

CABO VERDE 2020 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws protect the right of individuals to choose, practice, profess, and change their religion. The law provides for freedom of religion and worship and provides for equal rights in accordance with the constitution and international law. The law requires religious groups to prove they have 500 members before they may register formally as such and accords them certain rights and privileges. Under a concordat with the Holy See, the government recognizes the legal status of the Catholic Church and Catholic marriages under civil law.

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

Embassy representatives discussed interfaith relations with members of civil society, including religious leaders, around the country and promoted respect for religious freedom.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 583,000 (midyear 2020 estimate). According to the most recent national census in 2010, 77 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, 10 percent Protestant, and 2 percent Muslim; 11 percent does not identify with any religion. The second largest Christian denomination is the Church of the Nazarene. Other Christian denominations include Seventh-day Adventists, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Assemblies of God, Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, Independent Baptists, and other Pentecostal and evangelical Christian groups. There are small Baha'i and Jewish communities.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution states freedom of conscience, religion, and worship are inviolable and protects the right of individuals to choose, practice, profess, and change their religion and to interpret their religious beliefs for themselves. It provides for the separation of religion and state, and it prohibits the state from imposing religious beliefs and practices on individuals. It prohibits political parties from adopting

names associated with particular religious groups. The constitution prohibits ridiculing religious symbols or practices.

Violations of religious freedom are crimes subject to penalties of between three months and three years in prison. These may include discrimination against individuals for their expressed religion or lack thereof, violations of the freedom of and from religious education, denial of religious assistance in hospitals and prisons, denial of free speech to religious organizations, threats against places of worship, and violations of conscientious objection within the bounds of the law.

The law codifies the constitution's religious freedom provisions by providing for equal rights and guarantees for all religions in accordance with the constitution and international law. The law separates religion and state but allows the government to sign agreements with religious entities on matters of public interest. Specific sections of the law guarantee the protection of religious heritage, the right to religious education, freedom of organization of religious groups, and the free exercise of religious functions and worship.

A concordat between the government and the Holy See recognizes the legal status of the Catholic Church and its right to carry out its apostolic mission freely. The concordat further recognizes Catholic marriages under civil law and the right of Catholics to carry out religious observances on Sundays, and it specifies a number of Catholic holidays as public holidays. It protects places of worship and other Catholic properties and provides for religious educational institutions, charitable activities, and pastoral work in the military, hospitals, and penal institutions. The concordat exempts Church revenues and properties used in religious and nonprofit activities from taxes and makes contributions to the Church tax deductible.

The law requires all associations, whether religious or secular, to register with the Ministry of Justice. The constitution states an association may not be armed; be in violation of penal law; or promote violence, racism, xenophobia, or dictatorship. To register, a religious group must submit a copy of its charter and statutes signed by its members. Failure to register does not result in any restriction of religious practice but can impinge on a religious group's ability to conduct related activities, such as importing supplies, purchasing land, and constructing places of worship. Registration provides additional benefits, including exemptions from national, regional, and local taxes and fees. Registered religious groups may receive exemptions from taxes and fees in connection with places of worship or other buildings intended for religious purposes, activities with exclusively religious purposes, institutions and seminaries intended for religious education or training of

religious leaders, goods purchased for religious purposes, and distribution of publications with information on places of worship. Legally registered churches and religious groups may use broadcast time on public radio and television at their own expense. The law requires religious groups to obtain the notarized signatures of 500 members before they may begin any activities related to developing their presence in the country. Failure to present the required signatures prevents religious groups from completing their formal registration process and obtaining tax-exempt status and protections to property and presence in the country. The law permits conscientious objection to mandatory military service on religious grounds.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Government Practices

Some public schools continued to offer an optional Religious and Moral Education Curriculum (EMRC), produced by the Catholic Church per the terms of the Holy See's concordat with the government.

According to Ministry of Justice prison authorities, the government provided accommodation to inmates to practice their religions and to worship in the country's correctional facilities.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

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

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

Embassy representatives met with Catholic, Nazarene, Adventist, and other religious communities on trips around the archipelago to discuss social conditions and interfaith and religious community relations. Embassy officials spoke with civil society representatives from religious and human rights groups, as well as children's advocacy organizations, regarding religious freedom.