



Sao Tome and Principe

International Religious Freedom Report 2008

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

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 period covered by this report.

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 386 square miles and a population of 200,000. No official statistics on religious affiliation are available; however, it is estimated that 72 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, 23 percent Protestant, and 3 percent Muslim. Protestantism has grown considerably in recent years due to missionary activities. The number of Muslims has increased due to an influx of illegal immigrants from Nigeria and Cameroon. Some syncretistic beliefs are practiced, combining indigenous traditions with Christian or Islamic beliefs.

Section II. Status of 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 law at all levels protects this right in full against abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

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 has obtained authorization, it must submit its official name and charter to the national registrar's office to ensure no other organization has the same name. There were no reports that any groups were denied registration or that the activities of unregistered groups were restricted.

The Government observes Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, All Souls' Day, and Christmas as national holidays.

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 period covered by this report.

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

Forced Religious Conversion

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

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

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 capital Sao Tome, the U.S. Embassy in Libreville, Gabon, handles all official contact with the country.

Released on September 19, 2008

[International Religious Freedom Report Home Page](#)



Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.