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U.S. Department of State Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999: Tanzania

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TANZANIA

Section I. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice, subject to measures that it claims are necessary to ensure public order and safety. The Government does not penalize or discriminate against any individual on the basis of religious beliefs or practices, and it does not designate religion on any passports or records of vital statistics. However, individual government officials are alleged to favor persons who share the same religion in the conduct of business.

The Government requires that religious organizations register with the Registrar of Societies at the Home Affairs Ministry. In order to register, religious organizations must have at least 10 followers and must provide a constitution, the resumes of their leaders, and a letter of recommendation from their District Commissioner. Christian groups also must provide letters of recommendation from the leaders of three registered Christian churches or from a Christian Council of a similar denomination. Muslim groups also must have letters from the leaders of three registered mosques. These additional requirements apply to other religious organizations in the same manner. There were no reports that the Government refused to register any religious groups that met these criteria. Registered religious organizations do not pay taxes.

Christians, including Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, Protestants, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, constitute approximately 45 percent of a population of about 30 million. Approximately 40 percent of the population are Muslim. Adherents of traditional indigenous religions and atheists account for approximately 10 percent of the population. Approximately 5 percent of the population practice other faiths, including Hinduism and Buddhism.

Missionaries are allowed to enter the country freely, particularly if proselytizing is ancillary to other religious activities. Citizens are allowed to go abroad for pilgrimages and other religious practices.

The law prohibits preaching if it incites persons against other religions. In February 1998, police arrested a popular Muslim leader for violating this law, which triggered widespread riots in the Mmwembechi area of Dar es Salaam. Police opened fire on the protesters, killing three persons and wounding several others. Approximately 200

Muslims were arrested. There are reports that police tortured and sexually humiliated a group of Muslim women arrested during the riots and forced them to sing Christian songs while in custody. Riots broke out again in March 1998 after police cancelled a scheduled demonstration protesting the treatment of these women. Authorities used tear gas, water cannons, and clubs to quell the rioters; at least a dozen persons were injured and at least 50 Muslims were arrested.

Following these riots, the Government charged that some religious leaders were inciting their adherents to violence. The Prime Minister stated that the Government would further restrict individuals and organizations that were so involved. The Vice President also stated that the Government would ensure that religion was not used to destabilize the country. The Ministry of Home Affairs subsequently sent 22 religious organizations a letter demanding that they show cause why they should not be deregistered and expelled from the country. The Ministry had not acted to deregister these organizations by the end of the period covered by this report, although the threat to do so remained.

The Government failed to respond to growing tensions between the Muslim and Christian communities (see Section II). The Government appears to recognize that a problem exists, but it chose not to take action. The Government cancelled several meetings with Muslim and Christian leaders aimed at improving relations between the two communities. Even senior Muslim officials in the Government appear unwilling to address the problem, aside from general criticism of those who would foment religious conflict.

National and regional parole boards, constituted in 1998, were dissolved when it was found that they did not include Muslim members, and the Government named new boards in January 1999. It was disclosed in February 1999 that the Government was investigating reports that the National Muslim Council of Tanzania was receiving millions of dollars from unknown sources in the Middle East and was considered a possible "security risk."

Christians are governed by customary or statutory law in both civil and criminal matters. Muslims may apply either customary law or Islamic law in civil matters. Zanzibar's court system generally parallels the mainland's legal system but retains Islamic courts to adjudicate cases of Muslim family law, such as divorce, child custody, and inheritance.

The Government has banned religious organizations from involvement in politics.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Section II. Societal Attitudes

Muslim-Christian relations are fragile and, particularly since the Mmwembechi riots (see Section I) in February 1998, Muslims are sensitive to perceived discrimination. For example, Muslim women charged that human rights organizations in the country ignored police abuses against them following the dispersal of the rioters in Mmwembechi (see Section I).

The Muslim community claims to be disadvantaged in terms of its representation in the civil service, government, and parastatals, in part because both colonial and early post-independence administrations refused to recognize the credentials of traditional Muslim schools. As a result, there is broad Muslim resentment of certain advantages that Christians are perceived to enjoy in employment and educational opportunities. Muslim leaders have complained that the number of Muslim students invited to enroll in

government-run schools was still not equal to the number of Christians. In turn, Christians criticize what they perceive as lingering effects of undue favoritism accorded to Muslims in appointments, jobs, and scholarships by former President Ali Hassan Mwinyi, a Muslim. Despite these perceptions, there does not appear to be a serious widespread problem of religious discrimination in access to employment or educational opportunities.

A few leaders in the Christian and Muslim communities appear to be fomenting religious tension between their groups. For example, there were reports that some Muslims leaders distributed audiotapes of the Mmwembechi riots to the Muslim community; the tapes were later outlawed by the Government for being incendiary. Christian leaders reportedly used the 1998 bombing of the U.S. Embassies in Dar Es Salem and Nairobi, Kenya, as a justification to criticize Muslims.

There is a growing division between secular and extremist Muslims. For example, Muslims who drink, or who marry Christians are sharply criticized by extremist Muslims. Members of the extremist Muslim community also accused secular Muslims in the Government of supporting a Christian regime rather than protecting Muslim interests.

Section III. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights.

In April 1999, the United States Agency for International Development sponsored a roundtable discussion of the problem of interreligious relations, but government representatives declined to participate. Moderate Muslims who participated claimed that they were not anti-Christian but antigovernment; in other words, they were opposed to a government that they believe systematically had excluded Muslims from participation and representation in the Government since independence. They also claimed that the few ranking Muslims in the Government were not interested in righting perceived injustices.

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