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July-December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report - Burundi

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. 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.

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 10,747 square miles and a population of 8.6 million. Although reliable statistics on the size of various religious groups are not available, sources estimate Roman Catholics to be 60 percent of the population, members of indigenous religious groups 20 percent, and Protestants 15 percent. The Muslim population is estimated to be between 2 and 5 percent, the majority of whom live in urban areas. Sunnis make up the majority of Muslims; the remainder are Shia.

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/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. Discrimination on the basis of religious conviction is prohibited.

A 1992 law covering nonprofit organizations, including religious groups, is the basis for the recognition and registration of religious bodies. The government requires religious groups to register with the Ministry of the Interior. Each association of a religious nature must file the denomination or affiliation of the institution, a copy of its bylaws, the address of its headquarters in the country, an address abroad if the local institution is a subsidiary, and information about the association's governing body and legal representative. It usually takes between two and four weeks for the ministry to process a registration request. During the reporting period, the ministry did not refuse any requests for registration.

Although a representative of a religious institution can be jailed for six months to five years for failing to comply with these instructions, the ministry has not penalized any religious representatives in recent years.

While there was no law that accorded tax exemptions to religious groups, the Ministry of Finance often negotiates waivers of taxes on religious articles or goods imported by religious institutions that were destined for social development purposes. There was no indication of religious bias in the awarding of such exemptions.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Ascension Day, the Feast of the Assumption, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha (Eid al-Qurban), All Saints' Day, and Christmas.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and 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 abuses, including religious prisoners or detainees, in the country.

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.

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.