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2011 Report on International Religious Freedom - Guinea-Bissau

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
July 30, 2012

[Covers calendar year from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2011]

Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom. The government did not demonstrate a trend toward either improvement or deterioration in respect for and protection of the right to religious freedom.

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

The U.S. government discussed religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The U.S. embassy in Bissau suspended operations at the start of the 1998 civil war. The U.S. embassy in Dakar, Senegal, handled all official contact with the country.

Section I. Religious Demography

Approximately 50 percent of the population follows indigenous religious practices. Forty percent is Muslim, and 10 percent is Christian.

The Fula (Peuhl or Fulani) and Mandinka ethnic groups are the most numerous followers of Islam. Muslims generally live in the north and northeast, and most Muslims are Sunni. Practitioners of indigenous religious beliefs generally live in all but the northern parts of the country. Christians belong to a number of groups, including the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations. Christians are concentrated in Bissau and other large towns.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom.

The government requires that religious groups obtain licenses, and the government issues them routinely.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday, Easter, All Saints' Day, Tabaski (Abraham's sacrifice), 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.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discussed religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The U.S. embassy in Bissau suspended operations at the start of the 1998 civil war. The U.S. embassy in Dakar, Senegal, handled all official contact with the country.
