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July-December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report - Uganda

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
September 13, 2011

[Covers six-month period from 1 July 2010 to 31 December 2010 (USDOS is shifting to a calendar year reporting period)]

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally enforced these protections.

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice; however, the government continued to restrict religious groups it perceived as cults. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom.

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 93,000 square miles and a population of 33.4 million. According to government figures, an estimated 85 percent of the population is Christian, 12 percent Muslim, and the remaining 3 percent follow indigenous beliefs, Hinduism, the Bahai Faith, or Judaism. Among Christians, 42 percent are Roman Catholic, 36 percent Anglican, and 7 percent evangelical, Pentecostal, and Orthodox Christian. The Muslim population is primarily Sunni. Indigenous religious groups practice in rural areas. Indian nationals are the most significant non-African ethnic population and are primarily Shia Muslim or Hindu.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

Please refer to Appendix C in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for the status of the government's acceptance of international legal standards
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/appendices/index.htm>.

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally enforced these protections.

The law prohibits the creation of political parties based on religion.

The government allows religious groups to obtain legal entity status under the Trustees Incorporation Act. The Catholic Church, Orthodox Church, Anglican Church, and the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council registered under this provision; however, evangelical and Pentecostal churches opted to register with the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Nongovernmental Organizations (NGO) Board, which requires yearly registration renewal. Most religious organizations are granted legal status. Registration with the NGO Board provides certification that allows churches to access donor funding.

In response to alleged cult activity, the government now requires district officials to recommend to the NGO Board local religious organizations seeking to register for the first time.

In public schools, religious instruction is optional, and the curriculum surveys world religious beliefs rather than one particular faith. Private schools offer religious instruction and are common in the country.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday, Easter Monday, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, and Christmas.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice; however, the government restricted religious groups it perceived as cults. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

As in prior reporting periods, the government continued to monitor the activities of 20 registered NGOs that it perceived to be cults, including the Serulanda Spiritual Foundation in Rakai District, the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God in Kanungu District, the Abengeri in Hoima District, the New Heaven Church in Gulu, the Rwengwara Healing Church of All Nations in Kabarole, and the Enjiri groups in Mbale and Luwero districts.

The government continued to refuse to register the New Malta Jerusalem Church, citing national security concerns. In 2008 police in Padar detained Severino Lukoya and three of his employees for two weeks for operating the church. Lukoya is the father of Alice Lakwena, the former leader of the now defunct Holy Spirit Movement. During the 1980s Lakwena led an armed rebellion against the government, and the Holy Spirit Movement was a precursor to the Lord's Resistance Army led by Joseph Kony, Lakwena's nephew.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were reports of abuses of religious freedom in the country.

On June 26, police in Masaka arrested alleged cult leader Blessing Kisakye and 11 followers for holding an illegal assembly in Buwunga. On July 1, a court charged the suspects with operating an unregistered religious group and holding an illegal assembly. The case was pending at the end of the reporting period.

On April 25, police arrested 39 individuals belonging to the End of Time Gospel

movement for holding an illegal assembly in Luwero. On April 26, authorities charged them with holding an illegal assembly and remanded them to prison. The individuals pleaded not guilty; on August 13, a court sentenced them to community service and released them.

Section III. Status of Societal Actions Affecting Enjoyment of Religious Freedom

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom.

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.
