



## Togo

### International Religious Freedom Report 2008

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

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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 period covered by this report.

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 21,925 square miles and a population of 6.3 million. Statistics published by the Demographic Research Unit of the University of Lome in 2004 indicate that the population is approximately 33 percent traditional animist, 28 percent Roman Catholic, 14 percent Sunni Muslim, 10 percent Protestant, and 10 percent Christians of other denominations. The remaining 5 percent includes persons not affiliated with any religious group. Many converts to the more widespread religious groups continue to perform rituals that originated in traditional indigenous religious groups.

Most Muslims live in the central and northern regions. Catholics, Protestants, and other Christians live mainly in the south.

#### Section II. Status of 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 Constitution prohibits the establishment of political parties based on religion and states explicitly "no political party should identify itself with a region, an ethnic group, or a religion." There were no other laws or statutes that specifically restrict religious freedom. Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims occupy positions of authority in the local and national governments.

The Government observes New Year, Easter Monday, Ascension, Pentecost Monday, Assumption, All Saints' Day, Christmas, Tabaski, and Eid al-Fitr (Ramadan) as national holidays.

The Government recognizes three main religious groups as state religions: Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam. The Government requires other religious groups to register as associations. Official recognition as an association affords a group the same rights as the official religions. Officially recognized religious groups that conduct humanitarian and development projects receive tax benefits on imports but must request such benefits through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Organizations must submit applications for registration to the Office of the Political and Civil Organizations Affairs at the Ministry of Territorial Administration. A religious organization must submit its statutes, a statement of doctrine, bylaws, the names and addresses of executive board members, the pastor's diploma, a contract, a site map, and a description of its financial situation. Criteria for recognition include the authenticity of the pastor's diploma and, most importantly, the ethical behavior of the group, which must not cause a breach of public order. The Office of the Political and Civil Organizations Affairs issues a receipt that serves as temporary recognition to applicant religious groups and associations and allows them to practice their religion, pending investigations and issuance of written authorization, which usually takes several years.

Unlike previous reporting periods, the Government did not reject the applications of any religious groups.

The HAAC, the commission that monitors the media, prohibits political discussions on religious radio and television stations.

Religious organizations must request permission to conduct large nighttime celebrations, particularly those involving loud ceremonies in residential areas or that block off city streets. Officials routinely grant these requests. The Civil Security Division handles complaints associated with a religious organization, particularly noise complaints related to religious celebrations at night. The Ministry of Security sends security forces to address the complaints.

Religion classes are not part of the curriculum at public schools. However, Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic schools are numerous and the Government pays the salaries of some teachers and staff at these schools.

#### 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 period covered by this report.

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 of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

#### Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Members of different religious groups regularly invited one another to their respective ceremonies. Inter-marriage between persons of different religious groups was common.

The Christian Council addressed common issues among various Protestant denominations. Catholics and Protestants frequently collaborated through the Biblical Alliance.

#### 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. The U.S. Embassy organized activities to inform the public about religious diversity, values, and culture in the United States. The Embassy distributed publications on U.S. society that included key portions on religious freedom.

The Embassy included religious leaders, particularly Muslim leaders, in the International Visitors Program and continued an English language program that contained segments about religious tolerance in the United States.

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