



## U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

### Tanzania

#### 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.

The status of respect for religious freedom improved during the later half of the reporting period. Improvements in the respect for freedom of religion and the dissipation of religious tensions during the reporting period were facilitated by the appointment of Muslims to key administrative positions following the December 2005 general elections.

Although the perception of discrimination shifted from some Muslims under the previous administration to some Christians under the new administration, the perceived favoritism towards certain religious groups did not negatively impact the practice of religion in either circumstance. Despite the increased representation of Muslims in the Government, the generally amicable relations among religions in society still experienced some tension between Muslims and Christians and, in a few cases, between secular and fundamentalist Muslims. In Zanzibar, some Muslims remained concerned that the 2001 Mufti Law, which allows the Zanzibari government to appoint a mufti for the purposes of overseeing Muslim organizations and acting as a liaison with the Government, continued to permit undue government control of religious affairs.

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 approximately 36 million, of which an estimated 35 million live on the mainland and 1 million on the Zanzibar archipelago. Current statistics on religious demography were unavailable, because the Government does not track the religious affiliation of its citizens, and religious surveys were eliminated from all government census reports after 1967. Religious leaders and sociologists generally estimated that the Christian and Muslim populations were approximately equal, each accounting for 30 to 40 percent of the population, with the remainder consisting of atheists and practitioners of other faiths and indigenous religions.

The Muslim population was most heavily concentrated on the Zanzibar archipelago, which was estimated to be 99 percent Muslim. On the mainland, Muslim communities were concentrated in the coastal areas, with some large Muslim minorities in inland urban areas.

Between 80 and 90 percent of the country's Muslim population was Sunni; the remainder consisted of several Shi'a groups, mostly of Asian descent. The Christian population was 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, including Assemblies of God, Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Mormon, Anglican, and Muslim groups, operated in the country. Catholic groups primarily engaged in social services, while Muslim missionaries focused on teaching in mosques and local schools. Assemblies of God increasingly engaged in building churches, particularly in rural and remote areas.

#### 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 state 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. Despite these discussions, on April 23, 2006, a front-page newspaper article, prompted by the appointment of a Muslim to the post of Inspector General, criticized the Government for allowing elements of religious bias to creep into the Government of President Kikwete.

Historically, some urban Muslim groups have perceived discrimination in government hiring and law enforcement practices. This perceived

discrimination amongst Muslims prompted the new Union administration, led by President Jakaya Kikwete, to appoint Muslims to sensitive government positions including the vice presidency, ambassadorships, and ministerial positions in the Ministries of Defense, Finance, and Foreign Affairs. These appointments were met with approval by Muslims and with resentment by some Christians. A June 28, 2006, article in the *Guardian* newspaper quoted the Catholic archbishop as urging President Kikwete to review the system used in recruiting civil servants in the public security organizations.

A semi-autonomous archipelago, Zanzibar elects its own president to serve as the 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.

The Mufti Law continued to be controversial during the reporting period because some Muslim groups viewed it as giving the Zanzibari government undue influence in religious affairs. The Zanzibari Ministry of Good Governance declared in 2004 that it would establish a review committee to consider possible revisions to the Mufti Law; however, no such committee had been formed by the close of this reporting period. 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. 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 the review committee begins to function. For example, in a departure from previous policy, the Office of the Mufti quietly engaged in a dialogue with Saudi-line Muslim groups such as Uamsho, a fundamentalist organization that does not recognize Zanzibar's Mufti Law and serves as an umbrella for other Islamic groups. Following these discussions, Uamsho reported that they held twelve religious rallies, all without undue interference from government agencies.

On the mainland, mosques belonging to the National Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA) elect a mufti of their own who, unlike in Zanzibar, is not a public servant. BAKWATA serves as an NGO; however, when it was first established in 1968, BAKWATA was widely considered to be an unofficial arm of the ruling party Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), and public opinion still associated BAKWATA with the ruling CCM party. 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.

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. Some Muslim groups on the mainland claimed that they were also required to submit a letter of recommendation from BAKWATA; however, such groups did not report any difficulties in obtaining one. There were no reports that the Government refused the registration of any group.

The law requires all NGOs, including those that are religiously affiliated, to register with the Ministry of Home Affairs. The NGO law does not impose any new obligations on the parent organizations of religiously affiliated NGOs. 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 society. In 2006 the mufti recommended approval of at least one group (which sends Muslims to Mecca for the Hajj) and recommended denial of registration for two groups associated with the Baha'i faith and the Ahmadiyya, claiming that there were contradictions between the beliefs of these groups and the Islamic faith. The Ahmadiyya filed suit against the office of the mufti because of this recommendation; the case was pending at the end of the reporting period.

