

MOZAMBIQUE 2016 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 only temporarily be suspended or restricted in the event of a declaration of a state of war, siege, or emergency. The constitution prohibits faith-based political parties and the use of religious symbols in politics. Religious groups have the right to organize, worship, and operate schools. The government continued to register religious groups and organizations; however, a Catholic Church representative said that authorities in certain provinces required some dioceses to register locally in what he said was a violation of a 2012 agreement between the central government and the Holy See. The Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches continued to seek the return of properties the government seized in the years after independence.

In February four unidentified individuals fatally shot an Apostolic Faith Mission pastor in the central city of Chimoio. The pastor's widow said her husband may have been targeted because of a conflict with other churches.

The U.S. Ambassador and other embassy officials discussed the importance of religious freedom and the return of seized church property with the justice minister and the national director of religious affairs. Embassy representatives also discussed the importance of religious tolerance with Catholic Church representatives and religious leaders in Nampula.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 25.9 million (July 2016 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 Christian and Muslim 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 government estimates. 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 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 because of religious faith or practice. Political parties are constitutionally prohibited from using names or symbols associated with religious groups. 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 reasons. These and other rights may only temporarily be suspended or restricted in the event of a declaration of a state of war, siege, or emergency, in accordance with the terms of the constitution.

The law requires all nongovernmental organizations to register with the Ministry of Justice, Constitutional, and Religious Affairs (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 customs duties for imported goods, or submit visa applications for visiting foreign members.

A 2012 accord between the national government and the Holy See governs the Catholic Church’s rights and responsibilities in the country. The agreement recognizes the Catholic Church as a “legal personality” and recognizes the Church’s exclusive right “to regulate ecclesiastical life and to nominate people for ecclesiastical posts.” The agreement requires Catholic Church representatives to register with the government to benefit from the Church’s status. The accord also gives the Catholic Church the exclusive right to create, modify, or eliminate ecclesiastical boundaries; however, it stipulates that ecclesiastical territories must report to a Church authority in the country.

The law permits religious organizations to own and operate schools. The law forbids religious instruction in public schools.

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

Government Practices

The MOJ registered 19 new religious groups and three new religious organizations between January and August. There were a total of 859 religious groups and 219 religious organizations registered.

A Catholic Church representative said that provincial authorities in certain provinces violated the 2012 accord with the Holy See by requiring local dioceses to register with local authorities separately or present some form of proof of previous registration. The Catholic Church continued to pursue the return of property the government seized following independence. A Catholic Church representative reconfirmed that the government had returned approximately 60 percent of property seized from the Church after independence as of August and that the Church continued negotiations regarding the remaining 40 percent.

The Greek Orthodox Church continued to seek the return of the Ateneu (Athenaeum), a church property in central Maputo seized by the government after independence and renamed the Palacio dos Casamentos (Wedding Palace).

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

In February four unidentified men fatally shot Apostolic Faith Mission Pastor Joao Jofrisse during a church service in his home in the central city of Chimoio. Jofrisse's widow, Eugenia Chinhamandoa, said he may have been killed because of competition for members with other churches.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Ambassador and other embassy officials discussed the importance of religious freedom and the return of seized property with the justice minister and the national director of religious affairs. The Ambassador and embassy representatives discussed the importance of political and religious tolerance to promote peace and security with Catholic Church representatives who participated in international mediation between the government and the main opposition party. Embassy

officers also discussed the status of religious freedom and expressed U.S. government support for this fundamental right with religious leaders in Nampula.