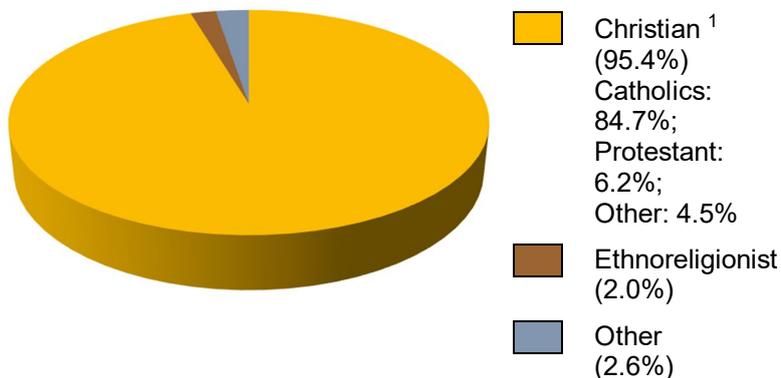


PARAGUAY



Area: 406,752 km ²	Population²: 6.7 million	Political system: Democracy	Major Language(s): Spanish, Guaraní ³
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Legal framework on religious freedom and actual application

Paraguay is a social State based on the rule of law with a representative, participatory and pluralistic democracy.⁴ In the preamble of the constitution, the people of Paraguay invoke God to sanction and promulgate it.

Freedom of religion is recognised without limitations other than those established in the constitution and the law. The independence and autonomy of churches and religious denominations are guaranteed. There is no official state religion in Paraguay and the relationship between the state and the Roman Catholic Church is based on independence, cooperation and autonomy. The prominence of Catholicism in the historical and cultural formation of the nation is also recognised.

No one may be investigated or required to testify because of their beliefs. Conscientious objection for ethical or religious reasons is recognised by the constitution and the law. The constitution also offers the right to diplomatic and territorial asylum to anyone persecuted for their opinions or beliefs.

Indigenous peoples have the right to preserve and develop their ethnic identities and are entitled to apply their own form of cultural and religious organisation. The right to learn without discrimination is guaranteed as is the freedom to teach, and the right to receive, a religious education.

In addition, no discrimination is permitted among workers on ethnic or religious grounds. The right to conscientious objection to military service is recognised, with the obligation to undertake an alternative service on behalf of the civilian population in healthcare centres. No ministers of religion can run for President, Vice President, Senator or Member of Parliament.⁵

Incidents

As stated in the 2014 International Religious Freedom Report for Paraguay by the Department of Human Rights of the U.S. Department of State, Paraguayan “unions and human rights organisations reported that Mennonite Businesses, often the predominant source of employment in the remote areas of the Chaco region, continued to favour indigenous labourers who had converted to the Mennonite faith over those who had not.”⁶

In 2014 the Paraguayan government continued to support an interfaith forum comprised of 16 associations of various religious groups aimed at facilitating dialogue.⁷

Prospects of religious freedom

With just a handful of cases of religious intolerance, discrimination or persecution reported over the past few years, Paraguay remains of a country of very low concern in terms of violations of religious freedom.

¹ http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_176_2.asp accessed on 7 May 2016.

² <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19978115> accessed on 7 May 2016.

³ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19978115> accessed on 7 May 2016.

⁴ http://www.bacn.gov.py/CONSTITUCION_ORIGINAL_FIRMADA.pdf accessed on 7 May 2016.

⁵ http://www.oas.org/juridico/spanish/par_res3.htm accessed on 3 March 2016.

⁶ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

⁷ <http://www.humanrights.gov/pdf/paraguay-spa-final.pdf> accessed on 3 March 2016.