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Burundi

International Religious Freedom Report 2008

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The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

The Government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the Government during the period covered by this report.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 10,747 square miles and a population of 8.4 million. Although reliable statistics on the followers of various religious groups are not available, sources estimate the Roman Catholic population to be 62 percent and Protestants 5 percent of the total. An estimated 23 percent adheres to traditional indigenous religious beliefs. The Muslim population is estimated to be as high as 10 percent, the majority of whom live in urban areas. Sunnis make up the majority of Muslims; the remainder is Shi'a.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion. The law at all levels protects this right in full against abuse, either by governmental or private actors. Discrimination on the basis of religious conviction is prohibited. A 1992 law covering nonprofit organizations, including religious groups, is the basis for the recognition and registration of religious bodies.

The Government requires religious groups to register with the Ministry of the Interior. Each association of a religious nature must file the following: the denomination or affiliation of the institution, a copy of its bylaws, the address of its headquarters in the country, an address abroad if the local institution is a subsidiary, and information about the association's governing body and legal representative. It usually takes from 2 to 4 weeks for the Ministry of the Interior to process a registration request. During the reporting period no religious institution had its request for registration refused.

If an association of a religious nature fails to register with the Ministry, its representative is reminded of the requirement to do so. If the representative does not comply, the place of worship or association is instructed to close down. Although the representative of the religious institution or association can be jailed for 6 months to 5 years for failing to comply with these instructions, during the reporting period no representative received this penalty.

While there is no law that accords tax exemptions to religious groups, the Finance Ministry often negotiates waivers of taxes on religious articles or goods imported by religious institutions that are destined for social development purposes. There is no indication of religious bias in the awarding of such exemptions.

The heads of major religious organizations are accorded diplomatic status.

The Government recognizes Ascension Thursday, the Feast of the Assumption, All Saints' Day, Christmas, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha as national holidays.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the Government during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees in the country.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

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

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

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