



## U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

### Cape Verde

#### International Religious Freedom Report 2006

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

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religious groups in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

#### Section I. Religious Demography

Cape Verde is an archipelago consisting of ten islands, nine of which are inhabited. It has an area of 1,557 square miles, and its population is approximately 458,000, according to the National Statistics Institute. More than 85 percent of the population was at least nominally Roman Catholic, according to an informal poll taken by local churches. The largest Protestant denomination was the Church of the Nazarene. Other groups included the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), the Assemblies of God, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, and various other Pentecostal and evangelical groups. There also were small Muslim and Baha'i communities. The number of atheists in the country was estimated at less than 1 percent of the population.

There was no association between religious differences and ethnic or political affiliations; however, the Roman Catholic hierarchy was sympathetic to the Movement for Democracy (MPD) party, which ruled the country from 1991 to 2001. While many Catholics once were hostile toward the MPD party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV), which again became the governing party in 2001, some have become supporters of the PAICV due to conflict within the MPD party and dissatisfaction over the latter's performance.

There were foreign missionary groups operating in the country, including evangelical groups from Brazil and the United States.

#### Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

##### Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. The Government at all levels sought to protect this right in full and did not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The new penal code, which entered into force in July 2004, states that violations of religious freedom are a crime subject to a penalty of between three months' and three years' imprisonment.

There is no state religion. The constitution provides for the separation of church and state and prohibits the state from imposing any religious beliefs and practices.

The Catholic Church enjoys a privileged status in national life. For example, the Government provides the Catholic Church with free television broadcast time for religious services. Also, the Government observes the Christian holy days, of Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Easter, All Saints' Day, and Christmas, as official holidays. Furthermore, each municipality has a holiday to honor its patron saint. The Government does not observe any other religious holidays.

The constitution provides for freedom of association. All associations, whether religious or secular, must register with the Ministry of Justice to be recognized as legal entities.

Registration is mandatory under the constitution and the law of associations. There are no special incentives for registering and failure to do so has not resulted in penalty or prosecution. One disadvantage of not registering is the inability of unregistered groups to apply for government or private loans and benefits as an association.

To register, a religious group must submit a copy of its charter and statutes, signed by the members of the group, to the minister of justice.

The constitution sets forth the criteria for all associations, including religious ones, and states that the association may not be military or armed; may not be aimed at promoting violence, racism, xenophobia, or dictatorship; and may not be in violation of the penal law. Failure to register with the Ministry of Justice does not result in any restriction on religious belief or practice.

#### Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

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

The generally amicable relationship among religious groups in society contributed to religious freedom.

The case before the Supreme Court of four Seventh-day Adventists who were accused of desecrating a Catholic church on Boa Vista Island was pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

#### Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. This dialogue focused on the importance of religious freedom in an open society and the need to maintain the present levels of religious tolerance.

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