

TANZANIA 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 reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Some prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom. However, there was an increase in church burnings and heightened tensions between the Muslim and Christian communities.

The U.S. ambassador and embassy staff discussed religious freedom and promoted tolerance with government officials and religious leaders. Embassy officers promoted a project to employ local Muslim artisans in restoring a historic Anglican cathedral in Zanzibar. Embassy officers also advocated for the government to take legal action against the perpetrators of church burnings in Zanzibar. In Zanzibar and on the mainland, the ambassador met with religious leaders and spoke with students about religious tolerance.

Section I. Religious Demography

The National Bureau of Statistics estimates the population is nearly 45 million. The government does not collect data on religious identification. The Interfaith Council (also known as the Inter-Religious Council for Peace Tanzania, a nongovernmental organization bringing together Christian, Muslim, Bahai, Hindu, and Buddhist leaders to foster peace and strengthen relationships) does not keep statistics on religious identity. Many religious groups are reluctant to estimate religious demographics, but most religious leaders estimate that the population is 50 percent Christian and 50 percent Muslim. A 2010 Pew Forum survey estimates that approximately 60 percent of the population is Christian, 36 percent Muslim, and 4 percent members of other religious groups.

On the mainland, large Muslim communities are concentrated in coastal areas, with some large Muslim minorities also located inland in urban areas. Zanzibar is approximately 98 percent Muslim. Between 80 and 90 percent of the Muslim population is Sunni. The remainder consists of several Shia subgroups, mostly of Asian descent. Christian groups include Roman Catholics, Protestants (including

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Pentecostals), Seventh-day Adventists, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah's Witnesses. Other religious groups include Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and Bahais.

The country's three largest political parties are secular, but include the opposition Civic United Front (CUF) party, often associated with Zanzibar's Muslim community, and the opposition Chama cha Mapinduzi na Maendeleo (Chadema) party, often associated with the Christian majority on the mainland.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom. Government policy prohibits discrimination against persons based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

The law prohibits religious groups from registering as political parties.

Zanzibar is a semi-autonomous archipelago. While Zanzibar has its own president, constitution, court system, and legislature, it is also subject to the Tanzanian constitution and its religious freedom provisions. The Zanzibar constitution also contains religious freedom provisions.

On the mainland, secular laws govern Christians and Muslims in both criminal and civil cases except for family-related cases involving inheritance, marriage, divorce and the adoption of minors, where Christians may choose civil law and Muslims may choose Islamic law. In 16 mainland regions, a kadhi court system hears civil cases concerning Muslims. Judges trained in Islamic legal traditions administer the kadhi courts. If the parties do not agree with a kadhi court decision, magistrate courts hear the cases.

In Zanzibar, Muslims have a parallel system of kadhi courts for matters of divorce, child custody, inheritance, and other issues covered by Islamic law. All cases tried in Zanzibar courts, except those involving constitutional matters and Islamic law, can be appealed to the Union Court of Appeals on the mainland. Decisions of Zanzibar's kadhi courts can be appealed to a special court consisting of the Zanzibar chief justice and five other sheikhs. The president approves the kadhi,

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who is the senior Islamic scholar responsible for interpreting the Quran and is recognized as a judge.

Religious groups must register with the home affairs ministry on the mainland and with the chief government registrar on Zanzibar. To register, religious groups must provide the names of at least ten members, a written constitution, resumes of their leaders, and a letter of recommendation from their district commissioner. In addition, Muslim groups registering on the mainland must provide a letter of approval from the National Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA). Muslim groups registering in Zanzibar must provide a letter of approval from the mufti, the government's official liaison to the Muslim community. Christian groups on the mainland must produce letters of acknowledgement from the leaders of their denominations.

On the mainland, BAKWATA elects the mufti. On Zanzibar, the president of Zanzibar appoints the mufti, who serves as a leader of the Muslim community and as a public servant assisting with local governmental affairs.

The Zanzibar mufti nominally approves all Islamic activities and supervises all mosques on Zanzibar. The mufti also approves religious lectures by visiting clergy and supervises the importation of Islamic literature from outside Zanzibar.

Public schools may teach religion, but it is not a part of the national curriculum. School administration or parent and teacher associations must approve such classes, taught on an occasional basis by parents or volunteers. Many private schools and universities are associated with religious groups. There is an Islamic university in Morogoro, a Roman Catholic university in Mwanza, a Lutheran university in Dar es Salaam, a Bahai secondary school in Iringa, and numerous Islamic and Christian primary and secondary schools throughout the country.

The government does not designate religion on passports or records of vital statistics. Police reports must state religious affiliation if an individual will have to give sworn testimony. School registration forms must specify a child's religious affiliation so administrators can assign students to the appropriate religion class if one is offered. Applications for medical care also must specify religious affiliation so that any specific religious custom may be observed.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Maulid, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Hajj, and Christmas.

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Government Practices

There were no reports of government abuses of religious freedom; however, the government imposed several restrictions that affected members of religious groups.

