

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE 2012 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. The trend in the government's respect for religious freedom did not change significantly during the year.

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

U.S. embassy representatives met with key government officials and religious leaders to encourage continued respect for religious freedom.

Section I. Religious Demography

The most recent government census estimates the population to be 185,000. The Roman Catholic bishop's office estimates that 85 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, 12 percent Protestant, and less than 2 percent Muslim. Protestant groups include Seventh-Day Adventists, Methodists, and evangelical groups, such as the Evangelic Assembly of Christ, the Universal Church of Christ, and the Thokoist Church. The number of Muslims has increased over the past ten years due to an influx of migrants from Nigeria and Cameroon. Some Christians and Muslims also adhere to aspects of indigenous beliefs.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom.

Religious groups must register with the government. To register, a group must 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 group has the same name.

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

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom.

There were no reports of the government denying registration or restricting the activities of unregistered groups.

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

There is no permanent U.S. diplomatic presence in the country. U.S. embassy representatives resident in Libreville, Gabon, engaged with government officials, the Roman Catholic bishop, and an imam to discuss religious freedom.