

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO 2012 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom. The trend in the government's respect for religious freedom did not change significantly during the year.

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

U.S. embassy representatives discussed religious freedom with the government and routinely met with religious leaders of all faiths.

Section I. Religious Demography

The population is 68.7 million, according to a 2011 UN Population Fund estimate. Approximately 50 percent is Roman Catholic, 35 percent Protestant (including evangelicals), 5 percent Kimbanguist (a Christian-inspired Congolese church), and 5 percent Muslim. Other religious groups with smaller populations include Jehovah's Witnesses, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Greek Orthodox Christians, and Jews. The remainder generally adheres to indigenous religious beliefs. Approximately 70 percent of the population attends religious services weekly.

Most religious groups are scattered throughout the country and are widely represented in cities and large towns. Muslims mainly reside in the provinces of Maniema, Orientale, Kasai Occidental, Bandundu, and Kinshasa. Although present throughout the country, Kimbanguists are primarily concentrated in Kinshasa and Bas-Congo.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom.

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A statutory order on the Regulation of Nonprofit Associations and Public Utilities regulates the establishment and operation of religious groups. By law, the government may recognize, suspend recognition of, or dissolve religious groups. The government grants tax-exempt status to recognized religious groups. The law requires officially recognized religious groups to maintain nonprofit status and respect the general public order. It also permits religious groups to establish places of worship and train clergy.

Nonprofit organizations, including religious groups, must register with the government by submitting a copy of their bylaws and constitution. Upon submission, the justice ministry issues a provisional approval, and within six months, a permanent approval. At the end of this six month period and regardless of whether or not the ministry issued its permanent approval, the group is considered registered and approved by the government. The government also requires foreign religious groups to obtain this approval.

The government observes Christmas as a national holiday.

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom.

Despite the registration requirement, unregistered domestic religious groups operated unhindered. Foreign religious groups generally operated without restriction after receiving approval from the government.

The government was primarily responsible for the administration of schools, but religious groups retained significant oversight and managerial independence. Approximately 72 percent of primary school students attended schools owned and managed by religious groups but funded in whole or in part by the government; 17 percent attended secular public schools, and 11 percent attended secular private schools. Of secondary schools, 64 percent were religious, 22 percent were secular public schools and 14 percent were secular private schools. Protestant groups managed 43 percent of primary and 34 percent of secondary schools. The Catholic Church managed 40 percent of primary and 21 percent of secondary schools. Religious classes typically were mandatory in religious schools.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

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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. ambassador and embassy representatives met regularly with the government and major religious leaders.

On August 13, the embassy co-hosted an iftar with Muslim groups. Over 100 people attended, including Muslims from the local and international communities, government officials, and non-Muslim diplomats.