



2012 Report on International Religious Freedom - Togo

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Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom. The trend in the government's respect for religious freedom did not change significantly during the year.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

The ambassador and embassy officials met with religious leaders to discuss religious freedom and tolerance.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to the 2010 census, the population is 6.2 million. 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 continue to perform indigenous religious practices. Reliable figures are difficult to obtain because of 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 needed to confirm or deny that claim.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies 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 them the same rights

as those afforded to Catholic, Protestant and Muslim groups. Officially recognized religious groups receive import duty exemptions for humanitarian and development projects.

Organizations apply for registration to 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, site map, and description of its financial situation. Criteria for recognition include the authenticity of the religious leader's diploma and, most importantly, the ethical behavior of the group, which must not cause a breach of public order. The directorate of religious affairs issues a receipt serving as temporary recognition for applicant religious groups and associations. This allows the group to practice its religion, pending investigation and issuance of formal written authorization, which usually takes several years. The government reportedly did not deny any requests for registration during the year.

Religious groups must request permission to conduct large nighttime celebrations, particularly those likely to block city streets or to involve loud ceremonies in residential areas. Officials routinely granted 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; however, there are many Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic schools, and the government provides them with teachers and other staff, and pays their salaries.

The constitution explicitly prohibits the establishment of political parties based on religion, ethnic group, or region.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Easter Monday, Ascension, Pentecost Monday, Assumption, Eid al-Fitr, All Saints' Day, Tabaski (commonly known as Eid al-Adha or Eid al-Kebir), and Christmas.

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of 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, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom. Members of different religious groups regularly invited one another to their respective ceremonies. Intermarriage between persons of different religious groups was common.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The ambassador and embassy representatives raised issues of religious freedom and tolerance with the Catholic Archbishop of Lome, the head of the Muslim Union of Togo, and with traditional chiefs. A U.S. embassy officer also gave a speech on December 16 at the Islamic Cultural Center of Lome, emphasizing the importance of religious freedom and tolerance.

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