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Mozambique

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

July-December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report

Report

September 13, 2011

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally enforced these protections.

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and 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, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom.

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 308,642 square miles and a population of 22.4 million. According to the National Institute of Statistics 2007 census, 28 percent is Roman Catholic; 27 percent is Protestant, Pentecostal, or evangelical; 18 percent is Muslim; and approximately 18 percent of the population does not profess a religion or belief. Religious leaders speculated, however, that a significant proportion of this group practiced some form of indigenous religion, a category not included in the 2007 census. The South Asian immigrant population is predominantly Muslim.

Christian groups include Anglican, Baptist, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Congregational, Methodist, Nazarene, Presbyterian, Jehovah's Witnesses, Roman Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, and Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, as well as various other evangelical, apostolic, and Pentecostal churches. The three principal Islamic organizations are the Mohammedan Community, Islamic Congress, and Islamic Council. There are small Jewish, Hindu, and Bahai groups.

Religious communities are dispersed throughout the country. The northern provinces are predominantly Muslim, particularly along the coast, while areas of the northern interior have a stronger concentration of Christian communities. Christians are more numerous in the southern and central regions, but Muslims also live in these areas.

Muslim journalists reported that the distinction between Sunni and Shia was not particularly important for many local Muslims, and Muslims were much more likely to identify themselves by the local religious leader they follow than as Sunni or Shia. There were significant differences between the practices of Muslims of African origin and those of South Asian background. In addition African Muslim clerics increasingly sought training in Egypt, Kuwait, South Africa, and Saudi Arabia, returning with a more fundamentalist approach than the local traditional, Sufi-inspired Swahili Islam particularly common in the North.

Many small churches that have split from mainstream denominations fused African indigenous beliefs and practices within a Christian framework. Some Muslims also continued to perform indigenous rituals.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

Please refer to Appendix C in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for the status of the government's acceptance of international legal standards <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/appendices/index.htm>.

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally enforced these protections.

The government does not officially favor a particular religion; however, Muslim leaders and journalists claimed tacit discrimination against the Muslim community. They cited the example of National Family Day, a holiday observed on December 25. Officially, there are no national holidays that are religious in nature, but some Muslims believe that Eid al-Fitr should be made a national holiday if Christmas is observed under the guise of family unification.

The Law on Religious Freedom requires religious institutions and missionary organizations to register with the Ministry of Justice, reveal their principal sources of funding, and provide the names of at least 500 followers in good standing. No particular benefits or privileges are associated with registration, and there were no reports that the government refused to register any religious group during the reporting period. The Christian Council reported that not all religious groups registered, but unregistered groups worshipped unhindered by the government. There were 749 religious denominations and 167 religious organizations registered with the Directorate of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice. During the reporting period, four denominations and 11 religious organizations registered.

The government routinely grants visas and residence permits to foreign missionaries. Like all foreign residents, missionaries faced a somewhat burdensome process in obtaining legal residency; however, they generally conducted their activities without government interference.

The constitution gives religious groups the right to acquire and own assets, and a more recent law permits them to own and operate schools, which were increasing in number. Religious instruction was the primary focus of these new primary and secondary schools. Universities associated with religious denominations did not offer religious studies; many students at Catholic University branches were Muslim, particularly in Pemba and Nampula. The government strictly prohibits all religious instruction in government-run schools.

The constitution prohibits political parties from directly affiliating with a religion or church.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

While followers of all major religious groups are members of the National Assembly and hold senior cabinet and media jobs, Muslims believed they held fewer of those positions than non-Muslims.

The Catholic Church and some Muslim organizations continued discussions with the government regarding land seized from religious groups after independence. While the final responsibility for establishing a process for property restitution lies with the provincial governments, the Directorate of Religious Affairs has a mandate to address the general issue. The papal nunciature reported that the government continued to occupy church properties in Inhambane, Maputo, Niassa, and Zambezia Provinces, which had been used for schools, seminaries, and residences, and the Catholic Church continued its peaceful discussions with the government for their return.

There were no reports of abuses, including religious prisoners or detainees, in the country.

Section III. Status of Societal Actions Affecting Enjoyment of 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.

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