

CAPE VERDE 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. embassy actively supported religious freedom in discussions with government officials and members of civil society. Embassy officials met with leaders of major churches and reached out to other religious groups. Embassy officials also supported efforts to preserve three Jewish cemeteries.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to the 2010 census, the population is 498,000. Government statistics indicate that 77 percent is Roman Catholic, 10 percent Protestant, 2 percent Muslim, and 11 percent does not identify with any religion. The majority of Christians belong to the Catholic Church; the second largest Christian denomination is the Church of the Nazarene. Other Christian denominations include Seventh-day Adventists, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), members of the Assemblies of God, Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, and other Pentecostal and evangelical groups. There are small Bahai communities and a small but growing Muslim community with approximately 6,000 members.

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 and to interpret their religious beliefs for themselves.

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The constitution provides for separation of church and state and prohibits the state from imposing religious beliefs and practices.

Violations of religious freedom are crimes subject to penalties of between three months and three years in prison.

Although there is no state religion, the government grants privileges to the Roman Catholic Church that other groups do not receive.

The constitution and the law require that all associations, whether religious or secular, register with the Justice Ministry. The constitutional registration criteria state that an association may not be armed; may not promote violence, racism, xenophobia, or dictatorship; and may not be in violation of penal law. Registered groups may apply for loans and benefits, both government and private, offered to associations. To register, a religious group must submit a copy of its charter and statutes signed by its members. Failure to register does not result in any restriction of religious practice.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Easter, All Saints' Day, and Christmas. In addition, each municipality has a holiday to honor its Catholic patron saint.

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom. The government upheld constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and protected the rights of citizens to hold and manifest their religious beliefs.

The government provided the Catholic Church with free television broadcasting time for religious services.

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. All religious groups reported good relations with adherents of other religious beliefs.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

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U.S. embassy officials promoted religious freedom in their ongoing discussions with the government and civil society. These included formal communications with the government regarding human rights concerns, public statements by embassy officials, informal discussions, and an emphasis on religious freedom as part of the embassy's social media outreach campaign. Embassy officials also supported efforts to preserve three Jewish cemeteries in the country.