Customary and statutory law governs Christians in both criminal and civil cases. Muslims are also 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 Muslims.

Some Christian judges on the mainland continued to administer Islamic law for civil cases involving family law where all the parties involved were Muslims. Some Muslim groups continued to 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.

Muslims held a number of influential positions in the legal and political systems. The majority of judges on Zanzibar were Muslim. On the mainland a Muslim continued to serve as Principal Judge and, in this capacity, oversaw the work of other judges. Another Muslim judge was appointed as permanent representative to the mission of the United Nations.

Religious organizations occasionally appealed to the secular civil authorities for assistance in resolving quasi-religious disputes over the ownership of places of worship or the leadership of religious organizations. For example, in late 2004 the Tanzanian Lutheran Confederation (KKT) replaced its secretary general. The deposed secretary general brought a lawsuit seeking his reinstatement. During the reporting period, the court case concluded with the secretary general not being reinstated, and the plaintiff was ordered to pay damages to the defendants.

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.

Many schools and universities were associated with missionaries, particularly since 2005 when the Government returned schools to the Catholic Church that were nationalized during the socialist era.

The country's first Muslim university opened in Morogoro in April 2006, two years after former president Benjamin Mkapa transferred government-owned office buildings to the Muslim Development Foundation for this purpose.

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 association. Unlike in public schools, some private schools make religious classes compulsory for all their students.

In 2005 BAKWATA proposed that the Government pay the salaries of Islamic religion teachers and develop a curriculum that addressed sexual behavior, HIV/AIDS, and drug abuse. The Government initially agreed but said it would leave to BAKWATA the authority to approve Islamic religion teachers. Fundamental Islamic clerics opposed BAKWATA's authority over teacher selection and the development of the proposed curriculum. The Government then decided not to implement the policies proposed by BAKWATA, and the tension over religious education partially abated.

The Government made some efforts to reduce the tensions between Muslim and Christian communities, which had been escalating in the lead-up to the elections in October 2005. Tensions stemmed from historical disparities between economic and educational opportunities available to Muslims and Christians and were exacerbated by some public rallies at which religious debate resulted in physical altercations.

To promote religious tolerance, President Jakaya Kikwete and Vice President Ali Mohamed Shein, both Muslims, participated regularly in Christian events such as inaugurations and fundraising activities of churches. Government officials frequently participated in interdenominational events sponsored by NGOs. In an address to the Union parliament on December 30, 2005, President Kikwete also said that he wanted to see close cooperation between the Government and political and religious leaders.

The president of Zanzibar, Amani Abeid Karume, also supported interfaith initiatives. On May 3, 2006, President Karume inaugurated a one-day seminar for Christian and Muslim religious leaders in Zanzibar, asking them to participate actively in peace-building programs. Two days later, a newspaper article reported the progress of these efforts, adding that religious leaders from forty-three Christian and Muslim groups had met for a joint prayer service and discussion of how religious institutions could work together for peace.

#### Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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 parties that campaign in houses of worship or educational facilities. None of these penalties were imposed during the reporting period, including during the general election period between October and December 2005, although laws may have been infringed. The lack of enforcement was a result of the Government and politicians not wanting to create additional tension between religious groups and political parties during an election year.

The law also prohibits preaching or distributing material that is considered inflammatory and represents a threat to public order. Government officials occasionally denied permits to religious organizations requesting to hold public gatherings if they believed that that the gathering could become confrontational or inflame religious tensions. For example, in May 2005 district authorities in Mbeya denied a permit to the Salvation Pentecost of Tanzania International after they claimed that the group's recent evangelical public meetings had turned into abusive campaigns against Islam.

In May 2005 Zanzibar authorities also prevented Islamic activist Sheikh Kurwa Shauri, a mainlander, from entering Zanzibar on the grounds that his preaching was considered a threat to the peace. Shauri had previously been arrested, released, and forced to return to Dar Es Salaam in 2004 after being charged with violating a 1993 order on disrupting the peace and fomenting interreligious conflict. These charges came after Shauri had advocated the use of violence against Zanzibar officials and tourists to the islands and distributed tapes of his teachings that were considered seditious material. As no one on Zanzibar would testify against Shauri, the authorities deported him to the mainland.

