



Religion

Population

Area

- Christians : **95.4%**
- Ethnoreligionists : **2%**
- Agnostics : **1.8%**
- Others : **0.8%**

6.725.000

406.752 Km²

Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

The preamble to the constitution invokes God and reaffirms the principles of a “pluralistic democracy”^[1]

Under article 24, “the freedom of religion, of worship, and ideological [freedom] are recognised without any restrictions other than those established in this constitution and in the law.” Under article 82, “the predominant role of the Catholic Church in the historical and cultural formation of the nation is recognised.” However, article 24 specifies that “no religious faith will have official character” and “the relations between the state and the Catholic Church are based on independence, cooperation, and autonomy.” Article 24 also guarantees “the independence and the autonomy of the churches and religious faiths”, without any restrictions other than legal ones.

Also under article 24, “no one may be interfered with, questioned, or forced to give testimony by reason of their beliefs or of their ideology.” Article 46 states: “all the inhabitants of the republic are equal in dignity and rights.” Article 88 condemns religious discrimination against workers.

Article 74 enshrines the “the right to a religious education” and “the right to ideological pluralism”. There is a Deputy Ministry of Worship within the Ministry of Education and Science. The Ministry of Worship functions involve religious education, registering religious organisations and certifying foreign missionaries.^[2] It also monitors freedom of religion and inter-faith dialogue.^[3]

Under articles 197 and 235 of the constitution, ministers of religion cannot run for President, Vice President, or Senator, or become Members of Congress.

Incidents

In December 2016 various Evangelical associations expressed concern that, if a proposed amendment to the constitution to allow presidential re-election was passed, democracy, the rule of law and civil and political freedoms could all be damaged.^[4] In March 2017, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Paraguay also spoke out against the re-election, stating it would create tension and polarise society, with the risk of violence breaking out.^[5]

In January 2018, in view of the many temples and churches in the cities, the Ministry of Education and Science, through the Deputy Ministry of Worship, introduced a new regulation, in which in order to continue to operate legally, religious groups were required to enrol at an official registry. The aim is to obtain details about religious groups, their belief systems and figures relating to the numbers of followers. Religious institutions already registered were required to update their registration.^[6]

In March 2018, as national elections approached, the Association of Evangelical Churches of Paraguay, the Association of Evangelical Pastors of Paraguay called on people to vote in accordance with Biblical principles and the values enshrined in the constitution.^[7]

Prospects for freedom of religion

There have been no reports of religious intolerance. Since the last reporting period, the situation of freedom of religion has not changed and the outlook is positive.

Endnotes / Sources

[1] Paraguay's Constitution of 1992 with Amendments through 2011, [constituteproject.org](https://www.constituteproject.org), https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Paraguay_2011.pdf?lang=en, (accessed 12th May 2018).

Constitución de la República del Paraguay de 1992 (rev.2011), arts.1,24,37,42,43,46,63,74,82,88,129,197,235, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Paraguay_2011?lang=en (accessed 29th March 2018).

[2] 'MEC dio a conocer logros del Viceministerio de Culto', La Nación, 2nd January 2017, <https://www.lanacion.com.py/2017/01/02/mec-dio-conocer-logros-del-viceministerio-culto/>, (accessed 23rd April 2018).

[3] 'Viceministerio de Culto', Ministerio de Educación y Ciencias de Paraguay, <https://www.mec.gov.py/cms/?ref=298271-viceministerio-de-culto>, (accessed 23rd April 2018).

[4] 'Paraguay', Comunicado de organizaciones evangélicas ante la iniciativa de enmienda de la Constitución para permitir la reelección presidencial por considerar que atenta contra el Estado de Derecho y las libertades civiles, Boletín Jurídico del Observatorio de libertad religiosa de América Latina y El Caribe, December 2016, p. 80-81, <http://derechoyreligion.uc.cl/es/docman/boletin-juridico/2016/1031-boletin-juridico-diciembre-2016/file>, (accessed 23rd April 2018).

[5] 'Comunicado del Consejo Episcopal Permanente de la CEP', Conferencia Episcopal Paraguaya, 29th March 2017, <http://episcopal.org.py/news-item/comunicado-del-consejo-episcopal-permanente-de-la-cep-2/>, (accessed 23rd April 2018).

[6] 'Ante aumento de templos, decretan la obligación de registrar entes religiosos', Ultima Hora, 27th January 2018, <http://www.ultimahora.com/ante-aumento-templos-decretan-la-obligacion-registrar-entes-religiosos-n1130769.html>, (accessed 23rd April 2018).

[7] Asociación de Iglesias Evangélicas del Paraguay (ASIEP), 'Elecciones Generales 2018', Facebook ASIEP, 12th

