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## Zambia

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 290,586 square miles and a population of 12.5 million. According to a 2000 census, approximately 87 percent of the population is Christian, 1 percent Muslim or Hindu, and 7 percent adheres to other belief systems, including indigenous religions. Five percent did not report a religious affiliation.

Muslims are primarily concentrated in areas along the railroad line from Lusaka to Livingstone, in Chipata, and in other parts of Eastern Province. Many citizens of South Asian and Middle Eastern descent are Muslim, although Hindus constitute a sizable percentage of this group as well. A small minority of indigenous persons is also Muslim.

#### 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.

A 1996 amendment to the constitution declared Christianity to be the official religion of the country while upholding the right of all persons to enjoy freedom of conscience or religion. On April 20, 2010, the National Constitutional Conference adopted a clause in the draft constitution reaffirming the 1996 amendment. The constitution provides for freedom of

thought and religion for all citizens; freedom to change religion or belief; and freedom to manifest and propagate religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, and observance. Other statutes provide effective remedies to address religious freedom violations. These provisions were enforced in a rigorous and nondiscriminatory fashion.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Monday, and Christmas.

Religious groups must register with the Registrar of Societies in the Ministry of Home Affairs. To be eligible for registration, groups must have a unique name; possess a constitution consistent with the country's laws; and display general compatibility with the peace, welfare, and good order of the country. Unregistered religious groups may be fined and members imprisoned for up to seven years. During the reporting period, there were no reports that the government refused to register religious groups, but there was one case where an existing group was deregistered. On October 4, 2009, the registrar of societies deregistered the Islamic Council of Zambia for violating its constitution and for infighting between members related to accusations by one faction of financial improprieties.

The government requires Christian religious instruction in public schools. The classes are conducted in both the Catholic and Protestant traditions and are mandatory for all students through grade seven. Islamic or other forms of religious education are not available in public schools; however, they are available in some private 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 reporting period.

On March 25, 2010, members from Catholic parishes in Lusaka petitioned the Vatican's representative to Zambia, Papal Nuncio Nicola Girasoli, to remove Archbishop Telesphore Mpundu of Lusaka Diocese as head of the Catholic Church in the country for criticizing President Rupiah Banda. Archbishop Mpundu remained in office at the end of the reporting period.

On January 21, 2010, members of the ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) threatened to petition Papal Nuncio Girasoli to remove Bishop Paul Duffy of the Catholic diocese in Mongu, Western Province, for calling on government leaders to improve infrastructure in Western Province and provide more economic opportunity.

On January 4, 2010, MMD members reportedly assaulted Ndola-based Catholic priest Augustine Mwewa for criticizing President Banda's frequent foreign travels.

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, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom.

Leaders of ecumenical movements, such as the Zambia Episcopal Conference, the Christian Council of Zambia, and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia, held regular meetings to promote mutual understanding and to discuss national concerns.

#### 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.

Embassy officials met with a wide spectrum of religious representatives to promote interreligious dialogue and collaboration.

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The embassy conducted several programs and activities that focused on religious themes and problems or directly involved religious, interfaith, and faith-based organizations or leaders. The ambassador hosted an iftar dinner (meal to break the fast of Ramadan) with Muslim leaders in August 2009 and a lunch with Christian, Muslim, and Hindu leaders on March 3, 2010. The embassy awarded a small grant to a Muslim organization to host a series of interfaith dialogue sessions with community members. On June 2, 2010, an embassy representative met with the head of the Catholic Church in the country to discuss religious freedom concerns.

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