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 individuals to indicate their religion in police reports in case individuals are later asked to give sworn testimony for which they would need to swear in court 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 religious instruction.

Government policy forbids discrimination against individuals on the basis of religious beliefs or practices; however, individual government and business officials were believed to favor conducting business with persons who shared the same religion. Such favoritism was based on the perceived loyalty that a shared religion was believed to bring to a professional setting.

Unlike in the previous year, the Muslim community did not claim to be disadvantaged in terms of its representation in the government, civil service, or other parastatal institutions.

Despite improvements in their political representation, Muslim leaders continued to complain that the number of Muslim students chosen to enroll in government-run schools was not equal to the number of Christians. Christian leaders continued to agree that the Muslim student

population in institutions of higher learning was disproportionately low; however, they attributed this condition to historical circumstances (the legacy of colonial and early post-independence government policies that did not recognize the credentials of traditional Muslim schools) and low daily school attendance rates by Muslims, rather than discrimination. Many Christians and Muslims also attributed the educational disparity between Muslim and Christians to the disproportional emphasis that Islamic schools continued to place on religion at the expense of other academic subjects.

Some Christian groups accused the current administration of religious bias against Christians during the reporting period, 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. Some Christians also attributed religious discrimination against Christians to what they understood to be the lingering effects of undue favoritism accorded to Muslims in appointments, jobs, and scholarships by former president Ali Hassan Mwinyi, a Muslim.

On Zanzibar, the 2001 Mufti Act gives the mufti the authority to determine the date of major religious observances. The Saudi-oriented group, Answaru Sunna, has been involved in a long-running dispute with the Zanzibar government over which Muslim leaders had the authority to determine annual religious observances. In past years, Zanzibari police have broken up public gatherings of Answaru Sunna and arrested the participants because they were observing Muslim holidays on the "wrong" day. In November 2005, however, Answaru Sunna publicly observed Eid al-Fitr on a day other than that designated by the mufti without incident and without interference.

#### Abuses of Religious Freedom

On February 12, 2006, a newspaper reported that a church in the Kigamboni Temeke district of Dar Es Salaam was burnt to the ground a few days after robbers had ransacked it. A week later, BAKWATA officials issued a statement denouncing the church's petrol bombing, which was being attributed to certain sections of the Muslim community. The March 12 edition of the same paper reported that a government official working at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism was behind the petrol-bomb destruction of the church in February. On May 7, another weekly newspaper reported that the local government told the church to stop its services pending investigations. On May 14, a third newspaper reported that the church had appealed to the State House, accusing the Temeke Municipal Council of interfering with their right to worship and alleging that certain government officials wanted to make Temeke district a Muslim bastion. The Government did not provide a response to these allegations, and no arrests were made in connection with these incidents.

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

Muslim-Christian relations remained stable in rural areas; however, some tension persisted in urban centers due to perceptions by some Muslim or Christian groups that the Government favored the other community in its hiring or law enforcement practices. Tensions between moderate Muslims and Muslim fundamentalists were eased following the October 2005 elections as the latter expressed satisfaction with appointments of Muslims to key government positions. During the elections, interdenominational dialogues and initiatives existing at the national and community levels without formal government sponsorship helped to prevent religion from becoming a political fault line on which to justify societal violence. Muslim-Christian relations, in particular, benefited from these initiatives.

An interdenominational religious council, composed of Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim representatives, continued to meet periodically, on an ad-hoc basis, to discuss issues of mutual concern. Between January and June 2006 the council met three times and discussed topics including: factors that contributed or could contribute to societal breaches of the peace, how political parties behaved during the 2005 elections, and whether political parties could have contributed to the disruption of national unity. These discussions followed an earlier meeting in Tanga on May 10, 2005, during which the council issued a five-point statement urging religious and political leaders to behave ethically and take concrete steps to promote social peace during the October election campaign. Early in 2006 the council also formed a committee to develop a framework for promoting a religious union between Muslim groups and the three major Christian denominations (Protestant, Catholic, and Pentecostal). Multifaith collaborations were also evidenced by a news report on January 8, 2006, which stated that BAKWATA met with Catholic and Lutheran churches to discuss how best to create vocational training institutes, schools, and higher learning institutions for the good of the community.

Unlike in previous years, there were no reports of fundamentalists criticizing moderate Muslim organizations, such as BAKWATA, for reaching out to other religions. In 2006, for example, the Mufti's Office sponsored three seminars for Christian and Muslim clerics, the theme of which was tolerance. In March representatives from 43 Muslim and Christian denominations met to have a special thanksgiving prayer service to celebrate and give thanks for the peaceful beginning of the first 200 days of the administration of President Kikwete.

