

TOGO 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. Ambassador and embassy officials met with religious leaders to promote religious freedom and tolerance.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 7.2 million (July 2013 estimate). In 2004, the University of Lome estimated the population is 33 percent traditional animist, 28 percent Roman Catholic, 14 percent Sunni Muslim, 10 percent Protestant, and 10 percent other Christian denominations. The remaining 5 percent includes persons not affiliated with any religious group. Many Christians and Muslims also engage in indigenous religious practices. Reliable figures are difficult to obtain due to migration and because the government does not collect religious and ethnic data.

Most Muslims live in the central and northern regions. Christians live mainly in the southern part of the country. The Muslim Union of Togo reports a large surge in immigrants from Muslim countries, but the government does not collect the statistics that would verify such reports.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

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

The government recognizes Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam as state religions. The government requires all other religious groups, including indigenous groups, to register as religious associations. Official recognition as a religious association affords these groups the same rights as those afforded to the

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three state religions. Officially recognized religious groups receive import duty exemptions for humanitarian and development projects.

Organizations apply for registration with the Directorate of Religious Affairs in the Ministry of Territorial Administration (MTA). A religious group must submit its statutes, statement of doctrine, bylaws, names and addresses of executive board members, the group leader's religious credentials, a site use agreement and map for religious facilities, and description of the group's finances. Criteria for recognition include the authenticity of the religious leader's diploma and, most importantly, the government's assessment of the ethical behavior of the group, which must not cause a breach of public order. The Directorate of Religious Affairs issues a receipt that serves as temporary recognition for religious groups and associations applying for registration. The investigation and issuance of formal written authorization usually takes several years.

Religious groups must request permission to conduct large nighttime celebrations, particularly those likely to block city streets or involve loud ceremonies in residential areas. Officials routinely grant these requests. The MTA handles complaints associated with religious organizations, particularly noise complaints from nighttime celebrations, and sends security force personnel to resolve issues.

The public school curriculum does not include religion classes. There are, however, many Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic schools, and the government provides additional teachers and staff, who are direct government employees, to these schools. Other religious groups have the right to establish schools, as long as they meet the accreditation standards.

The constitution explicitly prohibits the establishment of political parties based on religion. Private religious radio stations are forbidden from airing political broadcasts.

Government Practices

There were no reports of significant government actions affecting religious freedom.

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. Members of different religious groups regularly

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invited one another to their respective ceremonies. Intermarriage between persons of different religious groups was common.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Ambassador and other embassy officials raised issues of religious freedom and tolerance with Catholic bishops, Muslim leaders, and traditional chiefs.