

MOZAMBIQUE 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution provides for the right to practice or not to practice religion freely and prohibits discrimination based on religion. Religious groups have the right to organize, worship, and operate schools. The government continued to register religious groups. Some religious organizations expressed concern about politicians' use of the organizations' religious forums for advocacy during the national election campaign.

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

The Ambassador and embassy officials engaged government and civil society throughout the year to discuss religious freedom and tolerance. Embassy officials facilitated meetings between leaders of various religious groups to promote interfaith understanding.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 24.7 million (July 2014 estimate). According to the 2007 census, 28 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, 27 percent Protestant, 18 percent Muslim (mostly Sunni), 9 percent divided among many small groups, including Bahais, Jews, and Hindus, and approximately 18 percent does not profess any religion or belief. According to religious leaders, a significant portion of the population adheres to syncretic indigenous religious beliefs, characterized by a combination of African traditional practices and aspects of either Christianity or Islam, a category not included in the 2007 census. Muslim leaders state their community accounts for 25-30 percent of the total population, a statistic frequently reported in the press.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution prohibits religious discrimination, provides for the right of citizens to practice or not practice a religion, and stipulates that no individuals may be deprived of their rights or be exempted from their obligations because of religious faith or practice. The constitution protects places of worship and the right

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of religious groups to organize, worship, and pursue their religious objectives freely and to acquire assets in pursuit of those objectives. It also recognizes the right of conscientious objection to military service for religious or other reasons.

The constitution provides for the separation of religion and state. It prohibits political parties from using names or symbols directly connected with a religious group.

The law requires all nongovernmental organizations to register with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). Religious institutions and missionary organizations register by submitting an application form, providing identity documents of the local leaders, and submitting documentation of declared ties to international churches or religious organizations. There are no penalties for failure to register; however, religious groups must show evidence of registration to open bank accounts, file for exemption of custom duties for imported goods, or submit visa applications for visiting foreign members.

The law permits religious groups to own and operate schools. The government prohibits all religious instruction in government-run schools.

Government Practices

According to the MOJ, through September it had registered six new religious groups and 10 new faith-based organizations. It had rejected no applications. There were a total of 816 religious groups and 200 religious organizations registered.

In September some religious organizations expressed concern that politicians visited their religious forums for political advocacy in connection with the national elections campaign season. The president of the Christian Council of Mozambique held a press conference to call on political parties to stop the use of religious forums for political campaigning. One religious organization stated some members felt pressured into attending electoral events organized by the governing party scheduled at the same time as religious services.

The government routinely granted visas and residence permits to foreign missionaries, although the process for all foreign residents was somewhat burdensome. The government increased enforcement of documentation requirements for visas and changes in status, including demanding invitation

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letters, certified education transcripts, and other qualification documents. Some missionaries who became frustrated with the effort required to obtain visas changed their destinations to other countries in the region.

The Greek Orthodox Church continued discussions with the government regarding the return of the Palacio de Casamento (Wedding Palace) building, a historical landmark in Maputo seized from the church after independence. The issue was under the consideration of the Office of the Presidency, which did not comment on the request during the year. While provincial governments were responsible for establishing a process for property restitution, the MOJ's Directorate of Religious Affairs had a mandate to address the general issue.

Some members of the Muslim community sought permission to wear a headscarf in photos for identity documents. Although not directly addressed in the law, the government generally allowed wearing a headscarf for identity photos, but not the wearing of a veil or burqa in public schools. The provincial hospital in Pemba said it banned entry to persons wearing burqas to improve security in response to the theft of an infant by a person wearing a burqa.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were some differences between the religious practices of Muslims of South Asian heritage and those of the traditional, Sufi-influenced, Muslims of African heritage. An increasing number of African-heritage Muslim clerics traveled to Egypt, Kuwait, South Africa, and Saudi Arabia for training, and some reportedly returned with a more conservative approach to Islam.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The Ambassador and 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, including Muslims, Hindus, and Christians. The Ambassador hosted an iftar for Muslim community members in the northern city of Pemba, during which he praised religious freedom within the country and religious tolerance within the Muslim community.