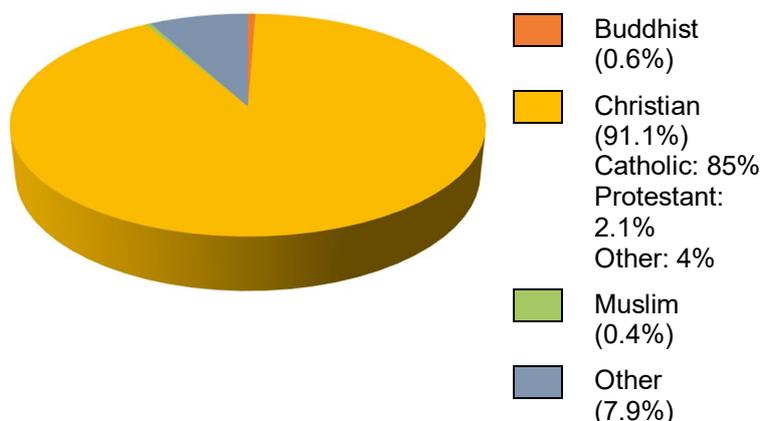
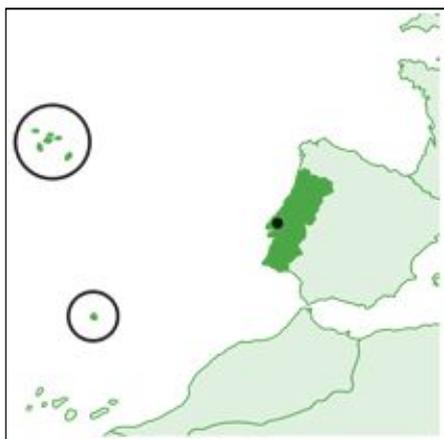


# PORTUGAL

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<b>Area:</b> 91,982 km <sup>2</sup>	<b>Population:</b> 10.3 million	<b>Political system:</b> Democracy	<b>Major Language(s):</b> Portuguese, Mirandese
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## Legal background to Freedom of Religion and actual application

Over the past two years, there have been no reports in Portugal of societal abuse or discrimination based on religious belief or practice. Freedom of worship is a concrete reality in society, respected by both central and local governments.

An indication of this is the “Observatory of Religious Freedom”, an initiative of a group of citizens and welcomed by the Science Department of Religions of Universidade Lusófona, in Lisbon. The observatory seeks to analyse issues related to religious freedom “either in national or international terms”.

Another significant development was a statement by the new President of the Republic given on 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2016, the day of his inauguration. Here, he publicly declared his aim to “always [be] an advocate of religious freedom”. He had previously promoted an inter-faith ceremony at the Central Mosque of Lisbon, attended by representatives of various religious denominations, including the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon, D. Manuel Clemente.

In Portugal, the constitution guarantees the right to religious freedom, ensuring that no-one can be “persecuted, deprived of rights or exempted from obligations or civic duties because of his convictions or religious practices”, while the objection of conscience is guaranteed, according to the law.

In Portuguese law, “churches and other religious communities are separate from the state and are free to organise and exercise their activities and worship.” The freedom to “teach any religion practiced in the context of their confession,” is guaranteed, as is the use of “own means of public information for the pursuit of its activities.”

The relationship between the Portuguese State and the Catholic Church is regulated by the Concordat of 18<sup>th</sup> May 2004. Along with the other religious groups, this relationship agenda is guided by Law No. 16/2001 of 22<sup>nd</sup> June,<sup>1</sup> named the “Law on Religious Freedom”. This law states: “Churches or religious communities settled in the country or federations in which these are integrated can propose the conclusion of agreements with the State on matters of common interest.”

According to legislation, minority religious groups in Portugal may, in common with the Catholic Church, conduct religious marriages with civil effects. Spiritual and religious assistance in the armed forces and security in prisons and hospitals dependent on the National Health Service is also provided in the Act.

