



Cape Verde

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

International Religious Freedom Report 2009

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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

Cape Verde is an archipelago consisting of 10 islands, nine of which are inhabited. It has an area of 1,557 square miles and a population of 500,000. More than 85 percent of the population is nominally Roman Catholic, according to an informal poll taken by local churches. The largest Protestant denomination is the Church of the Nazarene. Other groups include the Seventh-day Adventist Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Assemblies of God, Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, and various other Pentecostal and evangelical groups. There are small Baha'i communities and a small but growing Muslim community. No reliable statistics exist on membership.

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

The Constitution protects the right of individuals to choose and change their religion and to interpret their religious beliefs for themselves.

The Penal Code states that violations of religious freedom are crimes subject to a penalty of between three months' and three years' imprisonment.

The Constitution provides for the separation of church and state and prohibits the state from imposing any religious beliefs and practices.

The Catholic Church enjoys a privileged status, although it is not the state religion. For example, the Government

provides the Catholic Church with free television broadcast time for religious services.

The Government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Easter, All Saints' Day, and Christmas. In addition, each municipality has a holiday to honor its Catholic patron saint.

The Constitution provides for freedom of association. All associations, whether religious or secular, must register with the Ministry of Justice to be recognized as legal entities. Registration is mandatory under the Constitution and the law of associations. Groups that register may apply for government or private loans and benefits as an association. To register, a religious group must submit to the Ministry of Justice a copy of its charter and statutes signed by its members. The Constitution sets forth the criteria for all associations, including religious ones, and states that an association may not be military or armed; may not be aimed at promoting violence, racism, xenophobia, or dictatorship; and may not be in violation of penal law. However, failure to register with the Ministry of Justice does not result in any restriction on religious belief or practice.

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 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 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.