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Sao Tome and Principe

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

International Religious Freedom Report 2010

November 17, 2010

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

The government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 622 square miles and a population of 164,000.

According to the bishop's office, 85 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, 12 percent Protestant, and less than 2 percent Muslim. Protestantism has grown considerably in recent years due to missionary activities. The number of Muslims has increased due to an influx of migrants from Nigeria and Cameroon. Some syncretistic beliefs are practiced, combining indigenous traditions with Christian or Islamic beliefs. There have been no changes during this reporting period.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, All Souls' Day, and Christmas.

Religious organizations must register with the government. To register, a group must first send a letter requesting authorization from the Ministry of Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. Once the group obtained authorization, it must submit its official name and charter to the national registrar's office to ensure no other organization had the same name. There were no reports that any groups were denied registration or that the activities of unregistered groups were restricted.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees in the country.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. Since there is no U.S. embassy in the country, the U.S. embassy in Libreville, Gabon, handled most official contact with the country.

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