



## Togo

### International Religious Freedom Report 2007

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

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious belief or practice.

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 21,925 square miles and a population of 5,701,600. The most recent available statistics, published by the Demographic Research Unit of the University of Lome in 2004, stated 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 various denominations. Groups comprising less than 5 percent of the population include 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. The number of atheists in the country is unknown but estimated to be small.

Most Muslims live in the central and northern regions. Catholics, Protestants, and other Christians live mostly in the southern region.

Foreign missionaries are active 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 prohibits the establishment of political parties based on religion and states explicitly that "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 freedoms. Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims occupy positions of authority in the local and national governments.

The Government voted in favor of the 2004 UN General Assembly Resolution on the Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance, which reaffirms that freedom of religion is an inherent human right.

The Government recognizes seven Christian and two Islamic holy days as national holidays, including New Year, Easter Monday, Ascension, Pentecost Monday, Assumption, All Saints' Day, Christmas, Tabaski, and Eid al-Fitr (Ramadan).

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. The criteria for recognition are 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.

In 2006 the Government rejected the applications of a few religious groups, based on activities deemed illegal or immoral. In the past, the Government rejected the application of one Muslim group that it said was involved in supplying arms to northern Ghana. In another instance, the Government rejected the application of a Christian organization whose founders were accused of sexual harassment and embezzlement. Members of groups that were not officially recognized could practice their religion but did not have legal standing.

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 granted these requests during the period covered by this report.

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.

The Government recognized more than 758 religious groups over the past 16 years, although it is unknown how many of them still exist. Most new groups are small Protestant and Muslim congregations. 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.

The Muslim Union of Togo reported that since 1991, 65 Muslim groups had registered with the Ministry of Interior and the Muslim Union of Togo, including Islamic development nongovernmental organizations and Islamic radio and television enterprises.

Foreign missionary groups must meet the same registration requirements as other groups.

Religion classes are not part of the curriculum at public schools. Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic schools are common; however, they do not receive funding from the Government.

#### Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

Religious groups are generally left alone if they refrain from political activities and human rights issues, unless their opinions support the regime. In December 2005 the government-controlled media regulatory body, the High Authority for Radio-Television and Communication (HAAC) banned all political programs on community and religious radio and television stations. In the past, HAAC shut down or suspended broadcasts at Radio Maria, a popular station operated by a Catholic priest that has been critical of government actions.

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 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 Protestant denominations. The council comprises the Assemblies of God, Protestant Methodist, the Baptist Convention, Pentecostal churches, Seventh-day Adventist, Lutheran, and Evangelical Presbyterian denominations. Catholics and Protestants frequently collaborated through the Biblical Alliance.

#### 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. The U.S. Embassy organized activities to inform the public about religious diversity, values, and culture in the United States. The Embassy also hosted a dinner for Muslim leaders and distributed thousands of 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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