

CABO VERDE 2013 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.

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 several Jewish cemeteries.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 530,000 (July 2013 estimate). The Cabo Verde National Institute of Statistics indicates that 77 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, 7 percent Christian of other denominations, 2 percent Christian Rationalist, 2 percent Muslim, and 11 percent does not identify with any religion. 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), Assemblies of God, Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, and other Pentecostal and evangelical groups. There are also small Bahai communities.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies generally protect religious freedom.

The constitution protects the right of individuals to choose and change their religion and to interpret their religious beliefs for themselves.

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

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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 Ministry of Justice. The constitutional registration criteria state that an association may not: be armed, promote violence, racism, xenophobia, or dictatorship, nor 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.

Government Practices

The government offered religious groups free television broadcasting time for religious services but only the Roman Catholic Church had the capacity to make use of this opportunity.

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, but several Christian pastors expressed concern over the growing numbers of converts to Islam and what they perceived as the potential for violent politicization of Muslim youth.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

U.S. embassy officials promoted religious freedom in their ongoing discussions with the host government and civil society. These efforts included formal exchanges with the government regarding human rights concerns, informal discussions with religious leaders, and an emphasis on religious freedom as part of the embassy's social media outreach campaign. The U.S. embassy helped the Cabo Verde Jewish Heritage Project, a nongovernmental organization, make contact with appropriate Cabo Verde officials and identify sources of funding to restore and preserve several Jewish cemeteries in the country. The U.S. embassy

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provided no financial support, but offered suggestions to facilitate the work of the project.