



2013 Report on International Religious Freedom - Namibia

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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.

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

U.S. embassy officials engaged with the government, with religious groups, and with civil society to support religious freedom.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 2.2 million (July 2013 estimate). Although there are no official statistics on religious affiliation, more than 90 percent of the population reportedly identifies as Christian. Religious leaders estimate that 60 percent of Christians identify as Lutheran, 20 percent as Catholic, and 10 percent as Anglican. Other denominations, including Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, and evangelical and charismatic churches, as well as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and the Dutch Reformed Church of Namibia, make up the remaining 10 percent of the Christian population. The number of Pentecostal churches is growing, primarily in the northern Zambezi Region. A number of Zionist churches combine Christianity and traditional African beliefs. There are also small numbers of Muslims, Bahais, Jews, and Buddhists, primarily in urban areas.

Members of the Dutch Reformed Church are predominantly ethnic Afrikaners. Members of the Himba and San ethnic groups often combine indigenous religious beliefs with Christianity. Muslims are mostly Sunni and are predominantly immigrants from elsewhere in Africa or recent converts.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies generally protect religious freedom.

There is no state religion. The law allows recognition of any religious group through formal registration.

To receive tax exempt status, a religious group must register as a welfare organization with the Ministry of Health and Social Services. A religious group operating an income generating program must also register as a not-for-profit organization with the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

A religious group may seek to obtain land at a reduced rate offered to welfare organizations from local authorities. The sale of land at a reduced rate is at the discretion of the local authorities if they believe the welfare organization's use of the land will benefit the community.

Government Practices

The government periodically included religious leaders in important discussions regarding the country's future. The president held annual consultations with religious leaders.

The University of Namibia and the Polytechnic University in Windhoek, both government-supported institutions, provided rooms for Muslim students to use for prayer and meetings.

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.

Although differences in leadership frequently led to the formation of new churches, religious leaders generally cooperated and spoke respectfully of one another.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

U.S. embassy representatives met with religious leaders and communities to better understand changes to the country's religious landscape and any potential issues of discrimination.

In September the U.S. Ambassador met with a visiting delegation of African and German bishops and priests from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) to discuss various topics, including the 2017 LWF General Assembly which will be held in Windhoek. The U.S. embassy Deputy Chief of Mission met with the bishop of the country's Evangelical Lutheran Church in July to discuss this upcoming visit and other issues.

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