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Namibia

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

International Religious Freedom Report 2010

November 17, 2010

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 320,827 square miles and a population of two million. More than 90 percent of the population identifies itself as Christian. The three largest Christian groups are the Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Anglican churches, while smaller numbers affiliate with the Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, and evangelical (charismatic) churches, as well as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). The number of Pentecostal churches is growing significantly. There are also a number of Zionist churches, which practice a mixture of traditional African beliefs and Pentecostal Christianity, especially in urban areas. The Dutch Reformed Church of Namibia predominantly is made up of members of the Afrikaner ethnic group. The Himba, Herero, and San groups practice indigenous religions. There are also Muslims, Baha'is, Jews, and Buddhists, who reside primarily in urban areas. Muslims are almost exclusively Sunni and are predominantly immigrants or recent converts.

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 observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, and Christmas.

The government does not formally recognize any religious group; however, religious organizations must register with the Ministry of Trade and Industry to receive tax-exempt status or with local authorities to purchase land at a discounted rate.

There are some local registration requirements for religious organizations. For example, for a church to obtain land from the city of Windhoek, it needs to demonstrate that it has a constitution, registration with the Council of Churches, and sound financial management. The church must have at least 250 members and have been in operation for at least two years.

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.

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 well as with religious communities as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. During the reporting period, officials from the embassy engaged in an interfaith dialogue with members of the Christian, Baha'i, Jewish, and Muslim communities.

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