



Brazil

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

International Religious Freedom Report 2009

October 26, 2009

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Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 3,286,488 square miles and a population of 191.9 million. Nearly all major religious groups are present. Many citizens worship in more than one church or participate in the rituals of more than one religion. The 2000 census by the Geographic and Statistical Institute of Brazil indicated that approximately 74 percent of the population identified itself as Roman Catholic. Approximately 17.9 percent of the population is Protestant, an estimated 85 percent of whom are Pentecostal or evangelical, including the Assemblies of God, Christian Congregation of Brazil, Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, the Quadrangular Gospel, God is Love, Maranata, Brazil for Christ, House of the Blessing, and New Life. Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, Methodists, and Congregationalists account for most of the remaining Protestants and are centered in the south. In the 2000 census, 199,645 residents identified themselves as belonging to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons); however, the church lists its current membership at approximately one million.

According to the 2000 census, there are 214,873 Buddhists, 2,905 Hindus, and 151,080 adherents of other eastern religions. Japanese-Brazilians, to a limited extent, practice Shintoism. The census reports 17,088 adherents of indigenous religious beliefs. Members of African and syncretic religious groups such as Candomblé total a reported 127,582, while followers of Umbanda total 397,431. There are no statistics on the number of followers of Xango or of Macumba; however, the census indicates that members of Afro-Brazilian religious groups total 0.3 percent of the population.

The census reported 25,889 practitioners of Spiritualism. However, according to Fundação Getulio Vargas, a higher education institution considered a "policymaker think-tank," in 2003 followers of Spiritualism, mainly Kardecists--adherents of the doctrine expounded by Frenchman Allan Kardec in the 19th century--constituted approximately 1.4 percent of the population. An estimated 5 to 7 percent of the population does not practice any religion.

Reliable figures on the number of Muslims do not exist. The 2000 census reported only 27,239 Muslims. Muslim leaders estimate that there are between 700,000 and 3 million Muslims, with the lower figure representing active

practitioners. There are significant Muslim communities in the industrial suburbs of the city of São Paulo and in the port city of Santos, as well as in smaller communities in Paraná State in the coastal region and in Curitiba and Foz do Iguazu in the Argentina-Brazil-Paraguay triborder area. The community is overwhelmingly Sunni; the Sunnis are almost completely assimilated into broader society. The recent Shi'ite immigrants gravitate to small insular communities in São Paulo, Curitiba, and Foz do Iguazu. Sunni and Shi'a Islam are practiced predominantly by immigrants who arrived during the past 25 years from Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. Conversions to Islam increased during the reporting period among non-Arab citizens. There are approximately 60 mosques, Islamic religious centers, and Islamic associations.

According to the Jewish Confederation of Brazil (CONIB), there are more than 120,000 Jews, of whom 65,000 reside in São Paulo State and 40,000 in Rio de Janeiro State. Many other cities have smaller Jewish communities.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

Article 5 of the Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion. Criminal Code (Law 2.848/40), article 208 enforces protection of religious freedom.

There are no registration requirements for religious groups, and there is no favored or state religion. Religious groups are free to establish places of worship, train clergy, and proselytize. There is a general provision for access to religious services and counsel in all civil and military establishments. The law prohibits discrimination based on religion.

The Government observes the following religious holidays as national or regional holidays: Saint Sebastian's Day, Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Corpus Christi, Saint John's Day, Our Lady of Carmen (Carmo), the Assumption, Our Lady Aparecida, All Souls' Day, Evangelicals' Day, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and Christmas.

Education is mandatory for all children, but parents are free to send their children to the public or private school of their choice. Public schools are required to offer religious instruction, but neither the Constitution nor legislation defines how this should be done. Religious instruction is optional for students. Each school defines the religious curriculum, usually in agreement with parent councils. The law prohibits public subsidies to schools run by religious organizations.

It is illegal to write, edit, publish, or sell books that promote anti-Semitism or racism. The law enables courts to fine or imprison from two to five years anyone who displays, distributes, or broadcasts anti-Semitic or racist material.

According to a March 7, 2009, article in the *O Estado de São Paulo* newspaper, the Federal Public Ministry in São Paulo requested an injunction prohibiting the broadcast of television programs on the TV Globo, Record, and Gazette channels that offend religious groups of African origin. Violators would be required to pay a daily fine of \$4,200 (10,000 Brazilian Reais) in addition to compensation for collective moral damages of \$5.7 million (13.6 million Brazilian Reais) in the case of the Record and \$1.4 million (3.4 million Brazilian Reais) for the Gazette (equivalent to 1 percent of each station's accounts billable).