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, rather than the promotion of Islam. The sheikhs also criticized the Mufti's Office for not making a statement condemning Danish cartoons that were perceived as mocking the prophet Mohammed.

There was a significant increase in reported killings of elderly individuals suspected of being witches. On February 27, 2006, the brutal axing of a woman suspected of being a witch was reported in a newspaper. On May 11, 2006, a newspaper reported that a man was killed after he was accused of being a witch. There was no additional information regarding the status of investigations into these cases available at the close of the reporting period; however, the Government strongly condemned the killing of witches and prosecuted offenders. The Government held seminars for local government officials and attended workshops run by NGOs in an effort to sensitize the public on the evils of killing suspected witches. During the reporting period, there were articles in newspapers and the electronic media condemning the practice.

Investigations into the September 2005 beatings of a Christian pastor and deacon, and the attack by Muslim youths on a group of primary school religion teachers for teaching Muslim students about Christianity, both in Dar Es Salaam, were pending at the close of the reporting period. Also pending at the end of the reporting period was an investigation into the burning of a Catholic church in Morogoro region in April 2005.

#### 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.

Embassy representatives often extended their contacts and encouraged dialogue among a wide range of religious leaders during the reporting period. For example, in April 2006 embassy representatives attended the opening of a Muslim university in Morogoro. The embassy established an American Corner at the Zanzibar State University.

In addition to its outreach outside of the embassy, the embassy hosted several groups of Muslim high school students at the Information Resource Center as part of a series of outreach programs to Muslim groups living on the Swahili Coast. Students engaged with speakers, watched a film on Islam in America, and were given materials that explained the role of religious freedom and diversity in America.

The embassy organized a speaker program in Dar Es Salaam and Zanzibar on Islam in the United States that featured a renowned female Islamic scholar. At these events, U.S. State Department-produced posters and pamphlets highlighting the role of religious freedom in the United States were distributed.

In March 2006 the embassy organized a youth leadership speaker program that featured an American imam who spoke to youth at locations in Dar Es Salaam and Zanzibar on the importance of sound leadership and the role of the youths in national development. He noted self-reliance, problem solving, and networking as key aspects of progress, and he highlighted the country as an example of the harmonious relationships that can exist between different faiths. He added that the youth needed to ensure that this harmony continued so that the country continued to be a model for other nations in this respect.

In 2005 the embassy sponsored a series of civic education seminars for Christian and Muslim clergy and young persons who were active in their churches and mosques. One seminar, conducted in April by the interdenominational Global Network for Religions and Children, brought together religious activists from throughout Dar Es Salaam for discussions on the need for the peaceful and democratic conduct of the upcoming elections. During that year, the Global Network for Religions and Children also organized two major peace camps, one of which was held in conjunction with the Zanzibar Film Festival.

In the months leading up to the general election, embassy officials were especially proactive in encouraging dialogue among religious groups on Zanzibar.

On December 22, 2005, U.S. Department of State Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Dr. Jendayi Frazer met with Muslim leaders on the Zanzibar island of Pemba. This was the first visit in memory of an assistant secretary-level U.S. official to this remote, predominantly Muslim island. The round table, organized in coordination with the Mufti's Office of Zanzibar, brought together eighteen Muslim leaders representing youth groups, NGOs, and mosques to discuss issues of their choosing with the assistant secretary. Issues discussed included job creation and a request of Muslim clerics for industries to be established in Pemba, new economic projects and funding for existing projects, help to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and malaria on Zanzibar, and access to education for the majority of Zanzibaris and their children. On the same visit, Assistant Secretary Frazer officially opened the Pemba Museum, which was funded (\$23,500) through the State Department's Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation.

On September 28, 2005, the embassy hosted a digital videoconference with senior U.S. government officials for Muslim leaders, primarily from Zanzibar.

In June 2005 the embassy sent two key community leaders to the United States on an International Visitor program entitled "Multiculturalism in U.S. Society," which exposed the participants to issues of religious freedom and tolerance. One participant was an editor for one of the largest Kiswahili daily newspapers, whose readership is predominantly Muslim. The other participant was the secretary general of a large Christian organization that publishes a daily newspaper and has its own radio station.

Released on September 15, 2006

[International Religious Freedom Report Home Page](#)