No church or religion is financed by the State although it can support the construction of churches (and, in sporadic cases of non-Catholic churches) and works of a social nature. In certain situations, the confessions can receive some tax benefits.

Under article 52 of Law No. 16/2001, a Religious Liberty Commission (CLR) was created as an independent advisory body of the Parliament and the Government, with the purpose of monitoring the implementation of the Religious Freedom Act. This situation changed however in June 2016 with the appointment of the former Minister for Justice Jose Vera Jardim as President of the CLR, a socialist and one of the authors of the Religious Freedom Act. He succeeded Fernando Soares Loja, of the Evangelical Alliance; Mario Soares, former President of the Republic; and Joseph Menéres Pimentel, former Ombudsman.

In one of the first public statements Jardim made after releasing news of his nomination, he acknowledged that the CLR “fulfilled” thus far “the mission of registration of the established denominations in the country, but did not have the government’s resources and attention to fulfill other missions” notably the study of the religious phenomenon and the impetus for interreligious dialogue.

## **Incidents**

In the period covered by the present report, there were incidents involving places of worship, and almost all of the cases reported thefts and vandalism. The only situation that could have a different interpretation refers to the graffiti on a door and wall of the Central Mosque of Lisbon, shortly after the terrorist attacks in Paris in January 2015. In May 2014 an elderly woman who was in the church of St Peter, Faro, was threatened with a gun by a man who earlier had stolen her belongings.<sup>2</sup>

The cemetery belonging to the parish of Aboim da Nóbrega, Vila Verde, was vandalised in September 2014 and some steel railings and lamps were missing from some of the graves.<sup>3</sup>

In January 2015 the Central Mosque of Lisbon was vandalised and someone painted on the front door and on a side wall of the temple the number “1143”, the year of the independence of Portugal. Sheikh David Munir, Imam of the mosque, described the act as a “provocation”. This was the first such incident that occurred in the Central Mosque of Lisbon and coincided with the terrorist attack in Paris earlier that month, carried out in response to the French satirical newspaper “Charlie Hebdo”.<sup>4</sup> In February 2015 there was an incident of robbery and vandalism in the cemetery belonging to the parish in Valadares, São Pedro do Sul, in the district of Viseu. Damage was done to numerous graves.<sup>5</sup>

During the early hours of 7<sup>th</sup> August 2015, the church and the cemetery of St Domingos de Ana Loura, Estremoz were vandalised and robbed. Several grave sites were vandalised and there were objects stolen from tombs. In the church, some windows were broken and several items were destroyed.<sup>6</sup>

In the Cemetery of Bacelos, Mosteiros, in the parish of Alcanede, about 12 graves were vandalised and damaged in November 2015. According to reports, the thieves mainly tried to steal pieces of copper and bronze, along with pictures and vases.<sup>7</sup>

The Church of Santa Joana, in the district of Aveiro, was burgled at dawn on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2015 and some computer equipment was stolen.<sup>8</sup>

In the same month, the Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Assunção, near the village of Messejana, in Aljustrel, was the target of burglary and theft on six occasions. Widespread damage was recorded.<sup>9</sup>

The niche of the Sacred Heart of Mary, at Alameda de Santa Apolónia, in Bragança, was vandalised on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2016, and the image was stolen and desecrated.<sup>10</sup>

There were several churches attacked at the end of May 2016, particularly in Salto, Montalegre and Serzedo. In the Church of Serzedo, the tabernacle was stolen, along with the sacred vessels that kept the hosts for consecration at Mass. In Calvos, in the Sanctuary of Lapinha, thieves scattered the coins of the alms whilst trying to flee after hearing the alarm sound. In the Church of St Faustino, they broke into the box from the alms, as well as the tabernacle, but nothing was stolen. There were also reports of assaults on churches in Oliveira, Gominhães, Polvoreira and St Torcato.<sup>11</sup>

That same month in Braga, in the Church of Carmo, a statue of Our Lady of Fatima was stolen. Also in Dume, Braga, the local church was robbed and money was taken from the safe.<sup>12</sup>

