

# **MOZAMBIQUE 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 Ambassador and embassy officials discussed religious freedom with the government and civil society throughout the year. These efforts included meeting with religious leaders and groups, promoting interfaith understanding by holding joint meetings with representatives of different religious groups, and hosting events, including an iftar.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 24 million (July 2013 estimate). According to the 2007 census, 28 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, 27 percent is Protestant, 18 percent is Muslim, 9 percent is divided among many small groups, and approximately 18 percent do not profess any religion or belief. Religious leaders speculate that a significant portion of the population adheres to syncretic indigenous religious beliefs, a category not included in the 2007 census. Muslim leaders assert that their community accounts for 25-30 percent of the total population, a statistic frequently reported in the press. There are small numbers of Jews, Hindus, and Bahais.

Persons of South Asian heritage are predominantly Muslim, and there are some differences between their practices and the traditional, Sufi-inspired Swahili Islam of Muslims of African origin. An increasing number of African Muslim clerics travel to Egypt, Kuwait, South Africa, and Saudi Arabia for training, and some return with a more conservative approach to Islam.

## **Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

### **Legal/Policy Framework**

The constitution and other laws and policies generally protect religious freedom.

## MOZAMBIQUE

By law, religious institutions and missionary organizations must register with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). This is a straightforward process and there are no particular benefits or privileges associated with registration.

The government routinely grants visas and residence permits to foreign missionaries, although the process for all foreign residents is somewhat burdensome.

The constitution gives religious groups the right to acquire and own assets, and a more recent law permits them to own and operate schools. The government prohibits all religious instruction in government-run schools.

The constitution prohibits political parties from directly affiliating with a religion.

### **Government Practices**

Twelve religious groups but no new religious organizations registered with the Directorate of Religious Affairs of the MOJ, for a total of 810 religious groups and 190 religious organizations registered.

The Greek Orthodox Church initiated discussions with the government regarding the Palacio de Casamento building seized from the Church after independence. The building is a historical icon, and the Greek Orthodox archbishop stated that the Church wanted the building returned. While provincial governments were responsible for establishing a process for property restitution, the Directorate of Religious Affairs had a mandate to address the general issue.

Some members of the Muslim community sought permission to wear the headscarf in photos for identity documents; however, the government did not address the legality of wearing the headscarf in photos for identity documents or the wearing of the veil or burqa in public schools, and Muslim community leaders did not raise this issue during the year.

In May, Minister of Justice Benvinda Levi presided over the reopening of a renovated Jewish synagogue with a speech praising religious freedom in the country. The ceremony was well attended by members of Maputo's interfaith community, including local leaders of Muslim, Greek-Orthodox, Anglican, and traditional religions.

## **MOZAMBIQUE**

### **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 Ambassador and U.S. embassy representatives discussed religious freedom with the government and civil society throughout the year. Embassy officials promoted interfaith understanding by holding joint meetings with representatives of different religious groups. The Ambassador also hosted an iftar for Muslim community members, during which he praised religious freedom within the country and religious tolerance within the Muslim community.