

**Uganda (56)**
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The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government forcibly disbanded several religious groups.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Complaints by Muslim groups of government bias lessened.

There are amicable relations between the various religious communities and no religious group actively impinges upon the right of others to worship; however, the backlash from the death of over 1,000 citizens at the hands of a religious group has resulted in negative public attitudes towards Christian groups that are viewed as cults.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

Section I. Government Policies on Freedom of Religion

Legal/Policy Framework The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government forcibly disbanded several religious groups.

All religious organizations are required to register with the Nongovernmental Organizations Board. There were no reports that the Government refused to grant such registration to any religious organization.

Permits are also necessary for the construction of facilities, including religious facilities. There were no reports that the Government refused to grant such permits to any religious organization.

In the wake of discoveries in March, April, and May 2000 that over 1,000 citizens had been killed by members of a religious group, several religious organizations were disbanded forcibly. In early April 2000, following allegations that the church allowed youths to engage in sexual relationships, the deputy resident district commissioner closed the Revival Pentecostal Church in Nseko village, Kasangati. In mid-April, police in Kasese district banned the activities of a church group based in Hima public school, Busongora. On May 19, the Bushenyi resident district commissioner ordered the closure of the Church of the Servants

of the Eucharistic Hearts of Jesus and Mary, which allegedly was operating in the guise of a vocational school.

Religious Demography

Christianity is the majority religion, and its adherents constitute approximately 66 percent of the population. Muslims account for approximately 16 percent of the population. A variety of other religions, including traditional indigenous religions, Hinduism, the Baha'i Faith, and Judaism, are practiced freely and, combined, make up about 18 percent of the population. Among the Christian groups, the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches claim approximately the same number of followers, accounting for perhaps 95 percent of the nation's professed Christians. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Baptist Church, the Unification Church, and the Pentecostal Church, among others, are active. Muslims are mainly Sunni, although there are also Shi'a followers of the Aga Khan among the Asian community. Several branches of Hinduism are represented. Atheism is negligible.

In many areas, particularly in rural settings, some religions tend to be syncretistic. Deeply held traditional indigenous beliefs commonly are blended into established religious rites or observed alongside such rites, particularly in areas which are predominantly Christian.

Missionary groups of several denominations are present and active in the country, and face no particular restrictions on their activity. Foreign missionary groups, like foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), must register with the Government. There were no reports that the Government refused to grant registration to any foreign missionary groups.

Muslims and adherents of other minority religions occupy positions of authority in local and central government.

Private Koranic and Christian schools are common. There is no religious instruction in public schools.

Prisoners are given the opportunity to pray on days appropriate to their faith. Muslim prisoners usually are released from work duties during the month of Ramadan.

Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Some local governments have restricted the hours of operations of religious organizations that are viewed as cults, for example, prohibiting nighttime prayer meetings. The Government has largely ignored calls for these churches to be shut down and their followers returned to mainstream churches.

Local officials have dispersed meetings of religious groups. For example, on March 12, 2000, security operatives in Mbale dispersed hundreds of people who had gathered for an evangelistic event

organized by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. On March 19, police in Kikinzi, Rukungiri district, dispersed a baptism organized by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. On March 28, police in Mukono town dispersed a meeting of over 200 adherents of the Universal Apostolic Church for the Restless. On April 1, police dispersed an alleged "cult" gathering in Kikandwa, Mubende district.

Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom

During the period covered by this report, there was a decrease in complaints by Muslim groups of government mistreatment and bias. The Government's relationship with the Islamic community improved significantly following the release in March 2000 of 56 members of the Muslim Tabliq group who were accused of treason.

Following the murder on March 16, 2000 of more than 500 followers of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God and the discovery of mass graves of approximately 500 other persons on properties belonging to the group, the Government launched investigations of numerous religious groups. Three groups were disbanded forcibly and one religious leader was arrested. On March 29, 2000, former Rukungiri assistant resident district commissioner (ARDC) Rev. Francis Mutazindwa was arrested for failing to act on information about the activities of the Kanungu cult while he was the ARDC. He was released on bond in early May, pending further investigation.

On May 2, five members of the Kisaaba Redeemed Church in Kayunga, Mukono district--Benon Kaye, Monica Isabirye, Eseza Kisakye Lukwago, Catherine Nagujja, and Willinstone Nagenda--were arrested and charged with causing the death of a church member by denying him medical treatment. Kaye and Isabirye were released on bail, and the other members were freed.

On May 30, five members of the Mulungiomu Full Gospel Church in Luweero--John Mwebaza, Florence Mirembe, Fred Mwesigwa, Sarah Mugabi, and Geoffrey Beyongera--were arrested after reportedly telling their followers to fast and sell their property. The five remained in custody at Luzira prison at mid-2000.

Complaints by Muslim groups of government bias lessened during the period covered by this report; however, the backlash from the death of over 1,000 citizens at the hands of a religious cult resulted in negative public attitudes towards fringe Christian groups and the Government's forcible disbanding of some groups.

In 1998 approximately 100 Muslim men were detained and some were tortured, on suspicion that they supported rebel groups. Many of those detained were released, but the whereabouts of some remained unknown. There was no clear indication that religion was the sole factor in their arrests. The release of the 56 Tabliq prisoners in March 2000 resolved the issue of the unaccounted whereabouts of the Muslim prisoners.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Section II. Societal Attitudes

There are amicable relations between the various religious communities, and no religious group actively impinges upon the right of others to worship. However, the backlash from the death of over 1,000 citizens at the hands of a religious group resulted in negative public attitudes towards fringe Christian groups. Some officials of "mainstream" Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim religious organizations have called for the closure of Christian churches, which are viewed as cults.

Section III. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

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