



Tanzania

International Religious Freedom Report 2007

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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 by the Government during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

Despite the increased representation of Muslims in Government, tensions between Muslims and Christians persisted. There were a few cases of increased tension between secular and fundamentalist Muslims as the latter frequently called for Muslims to adopt a stricter interpretation of Islam in their daily lives.

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

The country has an area of 364,900 square miles and a population of 37 million, of which 36 million live on the mainland and 1 million on the Zanzibar archipelago. Current statistics on religious demography are unavailable because religious surveys were eliminated from government census reports after 1967. Religious leaders and sociologists estimate that the Christian and Muslim communities are equal, each accounting for 30 to 40 percent of the population, with the remainder consisting of practitioners of other faiths and indigenous religions, and atheists .

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

Foreign missionaries operate in the country.

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 Constitution does not establish any official religion and recognizes eight days as religious holidays, four Christian and four Muslim. Following the unwritten rule that the presidency would alternate between a Christian and a Muslim, on May 4, 2005, the ruling party nominated Foreign Minister Jakaya Kikwete, a Muslim, to succeed President Mkapa, who is Catholic. Although perceived religious favoritism was not a campaign issue, there was increasing public discussion of balancing government benefits among the country's religious communities.

Historically, some urban Muslim groups have perceived discrimination in government hiring and law enforcement. This prompted the new Union administration, led by President Kikwete, to appoint Muslims to key government positions, including the vice presidency, ambassadorships, and ministerial positions in the Ministries of Defense, Finance and Energy

and Minerals after the elections in 2005. However, the perception among Christians is that the two former Presidents, both Christian, and former president Ali Hassan Mwinyi, a Muslim, maintained a balance between Christians and Muslims in sensitive and high-level posts, whereas President Kikwete appointed a disproportionate number of Muslims to high-level positions.

Customary and statutory laws govern Christians in both criminal and civil cases. Muslims are governed by customary and statutory law in criminal cases; however, in civil cases involving family matters such as marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance, Islamic law is applied if both parties are Muslim and if they agree to be adjudicated under this law. Some Christian judges on the mainland continue to administer Islamic law for civil cases involving family law where all parties involved were Muslims. Some Muslim groups consider this inappropriate and reported it as a grievance against the legal system.

Zanzibar's court system generally parallels the mainland's legal system, and all cases tried in Zanzibari courts, except those involving constitutional issues and Islamic law, can be appealed to the Court of Appeals of the Union. There was occasional debate during the reporting period about the establishment of Shari'a (Islamic law) in Zanzibar, but the number of advocates remained small.

The Government requires religious organizations to register with the Registrar of Societies at the Ministry of Home Affairs on the mainland and with the Chief Government Registrar on Zanzibar. To register, religious organizations must have at least ten followers and provide a Constitution, the 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, mosques belonging to the National Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA) elect a Mufti who, unlike in Zanzibar, is not a public servant. Some Muslim groups on the mainland claimed that they were also required to submit a letter of recommendation from BAKWATA to register; however, such groups did not report any difficulties in obtaining one. There were no reports that the Government refused the registration of any group on the mainland.

A semi-autonomous archipelago, Zanzibar elects its own President to serve as head of government for matters internal to Zanzibar, and a parliament that can approve legislation pertaining to local affairs. The 2001 Mufti Law authorizes the President of Zanzibar to appoint an Islamic leader, or Mufti, to serve as a public employee of the Zanzibari Government. The Mufti possesses the authority to settle all religious disputes involving Muslims, approve all Islamic activities and gatherings on Zanzibar, supervise all Zanzibari mosques, and approve religious lectures by foreign clergy and the importation of Islamic literature from outside of Zanzibar. Under the 2001 Mufti Law, Zanzibar's Mufti is able to recommend that the Chief Government Registrar approve or deny the registration of any Islamic organization.