In January a legislator in the Zanzibar House of Representatives proposed caning women who wore miniskirts during the month of Ramadan. Zanzibar's minister for constitution and legal affairs rejected the proposal and told the House that his office established a committee to investigate prevention of potentially offensive behavior during Ramadan. There were no reported investigations. The minister urged all visitors to respect Zanzibar's culture during Ramadan.

In June Sheikh Ponda and the Council of Muslim Organizations accused National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA) officials of bias against Muslim students. Examination results released the same month demonstrated that 70 percent of the students who failed the National Examination section on Islamic knowledge were Muslim. Subsequent NECTA review revealed that the automated scoring system for this section was programmed incorrectly. After rescoring, 70 percent of the students who previously failed received a passing score. NECTA officials publicly apologized for the error.

In September the Kisutu Resident Magistrates Court acquitted the opposition Democratic Party chairman of 2011 charges that he made seditious statements and accused President Kikwete of trying to wipe out Christianity in the country. The court determined his actions did not constitute incitement.

In October after weeks of recurring Friday demonstrations in the Muslim community and subsequent clashes between Muslim and Christian groups, the home affairs minister issued a 30-day ban on all religious demonstrations.

At a mosque in the Kilimanjaro Region in October, the vice president rebuked religious leaders for allegedly preaching seditious messages following the arrests earlier that month of Muslim leaders on the mainland and Zanzibar. Police arrested the leaders and charged them with inciting their followers to violence and destruction of property worth more than 480 million TSH (\$300,000). The leaders remained in prison at year's end.

The Tukuyu district commissioner broke up a Christian rally in October after its leaders allegedly insulted government officials and accused them of associating

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with Freemasons and pursuing the country's inclusion in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). A church official reported that the regional police commander questioned the leaders about discussing politics at a religious rally, and subsequently released them without filing charges.

Zanzibar's Islamic organization Uamsho held numerous public meetings and rallies criticizing the constitutional review process and calling for increased political autonomy for Zanzibar. On three occasions in May, July, and October, clashes between Uamsho and security forces led to rioting and subsequent arrests. While most political commentators described these incidents as politically motivated, some press reports suggested that religious motivations also played a role.

On the mainland, the registration process for religious groups sometimes took as long as four years, a delay the government attributed to vetting and investigation.

The mainland home affairs ministry received 66 applications from Christian groups; six were registered and all others were pending as of November. The ministry received 23 requests for registration from Muslim groups; three were approved and the others were pending at year's end.

In Zanzibar, the chief government registrar received six applications from Muslim groups and five applications from Christian groups. At year's end, the registrar had approved one application from a Muslim group.

The government continued to allow offices to close early on Fridays to allow Muslim employees to attend afternoon prayers.

There were no further developments in the legal proceedings against those charged in the 2011 church burnings in Zanzibar.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

In October President Kikwete visited several churches in the Mbagala suburb of Dar es Salaam which were burned or damaged following religious unrest. He urged self-restraint and emphasized that citizens should not take the law into their own hands.

In November the prime minister publicly pledged to initiate a national dialogue between religious leaders to promote religious tolerance; this had not occurred by year's end. Also in November, the Interfaith Council asked to meet with the

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president to discuss intolerance among factions within the Muslim community and Christian groups. This meeting did not take place by year's end.

In November the prime minister took a strong stand against the October religious violence, calling for political and religious tolerance.

On December 31, President Kikwete stated that the country faced, for the first time in its history, the possibility of civil strife and division along religious lines. He encouraged religious and political leaders to take seriously their responsibility to ensure that citizens continue to live peacefully regardless of their religion, ethnicity, color, or place of origin.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

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

In May three churches burned during riots in Zanzibar. The riots began when police arrested Sheikh Mussa Juma, one of the leaders of the Islamic group Uamsho, after weeks of Uamsho demonstrations against the constitutional review process. Uamsho argued that the process pushed aside the interests of Zanzibar in favor of the mainland. Police intervened and arrested Sheikh Mussa after a demonstration exceeded the confines of its permit. Rioters set fire to the Kibweni Roman Catholic church, the Mpendae Roman Catholic church, and the Kariakoo Assemblies of God church. In predominantly Muslim Zanzibar, most Christians were from the mainland and churches reportedly symbolized mainland influence in Zanzibar. The attacks were apparently partly a strike against the mainland due to a combination of religious and political differences that were not always easily distinguishable. Many Zanzibar government officials and Muslim leaders, including the Uamsho chairman, condemned the attacks and called for the perpetrators to be punished. Police investigated, but no legal case was brought against the perpetrators by year's end.

