

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

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

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

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

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 622 square miles and a population of 167,000.

According to the Roman Catholic Bishop's Office, 85 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, 12 percent Protestant, and less than 2 percent Muslim. Protestantism has grown considerably in recent years due to missionary activities. The number of Muslims has increased due to an influx of migrants from Nigeria and Cameroon. Some syncretistic beliefs are practiced, combining indigenous traditions with Christian or Islamic beliefs. There have been no significant changes during this reporting period.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

Please refer to Appendix C in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for the status of the government's acceptance of international legal standards <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/appendices/index.htm>.

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Religious organizations must register with the government. To register, a group must first send a letter requesting authorization from the Ministry of Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. Once the group obtains authorization, it must submit its official name and charter to the national registrar's office to ensure no other organization had the same name. There were no reports that any groups were denied registration or that the activities of unregistered groups were restricted.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, All Souls' Day, and Christmas.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

There were no reports of abuses, including religious prisoners or detainees, in the country.

Section III. Status of Societal Actions Affecting Enjoyment of 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. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The Embassy in Libreville, Gabon handles official contact with the country.