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2010 Report on International Religious Freedom - Guinea-Bissau

[Covers the period from July 1, 2009, to June 30, 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 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 13,948 square miles and a population of 1.565 million.

Approximately 50 percent of the population is Muslim, 40 percent follows indigenous religious practices, and 10 percent is Christian.

The Fula (Peuhl or Fulani) and Mandinka ethnic groups practice Islam most widely; Muslims generally live in the north and northeast, and almost all Muslims are Sunni. The number of Ahmadis is extremely small and not confined to any particular region. Practitioners of indigenous religious beliefs generally live in all but the northern parts of the country. Christians belong to a number of groups, including the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations. Christians are concentrated in Bissau and other large towns.

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 holiday as a national holiday: Christmas.

The government required that religious groups receive licenses; reportedly, the

government did not refuse any such license applications.

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 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. Since there is no U.S. embassy in the country, the U.S. embassy in Dakar, Senegal handled all official contact with the country.