The niche of “Mãe Três Vezes Admirável”, next to the parish church of Nova Oeiras, was vandalised and set on fire on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016.<sup>13</sup>

On the night of 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016, the church of Moita Redonda, in the parish of Fátima, was the target of an act of vandalism. The assailants desecrated the tabernacle, “breaking the lock, removing the ciborium with the Hosts, which were scattered around the floor”. Moreover, the thieves also broke into the sacristy and scattered on the floor the liturgical linens, chalices, pyxes and liturgical books.<sup>14</sup>

## **Prospects for Religious Freedom**

In the period under review, there have been no significant cases of religious discrimination or abuse of religious freedom attributable to government or other entities. In addition, there are no social, political or economic tensions likely to alter this situation. As to what the near future holds, particular significance should be attached to a ceremony held in Lisbon at the Central Mosque on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2016. In this inter-religious ceremony, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, the new President of the Republic who had been in office for just a few hours, reaffirmed that as long as he was in office, he would “guarantee religious freedom”. He highlighted said Portugal had sought to uphold this commitment both inside and outside the country. The president also underlined that in the Portuguese constitution “religious freedom is enshrined, which presupposes the freedom not to believe, but that, for believers, this goes beyond mere freedom of worship” and “implies respect of each confession in his view of the world and life, expressed in the private space as well as the public space.”

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<sup>1</sup> [http://host.uniroma3.it/progetti/cedir/cedir/Lex-doc/Pt\\_I\\_16-01in.pdf](http://host.uniroma3.it/progetti/cedir/cedir/Lex-doc/Pt_I_16-01in.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://algarveprimeiro.com/d/faro-idosa-assaltada-em-plena-igreja/4089-1>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.correiodominho.com/noticias.php?id=80798>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.publico.pt/sociedade/noticia/mesquita-de-lisboa-vandalizada-1681707>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.jn.pt/local/noticias/viseu/sao-pedro-do-sul/interior/cemiterio-vandalizado-em-viseu-4387924.html#ixzz4CW5t7wdO>

<sup>6</sup> <http://jornale.pt/s-domingos-ana-loura-estremoz-igreja-e-cemiterio-vandalizados/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://portalcanede.com/noticias/item/1952-emiterio-dos-bacelos-em-mosteiros>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.diarioaveiro.pt/noticia/304>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ipressjournal.pt/assaltada-ermida-historica-na-messejana-pela-sexta-vez/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.mdb.pt/noticia/imagem-do-sagrado-coracao-de-maria-roubada-e-profanada-5092>

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<sup>11</sup> [http://www.cmjornal.xl.pt/nacional/portugal/detalhe/igreja\\_assaltada\\_em\\_braga\\_depois\\_da\\_missa.html](http://www.cmjornal.xl.pt/nacional/portugal/detalhe/igreja_assaltada_em_braga_depois_da_missa.html);  
[http://www.cmjornal.xl.pt/nacional/portugal/detalhe/assaltantes\\_deixam\\_populacao\\_sem\\_missa.html](http://www.cmjornal.xl.pt/nacional/portugal/detalhe/assaltantes_deixam_populacao_sem_missa.html);  
<http://www.guimaraesdigital.com/noticias/64244/varias-igrejas-paroquiais-assaltadas-em-guimaraes>

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.cmjornal.xl.pt/nacional/portugal/detalhe/igreja\\_assaltada\\_em\\_braga\\_depois\\_da\\_missa.html](http://www.cmjornal.xl.pt/nacional/portugal/detalhe/igreja_assaltada_em_braga_depois_da_missa.html)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.lisboa.schoenstatt.pt/noticias/category/2016>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.leiria-fatima.pt/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=10354:fatima-igreja-da-moita-redonda-foi-vandalizada](http://www.leiria-fatima.pt/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10354:fatima-igreja-da-moita-redonda-foi-vandalizada)