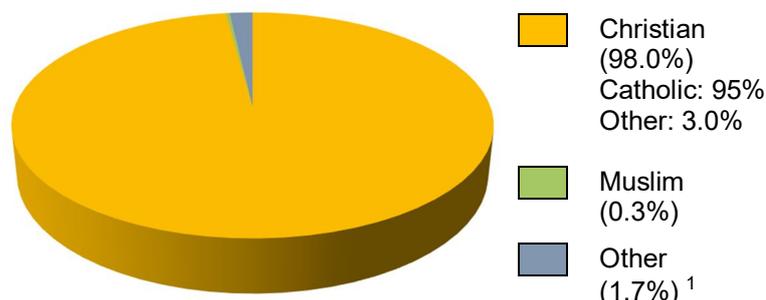
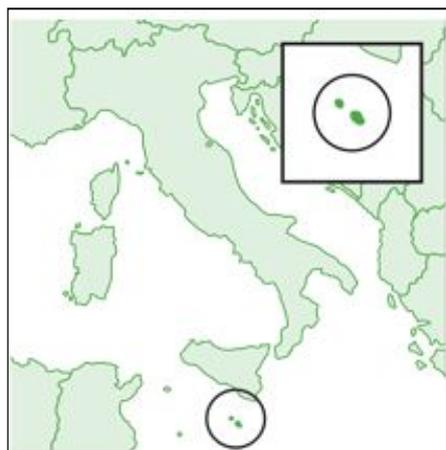


MALTA



Area: 316 km ²	Population: 445,426	Political system: Democracy	Major Language(s): Maltese, English ²
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Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

The constitution³ of Malta states in article 2 that Roman Catholicism is the official state religion and that Roman Catholic authorities have the duty and the right to teach Catholic moral principles as the basis of right and wrong. It also states that the religious tenets of Roman Catholicism be provided in all state schools as an optional component of a compulsory education. Article 40 guarantees full freedom of conscience and of religious worship and bars the requirement of religious instruction or to show proficiency in religion. Where articles 2 and 40 are in conflict, the latter legally prevails.

The Criminal Code of Malta provides for the special protection of Roman Catholicism.⁴ Articles 163, 164 and 165 outline suggested punishments for 'crimes against the religious sentiment'. Article 163 states that the public vilification or offence against Catholicism and the vilification of its believers, ministers or objects of worship through words, gestures, written matter (printed or not), pictures or visible means carries a sentence of from one to six months imprisonment. Article 164 extends the previous article to other "cults tolerated by law", but with a maximum prison term of three months. Article 165 refers to impeding or disturbing a function, ceremony or service, whether Catholic or of any religion tolerated by law, carrying a maximum prison term of one year, extendable by a further year in case of the threat of violence.

Incidents

No verifiable incidents were recorded in the period covered by this report.

Prospects for freedom of religion

The prospects for religious freedom in Malta are excellent. The vast majority of migrants⁵ to Malta are from the predominantly Muslim countries of Libya, Syria and Eritrea. Reports of religious hostility towards them, and amongst the settled religious minorities in general, are extremely rare.

¹http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_142_2.asp

²<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17597837>

³<http://www.refworld.org/country,,,MLT,,5716123bc7,0.html>

⁴<http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=8574>

⁵<http://www.unhcr.org/mt/charts/>