Previously, the Zanzibar Attorney General's Office reported that it was seeking input from various Muslim nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including some that have objected to the Mufti Law, before a state sanctioned review committee was to commence, as promised by the Zanzibari Ministry of Good Governance in 2004. In May 2007 officials from the Mufti's Office said that no committee had been formed to consider possible revisions to the Mufti Law. According to Zanzibari authorities, the modalities of the committee's formation were still in the process of being developed during the period covered by this report.

In November 2006 Zanzibar's Mufti recommended approval of at least one group (which sends Muslims to Mecca for the Hajj) and recommended denial of two groups associated with the Baha'i faith and the Ahmadiyya, citing contradictions between the beliefs of these groups and Islam. The Ahmadiyya filed suit against the Mufti's Office in a regional magistrate's court to protest this recommendation. The court dismissed the case early in 2007.

Religious organizations occasionally appealed to the secular civil authorities for assistance in resolving quasi-religious disputes over ownership of places of worship, leadership of religious organizations, or burial practices within their denominations.

Religion may be taught in public schools in the form of a class on religion, but it is not part of the national curriculum. Such classes are common, although they are generally taught on an ad hoc basis by parents or other volunteers. Classes must be approved by the school's administration and/or parent and teacher associations. Many schools and universities are associated with the Catholic Church and, the country maintains an Islamic university in Morogoro and numerous Islamic schools in Zanzibar. Unlike in public schools, some private schools make religious classes compulsory for all their students.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion. Missionaries were permitted to enter

the country freely. This was particularly true on Zanzibar if proselytizing was ancillary to other religious activities. Citizens were permitted to leave the country for pilgrimages and other religious practices.

All religious organizations are banned from involvement in politics, and politicians are restricted from using language intended to incite one religious group against another or to encourage religious groups to vote for certain political parties. The law imposes fines and jail time on political representatives who campaign in houses of worship or educational facilities.

In February 2007 to avoid increasing tensions, the Mufti's Office stopped a local youth group of Wahhabi/Salafi-inspired Muslims from building a mosque near another mosque that the group had unsuccessfully tried to take over in 2005.

In February 2007 Zanzibar's traffic police issued a ban on women from driving wearing veils, stating that veils could cause road accidents. Muslims on Zanzibar reportedly protested the ban as an attack on Islam. Although the ban is still in place, there have reportedly been no efforts to enforce it.

The law prohibits preaching or distributing material that is considered inflammatory and represents a threat to public order. In 2006 officials occasionally denied permits to religious organizations to hold public gatherings if they believed that the gathering could become confrontational or inflame religious tensions; however, there were no reports of such denials in 2007.

The Government does not designate religion on passports or records of vital statistics; however, it requires an individual's religion to be stated on police reports, school registration forms, and applications for medical care. The Government reportedly requires in police reports in case individuals are asked to give sworn testimony, according to their religion. The Government requires children to indicate their religion on school registration forms so that children can be assigned to the appropriate religion class if the school offers instruction.

Government policy forbids discrimination against persons on the basis of religious belief or practice; however, some officials and business persons were believed to favor conducting business with coreligionists.

During the reporting period, some Christian groups accused the current administration of religious bias against Christians citing the rapid appointment of Muslims to many important positions. For example, Christian pastors complained that it was sometimes difficult to get permits for outdoor rallies because most local government leaders in Dar es Salaam were Muslims. Former President Mwinyi was generally viewed by Christians as fair in his appointments. However, some Christians complained that he was responsible for opening the country up to a greater influx of aid from Arab countries - increasing the construction of mosques, and in short, trying to create a more "Islamic" country.

During the reporting period, several Muslim organizations continued to criticize both Zanzibar's Mufti Law and the mainland's practice of selecting a Mufti through BAKWATA, perceiving them as efforts by the Government to institutionalize government oversight of Islamic organizations.

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.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

To promote religious tolerance, in 2007 President Kikwete, First Lady Salma Kikwete and Muslim government ministers and Members of Parliament participated regularly in Christian events such as inaugurations and fundraising activities of churches. Government officials frequently participated in interdenominational events sponsored by NGOs. When inaugurating the Karatu District Council building in the Arusha Region on March 23, 2007, the President reiterated the government's commitment to serving all citizens equally irrespective of their religious and political affiliation. The President of Zanzibar, Amani Abeid Karume, supported interfaith initiatives and religious freedom.

