

ZIMBABWE

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. The government continued to favor the breakaway Anglican Church of the Province of Zimbabwe (CPZ) and harassed the leadership and members of the Church of the Province of Central Africa (CPCA), the official regional body representing the worldwide Anglican Communion.

There were reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

The U.S. embassy engaged and provided assistance to religious actors and faith-based organizations in support of religious freedom in the country and expressed concern regarding the intimidation and harassment of religious officials who criticized the government.

Section I. Religious Demography

Reliable figures on the country's religious demography are difficult to determine. According to the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), 84 percent of the population is Christian. In its 2004 census, the EFZ roughly estimated that, of the Christian population, 33 percent are Catholic; 42 percent are evangelical or Pentecostal; 17 percent are Anglican, Methodist, or Presbyterian; and 8 percent are members of apostolic groups. There are a significant number of independent Pentecostal and syncretic African churches.

While the country is overwhelmingly Christian, the majority of the population also adheres, to varying degrees, to indigenous or traditional religions. Religious leaders reported a continued increase in observance of indigenous or traditional religious practices, often simultaneously with the practice of formalized Christianity. Approximately 14 percent of the population solely adheres to traditional religious practices and belief systems.

Muslims account for 1 percent of the population and are primarily immigrants of Mozambican and Malawian descent who came to the country as farm laborers. The Muslim population is concentrated in rural areas, where Muslim-led humanitarian efforts were often organized, and also in some high-density suburbs. The remaining 1 percent of the population includes small numbers of practitioners of Greek Orthodoxy, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and the Baha'i Faith.

Political elites tend to be associated with one of the established Christian mainline or Pentecostal churches. Some apostolic groups, along with the CPZ, have taken a political position in support of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and are especially strong in ZANU-PF political strongholds.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom. The constitution protects the right of individuals to choose and change their religion as well as privately or publicly to manifest and propagate their religion through worship, teaching, practice, and observance. Most if not all official state gatherings and functions include nondenominational Christian prayers.

The 2002 Public Order and Security Act (POSA) restricts freedom of assembly, expression, and association. While POSA exempts religious activities and events, influential persons in the government view as political any public gathering, including religious gatherings, critical of ZANU-PF.

The Criminal Codification and Reform Act criminalizes any practice commonly associated with witchcraft, but only if that practice is intended to cause harm. It also criminalizes witch hunts, imposes criminal penalties for falsely accusing others of witchcraft, and rejects the killing of a witch as a defense for murder.

The government does not require religious groups to register; however, religious organizations that operate schools or medical facilities are required to register those institutions with the appropriate ministry regulating their activities. Religious institutions may apply for tax-exempt status and duty-free privileges with the customs department, which generally grants these requests.

The Ministry of Education sets curricula for public primary and secondary schools. Many public secondary schools include a religious education course that focuses on Christian religious groups and covers other religious groups, emphasizing the need for religious tolerance. School assemblies and functions routinely open and close with Christian prayer. Most public universities offer degrees in Christian religious study and theology. World religions are incorporated in the curriculum.

The country has a long history of Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Salvation Army, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Seventh-day Adventist churches building and operating primary and secondary schools. The United Methodist, Catholic, and Seventh-day Adventist churches all operate private universities. The government does not regulate religious education in private schools but plays a role in approving employment of headmasters and teachers. Since independence, there has been a proliferation of evangelical basic education schools. Christian schools, the majority of which are Catholic, constitute one-third of all schools. Islamic, Hindu, and Jewish primary and secondary schools are also in major urban areas such as Harare and Bulawayo.

The government observes Easter and Christmas as national holidays.

Government Practices

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the year. Government officials monitored and harassed religious leaders who were critical of government policies, individuals who spoke out against human rights abuses committed by the government, and those who organized public rallies centering on social and political issues. Police continued to monitor church leaders, and there were reports of increasing police intimidation against them as speculation concerning their role in national elections intensified during the year.