In October rioters burned and vandalized seven churches in the Mbagala suburb of Dar es Salaam after Muslim elders took a 14-year-old Christian boy to the local police. They demanded that police arrest the boy for allegedly urinating on a copy of the Quran. The police took the boy into custody. After Friday afternoon prayers, a crowd demanded that police release the boy to them to be beheaded. When police told the crowd they transferred the boy to another location, the crowd

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attacked Christian churches in the area. After leaving the local police station, the crowd attacked and vandalized a nearby church. When a church leader sought assistance, police responded within 20 minutes and dispersed the crowd. At a more remote Lutheran church, police did not respond, and the attack continued into the night. Lutheran leaders reported that the crowd included members of a mosque across the street who arrived after Friday prayers, chanting, "Takbir" (Arabic for "Praise God"). The rioters broke through the front gate, chiseled out iron-barred windows from cement walls, and stole money and other valuables from three separate church offices before setting fire to the church office, altar, and pulpit.

Police reportedly arrested more than 110 persons in connection with the Mbagala riots. Days later, police arrested another 50 persons for trespassing and looting in a separate incident, when a crowd protested the reported disappearance of a cleric. The second group of detainees included Sheikh Ponda Issa, secretary general of the Council of Muslim Organizations. Authorities charged him with inciting the Mbagala riots. By law, an individual charged with incitement cannot be released on bail. At year's end, Sheikh Ponda remained in detention.

In November assailants threw acid on and severely injured Sheikh Fadhil Suleiman Soraga, secretary to the Zanzibar mufti. Police arrested two suspects. A combination of religious and political factors reportedly motivated the incident.

In November in two separate incidents on the same night in Iringa, assailants attacked and robbed two Roman Catholic priests in their homes, shooting one and wounding the other with a machete. Iringa police arrested eight in connection with the attacks. While the police reported that the incidents were not connected to religious tensions, many Christian leaders believe the attacks were, at least in part, motivated by religion.

On December 25, two unidentified men on a motorcycle shot a Roman Catholic priest in Zanzibar as he got out of his car in Tomondo, Zanzibar. Police arrested five in connection with the incident.

There were efforts to improve interfaith dialogue and societal tolerance during the year. The Interfaith Council co-sponsored five public fora on topics related to religious tolerance and interfaith relations. Between 50 and 150 participants attended each event. Religious leaders on the council met during the year to discuss the interfaith relationship. Some council members reported that poor education, unemployment, and poverty contributed to religious unrest.

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Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), an international interfaith NGO, worked with mosques and churches during the year to support income generation projects among religious groups in different districts across the country. These projects promoted religious tolerance. Religious leaders in the Kilimanjaro region informed NCA that they established an interfaith committee at the regional level to work with political officials to counter intolerant messages.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. embassy engaged with government officials and religious leaders to promote religious tolerance and encourage legal action against perpetrators of religiously-based violence.

Embassy representatives met regularly with leaders of the Islamic organization Uamsho and with the Zanzibar Association of Imams (JUMAZA), emphasizing the importance of religious tolerance and encouraging Muslims leaders to make public statements condemning attacks against Christians and their property during recurring instances of civil unrest.

An embassy representative met numerous times with the Zanzibar culture ministry to discuss the protection and preservation of Zanzibar's historic Anglican Cathedral. The project was designed to employ Muslim artisans in the community to restore and renovate the church, thereby producing a physical representation of Muslim-Christian cooperation.

In May, an embassy representative met with the country's inspector general of police, the Zanzibar police commissioner, the minister of state in the Zanzibar second vice president's office, and various Zanzibar Christian leaders to discuss the church burnings that occurred in Zanzibar earlier that month. The embassy representative advocated for the protection of property of all religious groups, including Christian property, and prosecution of the culprits.

The ambassador met with religious leaders throughout the year. In August, the ambassador met with Muslim students on Pemba Island to discuss the importance of promoting education, empowerment of women and girls, religious freedom, and religious tolerance. During the same month, the media provided wide and positive coverage of the ambassador's Eid al-Fitr article, which highlighted U.S. admiration for the country's history of religious freedom, tolerance, and interfaith dialogue.

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The article also called on all Tanzanians to uphold and cultivate the country's tradition of mutual respect. The ambassador reiterated the importance of religious tolerance in a September statement.

In November embassy representatives visited churches attacked the previous month in Mbagala. The officers expressed condolences and encouraged continuing dialogue with the Muslim community.

During the year, the U.S. Department of State's special representative to Muslim communities visited Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar and underscored the U.S. commitment to religious tolerance and mutual understanding during a series of youth and women's outreach programs.

Embassy staff used public outreach efforts to foster mutual understanding and model religious tolerance and inclusion. As part of outreach to the Muslim community, embassy staff welcomed Muslim youth to film screenings, visited predominantly Muslim schools in various regions, and donated rice to a Ramadan celebration in Pemba. Additionally, embassy-supported American Corners in Mwanza, Unguja island (Zanzibar) and Pemba played a direct role in the embassy's promotion of and advocacy for religious freedom.

Embassy officers participated in television and radio events in which they promoted religious freedom and peaceful coexistence by underscoring the country's history and tradition of religious tolerance.