

BURUNDI 2012 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom. The trend in the government's respect for religious freedom did not change significantly during the year.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

The U.S. ambassador and embassy representatives encouraged the government and societal leaders to continue to support broad-based religious tolerance. Embassy efforts included hosting an iftar and encouraging interfaith discussion of social and economic challenges.

Section I. Religious Demography

The population is 10.5 million, according to a U.S. government estimate. Although reliable statistics are not available, religious leaders estimate approximately 60 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, 20 percent belongs to indigenous religious groups, and 15 percent to Protestant groups. Muslims constitute 2 to 5 percent of the population, and live mainly in urban areas. Most Muslims are Sunni, although some belong to Shia groups.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom, and prohibit discrimination on the basis of religious conviction.

The law covering nonprofit organizations is the basis for recognition and registration of religious groups, which must register with the interior ministry. Each religious group must provide the denomination or affiliation of the institution, a copy of its bylaws, the address of its headquarters in the country, an address abroad if the local institution is a subsidiary, and information about the association's governing body and legal representative. The ministry usually

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processes registration requests within two to four weeks. A representative of a religious group who fails to comply can be jailed for six months to five years.

The law does not grant tax exemptions to religious groups.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Ascension Day, the Feast of the Assumption, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha (Eid al-Qurban), All Saints' Day, and Christmas.

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom.

The government administration was a mixture of Christian and Muslim officials. The president was a Christian, while several prominent members of his cabinet were Muslim.

Although all religious groups must register with the interior ministry, the ministry did not refuse any requests for registration nor did it penalize any religious group for non-compliance.

The finance ministry often negotiated waivers of taxes on religious articles or goods religious groups imported for social development purposes.

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.

Religion was interwoven into the fabric of society, with freedom of religion as a guiding principle firmly in place. Members of different faiths lived and worked together without issue.

Although the majority of the country was Christian, there were areas where there were higher proportions of Muslims. The two faiths interacted without friction.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. ambassador and embassy representatives promoted religious freedom, and encouraged government officials and others to continue to support broad-based

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religious tolerance. Embassy staff established and sustained communications with religious leaders and encouraged meetings between Christian and Muslim groups to exchange views and enhance interfaith dialogue. The embassy also hosted an iftar.