

# SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

## 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.

The U.S. government discussed religious freedom with the government and key religious leaders as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

## Section I. Religious Demography

According to the Roman Catholic Bishop's Office, 85 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, 12 percent Protestant, and less than 2 percent Muslim. Protestantism has grown considerably in recent years due to missionary activities. The number of Muslims has increased due to an influx of migrants from Nigeria and Cameroon. Others practice syncretistic beliefs, combining indigenous traditions with Christian or Islamic beliefs.

## Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

### Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom.

Religious organizations must register with the government. To register, a group must first send a letter requesting authorization from the Ministry of Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. Once the group obtains authorization, it must submit its official name and charter to the national registrar's office to ensure no other organization has the same name.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Ash Wednesday, All Souls' Day, and Christmas.

## Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom.

Despite the government's requirement on registration, there were no reports of the government denying registration or restricting the activities of unregistered groups.

### **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 engaged in diplomatic activities to support the government's efforts to respect individual freedoms, including religious freedom. The U.S. embassy in Libreville, Gabon, handles official contact with the country.