

CHAD

Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom. The government did not demonstrate a trend toward either improvement or deterioration in respect for and protection of the right to religious freedom.

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

The U.S. government discussed religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The embassy continued a wide variety of outreach programs with Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Protestant religious leaders to promote tolerance and mutual understanding.

Section I. Religious Demography

More than half of the population is Muslim, approximately one-third is Christian, and the remainder follows indigenous religious beliefs or has no religion. Most northerners practice Islam, and most southerners practice Christianity or indigenous religions. Population patterns are becoming more complex, especially in urban areas, and there has been a proliferation of mosques in the traditionally Christian south.

The majority of Muslims adhere to the Sufi Tijaniyah tradition. A minority of Muslims (5 to 10 percent) hold beliefs in some cases associated with Wahhabism or Salafism. There has been a slow though steady movement towards membership in these groups.

Catholics represent the largest Christian group. Most Protestants affiliate with various evangelical Christian groups. Small Baha'i and Jehovah's Witnesses communities are also present.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom. Article 1 of the constitution provides that the country be a secular state and for separation between religion and state. Other provisions relating to religious freedoms are found in Article 14, providing for the equality of religions, and Article 27 which provides for freedom of religious expression.

The director of religious and traditional affairs oversees religious matters. Working under the Ministry of Interior (MOI), the director is responsible for arbitrating intercommunal conflicts, reporting on religious practices, and assuring religious freedom.

The independent nongovernmental High Council for Islamic Affairs (HCIA) oversees Islamic religious activities, including the supervision of some Arabic language schools and higher institutions of learning and the representation of the country in international Islamic meetings. The HCIA, in coordination with the president, appoints the grand imam, who oversees each region's high imam and serves as head of the council. In principle the grand imam has the authority, though it is generally not practiced, to restrict proselytizing by Muslim groups, regulate the content of mosque sermons, and exert control over activities of Muslim charities.

Religious leaders participate in managing the country's wealth. A representative from each of the country's two principal religious communities, Muslim and Christian, sits on a rotating basis on the Revenue Management College, a body that oversees the use of oil revenues. At the end of the year, a Muslim religious leader held the seat.

The government required religious groups, except indigenous groups but including foreign missionary groups, to register with the MOI. Registration took place without discrimination, and the government interpreted this recognition as official. Despite popular perceptions to the contrary, registration does not confer tax preferences or other benefits on religious groups.

The government prohibits activity that "does not create conditions of cohabitation among the populations" in order to promote interfaith cooperation and prevent sectarian tensions.

The government prohibits religious instruction in public schools but permits all religious groups to operate private schools without restriction. The government closed certain Qur'anic schools that compelled children to beg for food and money.

Many Arabic-language schools were financed by foreign donors, including the governments of Egypt and other countries, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals, particularly from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Turkey, Pakistan, and Kuwait.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: the Birth of the Prophet Muhammad, Easter Monday, Eid al-Fitr, All Saints' Day, Eid al-Adha, and Christmas. It is common for Muslims and Christians to attend each other's festivities.

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom.

President Deby promoted religious tolerance through several national speeches throughout the year. Leaders from the country's principal religious organizations were in attendance during the speeches and uniformly supported the policies.

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, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom.

There were occasional tensions between Christians and Muslims or within groups in some areas; however, these were often based on community level issues rather than religious conflict. In May Grand Imam Hissein Hassan Abakar was stabbed in an apparent murder attempt. Ethnic, religious, and political tensions reportedly contributed to the attack. Seven individuals were arrested, including the chief of district, a Muslim who also serves as the president of the local chapter of the HCIA.

During the year, a religiously conservative group, "Ansaar Al-Souna Al Mahamadiya," held a workshop in which it criticized government-led interfaith dialogue efforts as government interference in religious matters. This same group also refused to participate in some events where President Deby spoke on the theme of promoting religious tolerance.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government continued to support the country's history of religious tolerance through diplomatic engagement and outreach programs. Embassy officials regularly met with religious leaders from various religious groups, including the grand imam, the HCIA, and Catholic and Protestant leaders. The U.S. embassy also supported visits, debates, and cultural programs that promoted tolerance and interfaith dialogue.

The U.S. embassy supported projects for marginalized and vulnerable populations with the aim of lessening the influence of destructive and hostile ideologies that advocate violence, including religious violence.