

CHAD 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, and prominent governmental and societal leaders, including the president, took positive steps to promote religious freedom.

The U.S. ambassador and embassy representatives discussed religious freedom with the government and religious leaders. 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

The World Bank estimates the population at 11.53 million. Over 50 percent is Muslim, approximately 33 percent is Christian, and the remainder adheres to indigenous religious beliefs or has no religion. Most northerners practice Islam, and most southerners practice Christianity or indigenous religions, but population patterns are becoming more complex, especially in urban areas.

The majority of Muslims adheres to the Sufi Tijaniyah tradition. A minority of Muslims (5 to 10 percent) holds beliefs associated with Wahhabism or Salafism, and these numbers are increasing slowly.

Approximately 25 percent of Christians are Roman Catholics, according to Catholic Church data. Most Protestants are members of evangelical Christian groups. Small groups of Bahais and Jehovah's Witnesses are also present.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

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The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom. The constitution provides for a secular state, separation between religion and state, the equality of religions, and freedom of religious expression.

The director of religious and traditional affairs oversees religious matters. Working under the Ministry of Public Safety and Immigration, the director is responsible for arbitrating intercommunal conflicts, reporting on religious practices, and ensuring religious freedom.

The independent nongovernmental High Council for Islamic Affairs (HCIA) oversees Islamic religious activities, including supervising some Arabic language schools and institutions of higher learning, and representing the country in international Islamic meetings. In coordination with the president, the HCIA 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 he does not exercise it, to restrict Muslim groups from proselytizing, regulate the content of mosque sermons, and exert control over activities of Muslim charities.

Muslim and Christian leaders participate in managing the country's wealth through a rotational position on the government board overseeing the use of oil revenues.

The government requires religious groups, except indigenous African groups, to register with the Ministry of Public Safety and Immigration. The process is routine and non-discriminatory. Registration does not confer tax preferences or other benefits on religious groups.

The government prohibits religious instruction in public schools but permits all religious groups to operate private schools without restriction.

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.

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom.

The president promoted religious tolerance through several national speeches. Leaders from the country's principal religious organizations attended the speeches and uniformly supported the policies.

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The government reportedly closed a number of Quranic schools that compelled children to beg for food and money.

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 often concerned community-level issues.

In October a local Muslim group, “Ansaar Al-Souna Al Mahamadiya,” held a workshop in which it criticized government-led interfaith dialogue efforts as government interference in religious matters. The group also refused to participate in some events where the president spoke on the theme of promoting religious tolerance.

It was common for Muslims and Christians to attend each other’s festivities.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. ambassador and embassy representatives supported religious tolerance through diplomatic engagement and outreach programs. The ambassador and embassy officials met frequently with the grand imam and High Council in N’Djamena, and with Catholic and Protestant leaders, to monitor the state of religious freedom.

The embassy also supported visits, debates, and cultural programs promoting tolerance and interfaith dialogue. Six representatives from Islamic institutions spent ten days in the United States learning about religious freedom and democracy. The embassy provided a \$15,000 grant to sponsor two interfaith-dialogue seminars for members of Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant groups.

The embassy also supported projects for marginalized and vulnerable populations to lessen the influence of ideologies that advocate violence, including religious violence.