

GABON 2013 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom.

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

The U.S. embassy discussed religious freedom with the government and with key leaders from different religious groups and civil society.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 1.6 million (July 2013 estimate). Approximately 70 to 80 percent of the population is Christian. Of the Christian population, about two thirds is Catholic and one third Protestant. From 5 to 10 percent is Muslim, of whom 80 to 90 percent is foreign, including many with origins in West Africa. About 10 percent of the population practices animism exclusively, and 5 percent does not identify with any religious group. Many persons practice a syncretic faith that combines elements of Christianity, traditional mystical faiths, Voodoo, or animism.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom.

The Ministry of Interior (MOI) maintains an official registry of religious groups. The government does not require religious groups to register but recommends that they do so to receive exemptions from taxes, and land use and construction permit fees. Registered religious groups must prove that they are nonprofit organizations to be exempt from tax requirements. If recognized as a religious organization but not eligible for nonprofit status, a religious group is required to pay local taxes and customs duties on imports.

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Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant groups operate primary and secondary schools. These schools must register with the Ministry of Education, which is charged with ensuring they meet the same standards required for public schools.

Government Practices

An MOI official reported that the government completed its review of all outstanding requests for registration of religious groups from 2012 and that the government generally processed requests for registration in a timely fashion.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

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

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. embassy discussed religious freedom with the government, including with the Ministry of Human Rights and the MOI, and with religious leaders and various nongovernmental organizations.