



[Home](#) » [Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs](#) » [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor](#) » [Releases](#) » [International Religious Freedom](#) » [2010 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) » [Africa](#) » [Angola](#)

Angola

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. The new constitution promulgated in February 2010 defines the country as a secular state and allows freedom of conscience, religion, and worship.

There were isolated 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 481,351 square miles and a population of 17 million. The majority of the population is Christian. The Catholic Church estimates that 55 percent of the population is Catholic, while the government estimates 70 percent; neither figure could be independently verified. Data from the National Institute for Religious Affairs (INAR) indicate that 25 percent of the population adheres to African Christian denominations; 10 percent follows Protestant traditions, including Methodist, Baptist, Adventist, Congregationalist (United Church of Christ), and Assemblies of God; and 5 percent belongs to Brazilian evangelical churches. A small portion of the rural population practices animism or indigenous religious beliefs. There is a small Muslim community, unofficially estimated at 80,000 to 90,000 adherents, perhaps half of whom are migrants from West Africa or of Lebanese origin. Some sources in the Muslim community put these figures higher, although the accuracy of these estimates is questionable.

The country is traditionally strongly Christian, and the Catholic Church along with three evangelical groups has strong historical ties to political movements and regional ethnic groups. Churches remain a forum for political and social organization.

Immigrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo are sometimes criticized for importing nontraditional, syncretic faiths and frequently accused of abuse and witchcraft.

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 new constitution, promulgated in February 2010, addresses religion in two articles. Article 10 defines the country as a secular state, separating church and state. Under this article the state recognizes and respects different religious groups, which are free to organize and carry out their activities, provided that they abide by the constitution and the laws. Article 41 provides for freedom of conscience, religion, and worship. It also provides the right to be a conscientious objector.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday and Christmas.

The government required religious groups to petition for legal status with the justice and culture ministries. Legal status gave religious groups the right to act as juridical persons in the court system, secured their standing as officially registered religious groups, and allowed them to construct schools and churches. The Law 2/04 required any group to have more than 100,000 members and be present in 12 of the 18 provinces to gain legal status. This high membership threshold posed a barrier to registration. Leaders must present their doctrine or philosophy, an organizational structure, and a physical location. The government recognized 83 churches. More than 900 organizations have applied for legal recognition, but did not comply with all these provisions of the law. No new organizations have been recognized since 2004. Nonetheless, the government permitted these organizations to exist, function, and grow even without legal recognition.

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 continued to be significant concern in the government and among many citizens about Islam in the country. Many persons interviewed in the media, including government officials, expressed concern that Islamic practices went against the country's culture and that mosques were fronts for commercial interests and/or illicit activities such as trafficking in contraband, smuggling, or terrorism. There were persistent fears that children of an Angolan-foreign Muslim couple could be abducted to the Muslim immigrant's country of origin.

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 isolated reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

Public attitudes toward Islam were generally negative. Party representatives, as well as academics and religious leaders, cited cultural differences between native citizens and Muslim West African immigrants as causing the negative views.

They also claimed Islam was linked with illegal immigration and terrorism; in addition they complained about proselytizing.

There were scattered reports that Muslim immigrants engaged in international parental child abduction.

The C
Affair
the U
Exter
cons:
polici

Governmental agencies, church groups, and civil society organizations continued campaigns against indigenous religious practices that involved shamans, animal sacrifices, or "witchcraft." The stated goal of these campaigns was to discourage abusive practices, in particular exorcism rituals, which included willful neglect or physical abuse. According to an April 3, 2009, article in *Novo Jornal*, over the preceding three years, practitioners killed more than 400 persons in "faith-based cures" that involve violent rituals, beatings, and poison.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

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

[Back to Top](#)