtain recognition of their legal personality under existing laws. A difference is made between recognised churches and registered religious organisations. To obtain juridical personality, religious organisations must apply to the Secretariat of State for Human Rights, Justice, Government and Decentralisation, and obtain the approval of the Comptroller General and the president's signature. The register does not differentiate between religious and non-religious organisations. Registered groups can apply to the Finance Ministry for tax exemption status.

At present, only the Catholic Church is recognised under the law. The Government reclassified the Evangelical Confederation of Honduras as a religious organisation rather than Church. Such a designation does not entail the same rights and privileges as granted to Churches, like tax exemptions for clergy salaries and state recognition of religious marriages.

The Secretariat of State for Human Rights, Justice, Government and Decentralisation is involved with religious organisations in the development of registration rules that differentiate between

religious and non-religious non-governmental organisations, since the same rules are currently applied to both types of organisation.

Every military base has a Catholic and a Protestant chaplain. Both churches are broadly represented in the government, whose members are usually invited to religious meetings and ceremonies.<sup>6</sup>

## Incidents

The Education Secretariat has dispensed members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from attending Civic Saturdays, which are mandatory classes offered in public and private schools on some Saturdays. Nevertheless, some Adventists continue to complain that teachers and principals continue to expect their attendance in Saturday classes, which they say infringes upon their freedom of religion. The same charges have also been levelled at some universities that do not offer alternative days for exams or courses.

In February 2015, the Archbishop of Tegucigalpa expressed the support of the Catholic Church for the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity, which includes Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, the Inter-American Development Bank and the United States government. The plan's aim is to finance opportunities for young people to find work in their native countries and not be forced to leave.<sup>7</sup>

In July 2015, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Honduras voiced its concerns over corruption, violence and hunger in the country. It called for the strengthening state institutions as well as respectful, open and sincere dialogue, also complaining about specific cases of corruption affecting the country.<sup>8</sup>

The National Mother-and-Child Health Policy for 2008-2015 considers the use of contraceptive methods as a relevant and positive tool to manage fertility rates, and prevent unwanted and high-risk pregnancies. The government policy considers the use of such methods over the past 20 years as inadequate and criticises religious beliefs as a barrier to women having access to them.<sup>9</sup>

The situation of the Catholic Church allows its members to worship peacefully and participate actively in the public life of the country.

## Prospects for freedom of religion

Honduran legislation still sharply differentiates between a legally recognised Church and a religious organisation. In practice, the differences between the two notions entail different benefits. Government authorities favour changes in this regard, but it would be desirable to speed up the adoption and implementation of such developments.

The leaders of the country's dominant religions exert great influence on public opinion, a situation that is reinforced by its ongoing social conflicts. Moreover, smaller religious groups can be the subject of misunderstanding and intolerance, as evinced by institutions' expectations that students should attend Saturday classes despite the clash with their religious practice. It would be desirable to see the promotion of a culture of recognition for all religious beliefs.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Evangelical.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country\\_105\\_2.asp](http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_105_2.asp) accessed on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-18954311> accessed on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Democratic and representative Republic with a division between legislative, executive and judicial powers, <http://www.presidencia.gob.hn/index.php/honduras/historia> accessed on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/238766.pdf> accessed on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

[http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country\\_105\\_6.asp](http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_105_6.asp) accessed on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/238766.pdf> accessed on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

<sup>7</sup> <https://es.zenit.org/articles/iglesia-en-honduras-favorable-a-plan-de-desarrollo-pap/> accessed on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.iglesiahn.org/images/comunicados/DIALOGOPARALAPAZSOCIAL.pdf> accessed on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

<sup>9</sup> <http://observatoriointernacional.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Pol%C3%ADtica-Nacional-de-Salud-Materno-Infantil-2008-2015.pdf> accessed on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/238766.pdf> accessed 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016.