



Mozambique

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. Prominent social 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 21.7 million. According to the 1997 census, 24 percent are Roman Catholic, 22 percent are Protestant, 20 percent are Muslim, and one-third do not profess a religion or belief; however, religious leaders speculated that a significant proportion of this group practiced some form of indigenous religion, a category not included in the 1997 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 Baha'i 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 generally more numerous in the southern and central regions, but Muslims also live in these areas.

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

Many small churches that have split from mainstream denominations fuse African indigenous beliefs and practices

within a Christian framework. Some Muslims also continue to perform indigenous rituals.

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 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 members of the Muslim community believe that Eid al-Fitr should be made a national holiday if Christmas is observed de facto under the guise of family unification.

The Government officially acknowledges the Eid festival by permitting Muslims to take leave on this day, with a presidential speech, and with other events. The Government recognizes Eid on a date identified by the South Asian community, in a perceived slight to black Muslims, who celebrate the festival on a different day.

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

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 register, but unregistered groups worship unhindered by the Government. There were 739 religious denominations and 162 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 face a somewhat burdensome process in obtaining legal residency; however, they generally conduct 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 are increasing in number. Religious instruction is the primary focus of the new primary and secondary schools. Universities associated with religious denominations do not offer religious studies; many students at Catholic University branches are Muslim, particularly in Pemba. Religious instruction in public schools is strictly prohibited.

The Catholic Church and some Muslim organizations are still in discussion 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 is mandated to address the general issue. The Papal Nunciature reported that the Government continued to occupy properties in Inhambane, Maputo, Niassa, and Zambezia Provinces that had been used for schools, seminaries, and residences, and that the Vatican had entered into negotiations with the Government for their restitution.

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.

While all major religious groups are represented in the National Assembly and government ministries, many Muslims felt underrepresented because Christians held the majority of leadership positions in the Government and media services.

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.