



[Home](#) » [Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs](#) » [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor](#) » [Releases](#) » [International Religious Freedom](#) » [2010 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) » [Africa](#) » [Tanzania](#)

## Tanzania

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 a few 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 364,900 square miles and a population of 43 million, of which 41.9 million live on the mainland and 1.3 million on the Zanzibar archipelago, which has a president and semiautonomous political structure separate from the mainland political system. The government does not gather religious identification data in its census as a matter of policy. However, recent information suggests that 62 percent of the population is Christian, 35 percent is Muslim, and 3 percent are members of other religious groups.

On the mainland Muslim communities are concentrated in coastal areas, with some large Muslim minorities also in inland urban areas. Zanzibar is 98 percent Muslim. Between 80 and 90 percent of the Muslim population is Sunni; the remainder consists of several Shi'a subgroups, mostly of Asian descent. The Christian population is mostly composed of Roman Catholics, Protestants, Pentecostals, Seventh-day Adventists, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah's Witnesses. Other active religious groups include Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and Baha'is.

#### 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: Maulid, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Hajj, and Christmas.

Customary and statutory laws govern Christians in both criminal and civil cases. Muslims are governed by customary and statutory law in criminal cases; however, Muslims in Zanzibar have a parallel system of kadhi courts to judge matters of divorce, child custody, inheritance, and other matters covered in customary Islamic law. All cases tried in Zanzibar courts, except those involving constitutional issues and Islamic law, can be appealed to the Court of Appeals of the Union on the mainland. Decisions of Zanzibar's kadhi courts can be appealed to a special court consisting of the Zanzibar Chief Justice and five other sheikhs. The kadhi, who is the senior Islamic scholar responsible for interpreting the Qur'an, is approved by the president and recognized as a judge. There is also a kadhi court of appeal.

During the reporting period, a kadhi court committee consisting of government officials and Muslim sheikhs was established to discuss the integration of the kadhi court into the country's legal system as well as a means of financing such a court system. The committee met several times. These activities followed a renewed call for the establishment of a mainland kadhi court by the National Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA) in 2009 and a 2008 parliamentary debate.

Religious organizations must register with the Registrar of Societies at the Ministry of Home Affairs on the mainland and with the Chief Government Registrar on Zanzibar. Religious organizations must have at least 10 followers to register, provide a written constitution, resumes of their leaders, and a letter of recommendation from their district commissioner. In addition groups registering on Zanzibar must provide a letter of approval from the mufti.

On the mainland BAKWATA elected a mufti, the community's religious leader. On Zanzibar the mufti was appointed by the president of Zanzibar under the 2001 Mufti Law and served both as a leader of the religious community and as a public servant assisting with local governmental affairs.

The Zanzibar mufti possesses the authority to settle some religious disputes involving Muslims. During the year the mufti's office settled two religious disputes involving youths at two mosques who wanted the mosques to adopt the Hanbali school of Islamic thought. Officials from the mufti's office ruled that the youths could not hold leadership positions within the mosques and the mosques should adhere to the Shafii teachings of Islam, which predominate in East Africa.

The Zanzibar mufti nominally approved all Islamic activities and gatherings on Zanzibar and supervised all Zanzibari mosques. The mufti also approves religious lectures by foreign clergy and the importation of Islamic literature from outside Zanzibar. Under the 2001 Mufti Law, Zanzibar's mufti was able to recommend that the Chief Government Registrar approve or deny the registration of any Islamic organization. However, the small staff and resources of the mufti's office significantly limited the mufti's role in practice.

During the reporting period, the Chief Government Registrar did not receive any new applications for registration.

Public schools may teach religion, but it was not part of the national curriculum. Parents or volunteers taught religion on an occasional basis. School administration and/or parent and teacher associations must approve the classes. Many private schools and universities were associated with religious institutions. There was an Islamic university in Morogoro, a Catholic university in Mwanza, numerous Islamic and Christian primary and secondary schools throughout the country, and a Baha'i secondary school in Iringa.

In May 2010 there were reports that the Zanzibar University Christian Students Association complained to Zanzibar State University authorities about what they considered to be discriminatory treatment. The association claimed Muslim students were given more opportunities to worship and more financial support for their activities, including Islamic rallies on campus. They reported that during Muslim prayers, university departments closed, including the library, computer

laboratory, and cafeteria, and that Christian women were forced to wear traditional Muslim dress or face expulsion. The association said it planned to take the university to court in protest.

Religious organizations were banned from involvement in politics; however, during the reporting period, both Muslim and Christian leaders accused the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM)-led government of favoring political candidates of the other faith.

Politicians were restricted from using language intended to incite one religious group against another or to encourage religious groups to vote for certain political parties.

On April 14 police arrested the leader of the Democratic Party, Christopher Mtikila, for possessing and distributing seditious papers. According to the documents, Mtikila urged Christians not to vote for President Kikwete, whom he accused of trying to destroy Christianity in favor of Islam. Mtikila was released after three days. No charges were filed against him in court. The law imposed fines and jail time on political representatives who campaigned in houses of worship or educational facilities.

In July 2009 the Catholic Church published a manifesto on candidate selection for the October 2010 elections. The Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office publicly asked religious institutions to ensure their documents did not promote societal divisions. Some Muslim politicians called the Catholic document divisive.

In August 2009 the Political Committee of the Council of Muslim Clerics launched a similar set of election guidelines in which it blamed the government and Christians for the socio-economic and political problems experienced by Muslims. It accused Christians of voting according to the church's instructions and against the interests of Muslims.

