



Guinea-Bissau

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

International Religious Freedom Report 2009

October 26, 2009

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

The country has an area of 13,948 square miles and a population of 1.5 million. Approximately one-half the population follows indigenous religious practices. Of the remainder, an estimated 40-45 percent is Muslim and 5-10 percent is Christian.

Islam is practiced most widely by the Fula and Mandinka ethnic groups; Muslims generally live in the north and northeast. Virtually all Muslims are Sunni. The number of Ahmadis is extremely small and not confined to any particular geographic region. Practitioners of indigenous religious beliefs generally live in all but the northern parts of the country. Christians belong to a number of groups, including the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations. Christians are concentrated in Bissau and other large towns.

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 Government at all levels generally sought to protect this right in full against abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government observes Christmas as a national holiday.

The Government requires that religious groups be licensed and reportedly did not refuse any applications.

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 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 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. Since there is no U.S. Embassy in the country, the U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal handles all official contact with the country.