

# **REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO 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 promoted religious freedom in interactions with the government and civil society.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 4.5 million (July 2013 estimate). A 2010 government report estimates over 80 percent of the native population is Christian, of which an estimated 40 percent is Roman Catholic, 51 percent Protestant, and the remaining Kimbanguist, Salvationist, Jehovah's Witnesses, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). Approximately 28 percent of Protestants are evangelical. An estimated 11 percent of the population is atheist, and 2 percent Muslim. The remainder includes other religious groups. A significant portion of the population combines traditional beliefs and practices with Christianity or other religious beliefs.

Many residents not included in government statistics are workers from predominantly Muslim countries. In 2010, the government estimated there were 726,000 Muslim foreign migrant workers.

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

### **Legal/Policy Framework**

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

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on religion. All organizations, including religious groups, must register with and be approved by the government, a time-consuming process. Penalties for failure to register include fines and

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potential confiscation of goods, invalidation of contracts, and deportation of foreigners.

Public schools do not have religious instruction.

### **Government Practices**

The government granted Christians and Muslims access to public facilities for special religious events.

### **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.

The Ecumenical Council, representing the Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist Christian churches, met at least biweekly. The Revivalist Council, representing evangelical Protestant churches, and the Islamic Council each met at least twice during the year. The ad hoc interfaith committee that the leaders of the three councils had previously established to respond to issues of joint concern did not meet during the year.

There were reports of a growing societal concern among political and religious leaders and in the press about religious violence in Central Africa and a perceived potential threat from religious extremism connected with the growing presence of foreign Muslims in the country. However, the concern did not result in actions directed against the Islamic community.

### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy**

The U.S. embassy promoted religious freedom in interactions with the government and civil society. In July and October, embassy officials met separately with leaders of Protestant, Catholic, and Islamic groups to discuss the state of religious tolerance and cooperation, and to reaffirm the U.S. government's commitment to religious freedom.