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## **2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: Madagascar**

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor  
U.S. Department of State, September 5, 2000

### **MADAGASCAR**

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice.

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

Both government policy and the generally amicable relationship among religions in society contribute to the free practice of religion.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

#### **Section I. Government Policies on Freedom of Religion**

##### Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

Religious groups must register and obtain authorization from the Ministry of Interior. In January 1998, an organization widely perceived to be affiliated with the Reverend Sun Myung Moon was refused registration, apparently due to concerns about its use of mind-control practices. There is no indication that the organization has reapplied for registration, nor that the Government has changed its decision.

##### Religious Demography

Most of the population of roughly 15 million persons is nominally Christian, of which an estimated 4.5 million are Roman Catholics, 3.5 million are Protestants belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (mostly from Fianarantsoa North), 2 million are Lutherans (mostly from Fianarantsoa South), and less than 1 million are Anglicans (mostly in Antananarivo and Toamasina). Most other citizens are followers of traditional indigenous beliefs centered on ancestor worship. Muslims constitute probably slightly less than an estimated 10 percent of the population (concentrated in the north and northwest); they include ethnic Malagasy as well as most of the ethnic Indians who immigrated within the past hundred years. There are a few Hindus among the Indians.

Foreign missionary groups operate freely, including Catholics, Protestants of various denominations, and Mormons.

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.

**Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens** 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**

Relations among religious communities are generally amicable. Some ethnic Malagasy voice resentment against the ethnic Indian community, but this is primarily due to perceptions that the relative prosperity of the ethnic Indian community is due to the corruption of government officials and the economic exploitation of ethnic Malagasy customers. There were no reports of violence or looting directed against members of the ethnic Indian community during the period covered by this report.

## **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.

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[Africa Index](#) | [Table of Contents](#) | [International Religious Freedom](#) | [Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor](#) |