In 2008 the municipal government of Salvador, Bahia State demolished a Candomblé temple that had been illegally constructed on public land. The mayor of Salvador publicly apologized, dismissed the official responsible, and rebuilt the temple.

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.

The Government restricted access by nonindigenous persons, including missionaries, to indigenous reserves. Visitors must have permission from the National Indigenous Foundation and an invitation from a member of the indigenous group.

In February 2009 the newspaper *O Globo* reported that the new president of the Court of Justice in Rio de Janeiro, Luiz Zveiter, removed a crucifix from a shared chapel of the Special Body of the court. Zveiter stated that the 25 judges follow different creeds and have the autonomy to retain or remove religious images. Some Catholics believed that the decision should be reviewed and reconsidered. A representative of the Catholic archdiocese affirmed that symbols important to the majority should be approached with care so as not to contribute to religious intolerance.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners 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 who had not been allowed to be returned to the United States.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were some reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice; however, prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom.

In January 2009 the Commission Against Religious Intolerance, a non-governmental organization (NGO), published the *Guide to Combat Racism and Religious Intolerance (Freedom Manual)*, written by a former state secretary of human rights, which contains general guidelines for victims of racial or religious discrimination. On January 21, 2009, representatives of various religious groups met in Rio de Janeiro to launch the guide, which explains the implementation of article 20 of Law CAO No. 7437 that provides penalties of up to five years for crimes of racism and religious intolerance. The guide also provides addresses where victims can receive aid. Police distributed the manual to police stations and religious organizations in Rio de Janeiro to advise officers on how to respond to discrimination complaints.

In September 2008 the Rio de Janeiro State Legislature created a religious intolerance hotline number to register cases of discrimination or threats against any religion. The number of religious discrimination complaints registered by the police in Rio de Janeiro State increased during the reporting period. Most of the complaints were from followers of African-based religious groups, such as Candomblé and Umbanda. In Rio de Janeiro, the NGO Legal Project assisted with 15 cases of religious intolerance, most of which targeted believers of religious groups of African origin.

In April 2009 Adriana de Holanda, a Candomblé religious leader in the city of Niterói, opposite Rio de Janeiro, reported that neighbors threatened her because of the religious services held in her house. She also reported verbal and physical violence against her. The Commission Against Religious Intolerance sent the case to the Public Ministry.

In January 2009 a Candomblé priest from northern Rio de Janeiro pressed charges against an evangelical church, alleging that the pastor and church members destroyed offerings (macumba) he left in the street in honor of his deities.

In September 2008 in Salvador, Bahia State, the State Court ordered the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God to compensate family members of Candomblé religious leader Gildásia dos Santos for damages related to the death of dos Santos in 2000.

In March 2009 vandals threw an improvised explosive device at a Pentecostal church in Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais during a Sunday evening service, damaging the building and injuring a parishioner. The case was under investigation at the end of the reporting period.

In March 2009 unknown persons in Pavuna, a district of Rio de Janeiro, broke the windows of the temple of a spiritualist group, injuring one person. Members of the neighboring Baptist church allegedly antagonized the spiritualist group by holding services on its grounds. The spiritualist group decided not to press charges against the Baptist church leaders.

Anti-Semitism was rare; however, there were reports of anti-Semitic graffiti, other acts of vandalism, harassment, and threats via telephone and e-mail. Numerous anti-Semitic websites continued to operate. A Jewish lawyer from Rio de Janeiro sued a cast member, known as Vovó Naná, of the popular television program *Big Brother Brazil Season 9* for declaring during the show that Jewish people do not believe in God.

The Center for Promoting Islam in Latin America in São Bernardo do Campo, São Paulo State, which has a large Shi'ite population, reported frequent complaints of verbal harassment of Muslim women wearing veils in public.

There was no national interfaith movement; however, the National Commission for Religious Dialogue brought together Christian and Jewish religious groups. In 2007 the Protestant-Catholic Group of Dialogue was created. The Group of Ecumenical Reflection and Interreligious Dialogue supported these groups and promoted dialogue at regional and national levels.

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.