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Sierra Leone

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BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR **International Religious Freedom Report 2010** **November 17, 2010**

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 reporting period.

There was one report of societal abuse 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 29,925 square miles and a population of 5.7 million.

The Inter-Religious Council (IRC) estimated that 77 percent of the population is Muslim, 21 percent Christian, and 2 percent practitioners of indigenous and other religious beliefs, mostly animist. There are small numbers of Baha'is, Hindus, and Jews.

Evangelicals are a growing minority in the Christian community. Many citizens practice a mixture of Islam or Christianity with traditional indigenous religious beliefs.

Historically most Muslims have been concentrated in the northern areas of the country, and Christians in the south; however, the 11-year civil war, which officially ended in 2002, resulted in movement between regions by large segments of the population.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for 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 government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: the Birth of the Prophet Muhammad, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, and Christmas.

The government has no requirements for recognizing, registering, or otherwise regulating religious groups.

The government permits religious instruction in all schools. Students may choose whether to attend the religious knowledge classes that the schools offer.

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 reporting period.

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

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There was one report of societal abuse based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

On December 15, 2009, a Pentecostal church in Calaba Town, eastern section of Freetown, was damaged during a

Tuesday church service, and there was reported damage to the roof of the pastor's vehicle. This reportedly occurred after members of a nearby mosque had allegedly warned the pastor to reduce the volume of the church loudspeakers, and the pastor did not turn them down. No further violence or legal action was reported.

The IRC, composed of Christian and Muslim leaders, played a vital role in civil society and actively participated in efforts to further the peace process in the country and the subregion. In the past several years, since the civil war ended and the country has begun recovery and reconstruction, the IRC has returned to its former role as a civil society organization, maintaining harmony among the various Christian and Muslim denominations and providing an exhortatory voice on peace and good governance in the run-up to the 2012 presidential election. Evangelical Christians have a separate communal organization, the Evangelical Fellowship of Sierra Leone. Previous membership applications from Baha'i and Jewish communities to the IRC lapsed during the reporting period.

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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