The law prohibited preaching or distributing material considered as inflammatory or that represented a threat to public order.

The government did not designate religion on passports or records of vital statistics; however, it required religion to be stated in police reports in cases where individuals may be asked to give sworn testimony. The government also required children to indicate a religion on school registration forms, so children can be assigned to the appropriate religion class if the school offered religious instruction, and on applications for medical care, so any specific religious custom may be observed.

Government policy prohibited discrimination against persons based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice; however, some officials and businesspersons were believed to favor conducting business with coreligionists.

#### 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.

Following reports in February that a religious group in Mbeya region prohibited the children of its members from singing the national anthem in school, Prime Minister Mizengo Pinda announced in parliament that the government would take legal action against religious denominations that breached the law. No action was taken against the group at the end of the reporting period.

#### Abuses of Religious Freedom

On February 11, 2010, two evangelists, Eleutery Kobelo and Cecil Simbaulanga, were charged with holding an illegal assembly in Kariakoo, Dar es Salaam, and inciting religious animosity between Muslims and Christians. The two

The C  
Affair  
the U  
Exter  
cons:  
polici

evangelists denied the charges. They said Muslims invited them to debate religion. The suspects were free on bail and awaiting trial at the end of the reporting period.

On March 18, 2009, police in Dodoma stopped two Christian evangelists from reading excerpts of the Qur'an during an outdoor ceremony. The police temporarily detained both ministers and temporarily confiscated video recording equipment. The police released the ministers with a warning not to read the Qur'an during their sermons lest it antagonize the Muslim community and disrupt public order.

#### Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion. Although some women traditionally take the religion of their husbands after marriage, this practice continued to decline.

#### Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were a few reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

In February an angry mob killed one person and severely injured another suspected of stealing from a church and desecrating a statue of the Virgin Mary in the Silai village of Peramiho, Ruvuma region. The incident was reported to the Ruvuma Regional Police Commander. No further information was available by the end of the reporting period.

It was widely reported in January that an Assemblies of God pastor was subjected to public humiliation by a group of traditional Massai for refusing to allow the circumcision of his male children according to local custom. The Arusha Churches Association condemned the abuse and reported the incident to the Arusha Regional Commissioner and the Arusha Regional Police Commander. At the end of the reporting period, the matter was still under investigation.

Some tensions between Muslims and Christians also persisted. In May BAKWATA leaders accused Christian denominations of trying to hinder the establishment of a kadhi court on the mainland and block the country's membership in the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

According to the March 15, 2009, edition of *Msemakweli*, BAKWATA sent a team to Iringa to investigate reports of persons who had forced Muslims working in a local tea manufacturing plant to eat pork and drink alcohol. The government investigated the incident.

During the reporting period, members of a Pentecostal church in Zanzibar reported that social tensions with Muslim neighbors arising from the church's outdoor services and outreach continued.

There were efforts to improve interfaith dialogue and societal tolerance during the reporting period.

On May 14, 2010, President Kikwete held a roundtable discussion with Christian and Muslim leaders during which he asked them not to preach politics from their pulpits. He asked them to work together to foster peace during the coming elections. President Kikwete also asked for their assistance in educating the public about new legislation governing campaign activities. After the discussion the religious leaders prepared a seven-point communiqué outlining the messages for their congregations. It was signed by the Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs as well as a sheikh and a bishop representing the other religious leaders.

In May 2010 the National Bank of Commerce, in which the government has a 51 percent stake, began offering Shari'a banking services. Other banks introduced similar services.

During the reporting period, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and other religious leaders drafted a constitution for the Interreligious Council of Tanzania, which will function as a body to advise the government on peace initiatives.

In April 2010 the Chief Monk of the Buddhist Temple in the country reported that an interfaith group, consisting of Christians, Muslims, Hindu, and other faiths, met 10 times during the year to discuss ways to maintain and promote peace. This interfaith committee asked the government to provide it with opportunities to play a more active role in political issues.

On April 4, 2010, the deputy mufti spoke at a seminar in Zanzibar on the importance of peaceful elections. The seminar was a collaborative effort between UNDP, the mufti's office, the Zanzibar Electoral Commission, senior police officers, and various political leaders from the ruling and opposition parties. During the reporting period, the mufti also visited three mosques to speak about the importance of keeping the peace during the upcoming elections.

The mufti's office was also instrumental in assuaging community concerns about the construction of a Christian church in rural Unguja.

Also during the year, BAKWATA worked with Christian leaders to promote microfinance projects involving persons of different faiths in local communities.

On March 14, 2009, Christian, Muslim, and Hindu leaders issued a joint statement supporting government efforts against the killings of persons with albinism for their body parts and promised to work together and with the government to end the practice. During Eid el Fitr and Eid el Hajj, the mufti condemned the killing of persons with albinism. Several Christian leaders also preached against the practice in their services, and on April 18, the Roman Catholic Church of Dar es Salaam, held a concert to support outreach and sensitization efforts against this abuse.

#### 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.

In June 2009 the embassy arranged a live viewing of President Obama's speech in Cairo for students at the Dar es Salaam Islamic Secondary School, followed by a discussion of his messages. On a separate occasion, an embassy representative responded to questions from several hundred students and the faculty of the Islamic University of Morogoro in a discussion that covered the most contentious topics addressed in the speech.

During Ramadan the embassy engaged several hundred Muslims at iftars (evening meal during Ramadan) on the mainland and Zanzibar. The ambassador also hosted an interfaith luncheon for nine prominent Muslim and Christian religious leaders.

[Back to Top](#)