In January 2007 the Uamsho met again with officials from the Mufti's Office to discuss provisions in the Mufti law regarding rally permits. The Mufti's Office confirmed that the law allowed religious groups to inform, rather than request permission from, its office to hold outdoor religious gatherings. As a result Uamsho began to hold weekly, instead of monthly, outdoor religious rallies. Between January and May 2007, Uamsho held 12 religious rallies.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Muslim-Christian relations remained stable in rural areas; however, some tension persisted in urban centers due to perceptions by some Muslim and Christian groups that the Government favored the other community in its hiring or law enforcement practices.

The July 2, 2007 edition of the Citizen reported that a priest of the Anglican Diocese of Central Tanganyika was arrested for his involvement in disrupting the church services of a Bishop who was sympathetic to homosexuality. A 60-year-old woman was seriously injured in the disturbance. An article dated April 11, 2007 stated that some members refused to allow the Bishop to perform Easter Mass and baptisms and threatened him with beatings after he made statements condoning homosexuality. The Dodoma Regional Police were investigating the threats at the end of the reporting period.

In 2007 tensions stemming from historical disparities in economic and educational opportunities available to Muslims and Christians were exacerbated by some public rallies at which religious debate resulted in physical altercations. A June 29, 2007, article reported that policemen in Morogoro region were forced to break up a similar religious debate where a Christian pastor was defending his faith before a group of Muslim clerics.

On May 3, a local press article reported that religious arguments between Christians and Muslims in Korogwe almost resulted in fighting with machetes. A March 20, 2007, article reported the BAKWATA district leadership in Korogwe, Tanga region had warned the District Commissioner, a Christian, not to interfere with religious rallies, or her job would be jeopardized. The BAKWATA district leadership contended that they would not stop their religious rallies even if Christians felt insulted by their remarks. The Tanga Regional Commissioner, a Muslim, met with BAKWATA leaders and told them that they had to abide by a law that barred religious groups from inciting its members against other religious groups.

In April 2007 an interfaith committee established by the Mufti's Office met to plan a meeting for late 2007 between the Mufti's Office, the Zanzibar Muslim Ulamaa (or Scholar's) Council, and Anglican, Catholic, and Protestant bishops to discuss peace-building initiatives. Created in February 2007, the interfaith committee consists of 6 Muslim leaders and 3 Christian leaders to seek ways of fostering peace and stability in Zanzibar.

A March 8, 2007, a Swahili daily article stated that Answaru Sunna Wahhabi Muslims beat other Ansar Suna Shafii Muslims with sticks at a burial ceremony for Mr. Sadiki Shaaban Kalondo. Each group claimed that the deceased was its member. After the intervention of the Dodoma Regional Police Commander, the deceased was buried as an Ansar Suna Shafii Muslim.

An article dated January 17, 2007, in the Daily News, an English newspaper, reported that the Mwanza Regional Police arrested 20 witch doctors for inciting violence and mob killings against suspected witches. According to the article, the witch doctors caused the death of 128 persons. The Government continued to condemn the killing of alleged witches and to prosecute offenders. In 2007 there was a decrease in reported killings of elderly individuals suspected of being witches.

Despite generally improved relations between religious groups, there were sporadic reports of religious-based violence and unease. Tensions between different Muslim groups reemerged on May 12, 2006, when Muslim sheikhs were quoted in a newspaper as strongly criticizing the office of the Zanzibar Mufti for remaining silent when both Mufti officials and local Muslims were viewed as compromising the Islamic faith by being more concerned with secular pursuits, such as monetary gain, than with the promotion of Islam.

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. As part of this strategy the U.S. Government encouraged continued economic reform as a means to alleviate poverty, which has been identified as a contributing factor in the growth of religious intolerance.

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