

U.S. Department of State
Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999:
Burundi

Released by the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
Washington, DC, September 9, 1999

BURUNDI

Section I. Freedom of Religion

The Transitional Constitutional Act provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. There is no state religion.

The Government requires religious groups to register with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which keeps track of their leadership and activities. The Government requires that religious groups have a headquarters in the country. Once registered, religious organizations enjoy tax-free status, and clergy theoretically do not have to pay duty on purchased goods. However, one religious group reported that it was required to pay duty on all imported goods, except books and other publications.

Many citizens regularly attend religious services. Although precise statistics on the number of followers of various religions are not available, a Roman Catholic official estimated that 60 percent of the population are Catholic, with the largest concentration of adherents located in the center and south of the country. A Muslim leader estimated that up to 10 percent of the population are Muslim, mostly in urban areas. The remainder of the population is Protestant, practitioners of traditional indigenous religions, or has no religious affiliation.

The heads of major religious organizations are accorded diplomatic status. Foreign missionary groups of many faiths are active in the country and openly promote their religious beliefs. The Government has welcomed their development assistance.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

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

Section II. Societal Attitudes

In their practice of religion, citizens generally tolerate other religions. Disputes between religious groups are rare, apart from minor disagreements over competition for followers.

Section III. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the overall context of the promotion of human rights. Embassy officials also maintain regular contact with leaders and members of the various religious communities.