According to credible church organizations, police summoned religious leaders to police stations and questioned their activities and funding sources. Police warned them against organizing public rallies without police clearance, which resulted in some religious organizations exercising caution by applying for prior police approval for their public events. The government viewed suspiciously any organization, including missionary organizations, that it considered to be politically motivated and warned them from meddling in the country's internal politics.

Some missionary organizations occasionally experienced significant delays implementing humanitarian relief activities and having their work permits issued. According to a reputable Christian umbrella group, the government continued to interfere with efforts of religious organizations to provide humanitarian assistance, particularly in areas where ZANU-PF was trying to strengthen its presence.

The government routinely invoked POSA to prevent or disrupt public gatherings, including public events and prayer rallies organized by religious groups. Government officials monitored and harassed religious leaders who were critical of government policies. They also monitored and harassed individuals who spoke out against human rights abuses and who organized public rallies centering on social and political issues.

There were abuses of religious freedom against members of the CPCA in the Harare, Masvingo, and Manicaland Dioceses. The government, through the courts and government security agents, continued to arrest and harass Anglican clergy and parishioners from the CPCA. They prevented its members from worshipping and conducting services at CPCA properties and other venues.

The legal dispute between the CPZ and CPCA over the ownership of CPCA Harare Diocese property continued in court. A Supreme Court decision in August 2011 in favor of the CPZ resulted in a spike of government harassment and evictions. The High Court and Supreme Court had not ruled on the CPCA's application to suspend the eviction order and other pending applications at year's end.

On November 16, approximately 20 CPZ priests attempted to take over CPCA's regional seminary in Harare, Bishop Gaul College, pursuant to an eviction order granted by the Supreme Court in August. Police summoned both parties to the police station but declined to settle the matter, arguing the conflict was a matter internal to the Anglican Church. The CPZ occupiers left after two days of passive resistance from the resident CPCA priests and seminarians. The courts had not ruled on the CPCA's application to suspend the eviction order and other pending applications at year's end.

In October there were reports that followers of the CPZ leader Nolbert Kunonga, a ZANU-PF supporter and former CPCA bishop, occupied church vestries and turned them into residential homes in Marondera. In mid-September police officers in Harare evicted CPCA parishioners from their newly-built church. The parishioners claimed they built the church using donations by members after being evicted from their former church in 2007 by Kunonga supporters. A Kunonga-

allied CPZ priest and his family were reportedly occupying the church at year's end.

On October 10, the High Court ruled in favor of the CPCA Manicaland Diocese by granting a provisional order against Elson Jakazi, an excommunicated bishop of the CPCA Manicaland Diocese, from taking over more CPCA properties. Jakazi, reportedly following Kunonga's example, had left the CPCA earlier.

Police also restricted religious assembly. For instance, police, in support of CPZ leader Kunonga, barred the CPCA from hosting its annual three-day pilgrimage to a shrine, scheduled for July 29-31. On July 28, the High Court ruled that the CPCA and the CPZ's Kunonga must share the venue for the celebration. On July 31, an emboldened Kunonga made public statements on national television claiming ownership of the shrine and an additional 78 church properties in Masvingo province.

On January 28, police arrested eight members of the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance, a faith-based organization, for conducting a meeting without police clearance. Among the detainees was Ray Motsi, the chairperson of the organization. On January 31, the magistrate's court released all members on bail. The case was still pending at the end of the year.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Tensions between indigenous religious groups and mainstream Christian churches on issues of polygamy, modern medicine, education, and political exclusion continued during the year. For example, indigenous religious groups, particularly the apostolic community in Chipinge, were blamed for exacerbating measles outbreaks in the country by not allowing immunization of their children. Christian church leaders and the government nonetheless reached out to the groups on this issue to mitigate the concerns. Religious leaders from a wide spectrum of groups continued to discuss these matters productively in interfaith council meetings.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. embassy often met with religious and interfaith leaders to discuss religious freedom and general human rights issues. U.S. officials expressed concern regarding the intimidation and harassment of religious officials who criticized the government. The U.S. embassy implemented numerous assistance

programs in direct partnership with local interfaith and faith-based organizations and engaged religious organizations and leaders in training programs.