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27 May 2005

GIN100074.FE

Guinea: Treatment of Christians, specifically how Muslims and Guinean society as a whole treat Muslims who convert to Christianity; available state protection (May 2005)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

The population of Guinea is predominantly Muslim (*The Europa World Year Book 2004* 2004, 1949; *International Religious Freedom Report 2004* 15 Sept. 2004, Sec. I). Approximately 10 per cent of Guineans belong to Christian denominations (ibid.).

According to the *International Religious Freedom Report 2004*, the Guinean constitution provides for freedom of religion, and "the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors" (15 Sept. 2004, Sec. II). That same source states that "[b]oth Muslim and Christian holidays are recognized by the Government and celebrated by the population" (*International Religious Freedom Report 2004* 15 Sept. 2004, Sec. II). In addition, the state press reports on religious events involving both Islamic and Christian groups (ibid.).

The *International Religious Freedom Report 2004* states that relations between the various religions are "amicable," but that "in some areas, strong social pressure discourages non-Muslims from openly practicing their religion" (15 Sept. 2004, Sec. III). It also states that in June 2004, a violent incident occurred between Muslim Malinke and Christian Guerze in Nzerekore, resulting in two deaths (*International Religious Freedom Report 2004* 15 Sept. 2004, Sec. III). However, that conflict was reportedly of a more ethnic than religious nature (ibid.).

In a 27 May 2005 telephone interview, the general archivist of the Congrégation du Saint-Esprit in Chevilly-Larue (Val-de-Marne), France, a Spiritan who practised his ministry in Guinea from 1954 to 1967 and author of a recent book on the Catholic church in Guinea, provided the following information.

The Guinean population is predominantly Muslim. However, unlike the Sékou Touré (1958-84) regime, the current government authorities respect and protect all Guineans' freedom of religion. For example, the general Christian community, and the Catholic church specifically, can run their own schools, which they were unable to do under Sékou Touré. Furthermore, members of the Muslim and Christian communities live [translation] "in perfect harmony," especially in the large cities. Conversions from Islam to Christianity are rare, but they do occur and without incident.

In some regions, however, particularly Fouta-Djalou, Islam is so deeply rooted that a person wanting to convert to Christianity would encounter strong social pressure and would risk being rejected by his or her community. As in a number of other African countries, Guinea is experiencing a proliferation of certain Muslim groups that are extremely radical and intolerant of other religions, including Christianity. The Guinean government is opposed to those groups.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Congrégation du Saint-Esprit, Chevilly-Larue, France. 27 May 2005. Telephone interview with the general archivist.

The Europa World Year Book 2004. 2004. 44th ed. Vol. 1. London: Europa Publications.

International Religious Freedom Report 2004. 15 September 2004. United States Department of State. Washington, DC. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/35361.htm>> [Accessed 12 May 2005]

Additional Sources Consulted

The Guinean Organization for Human Rights (Organisation guinéenne pour la défense des droits de l'homme, OGDH) did not respond to a request for information within the time constraints for this Response.

Attempts to contact the office of the *Journal d'informations chrétiennes évangéliques de Guinée* were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including : AllAfrica.com, Amnesty International, European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), Missionary Service News Agency (MISNA), United Kingdom Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United States Department of State, World News Africa.

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