

MOZAMBIQUE 2015 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. These and other rights may be temporarily suspended or restricted only in the event of a declaration of a state of war, siege, or emergency, in accordance with the terms of the constitution. The constitution prohibits faith-based political parties. Religious groups have the right to organize, worship, and operate schools. The government continued to register religious groups and organizations; nevertheless, a number of applications remained pending at year's end. Government-run Pemba Provincial Hospital reversed a 2014 temporary ban on visitors wearing burqas that it put in place after a woman wearing a burqa kidnapped a newborn at the facility. Hospital management lifted the ban after discussions with local Muslim community leaders. The government continued negotiations on the restitution of property seized from religious groups after independence.

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 25.3 million (July 2015 estimate). According to the U.S. government, 28 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, 16 percent Zionist Christian, 12 percent Protestant, 18 percent Muslim (mostly Sunni), and 8 percent other religious groups including the Bahai Faith, Judaism, and Hinduism. 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.

MOZAMBIQUE

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution defines the country as a secular state. It 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 exempted from their obligations because of religious faith or practice. The constitution protects places of worship and the right of religious groups to organize, worship, and pursue their religious objectives freely and to acquire assets in pursuit of those objectives. It recognizes the right of conscientious objection to military service for religious or other reasons. These and other rights may be temporarily suspended or restricted only in the event of a declaration of a state of war, siege, or emergency, in accordance with the terms of the constitution.

The constitution provides for the separation of religion and state. It prohibits political parties from using names or symbols associated with religious groups.

The law requires all nongovernmental organizations to register with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). Under the law, “religious organizations” are charities or humanitarian organizations, whereas “religious groups” refer to particular denominations. Religious groups register at the denominational level or at the congregational level if they are unaffiliated. Religious groups and organizations register by submitting an application, providing identity documents of the local leaders, and submitting documentation of declared ties to any international religious group or organization. There are no penalties for failure to register; however, religious groups and organizations 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 organizations to own and operate schools. The law forbids religious instruction in public schools.

Government Practices

According to the MOJ, 14 new religious groups and 13 new religious organizations received registration approval between January and early October. The MOJ stated it did not reject any registration requests; however, it also reported 10 were

MOZAMBIQUE

“pending authorization.” There were a total of 830 religious groups and 213 religious organizations registered.

Government-run Pemba Provincial Hospital reversed a 2014 temporary ban on visitors wearing burqas it put in place after a woman wearing a burqa kidnapped a newborn from the facility. Hospital management lifted the ban after discussion with local Muslim community leaders.

The Catholic Church continued to negotiate the return of property the government seized following independence. A Catholic Church representative estimated that the government had returned 60 percent of property seized from the church after independence as of the end of the year.

The government routinely granted visas and residence permits to foreign missionaries. There were no reports of systematic government discrimination against any religious groups in the granting of visas or residency permits.

The government organized its third annual National Religious Conference in Quelimane in September for approximately 500 religious leaders. President Filipe Jacinto Nyusi opened the event with the theme “Contribution of Religious Organizations to the Maintenance of Peace in Mozambique,” praising the country’s “significant” number of religious groups and organizations for contributing to the country’s “moral and material well-being”.

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

The U.S. Ambassador and embassy representatives discussed religious freedom with the government throughout the year, primarily in the context of promoting societal tolerance. The Ambassador and embassy representatives also discussed the importance of political and religious tolerance to promote peace and security with nationally recognized religious leaders who facilitated official dialogue between the government and the main opposition party. In addition, the Charge d’Affaires hosted an iftar for Muslim community members in Maputo at which he noted the importance of the active, free participation of religious groups in society.