

# **SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE 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.

U.S. embassy representatives met with key government officials and religious leaders to encourage continued respect for religious freedom.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 190,000 (July 2013 estimate). The Roman Catholic bishop's office estimates that more than 85 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, about 12 percent Protestant, and less than 2 percent Muslim. Protestant groups include Seventh-day Adventists, Methodists, and evangelical groups, such as the Evangelic Assembly of Christ, the Universal Church of Christ, and the Thokoist Church. The number of Muslims has increased over the past 10 years due to an influx of migrants from Nigeria and Cameroon. Some Christians and Muslims also adhere to aspects of indigenous beliefs.

## **Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

### **Legal/Policy Framework**

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

Religious groups must register with the government. To register, a group must send a letter requesting authorization to the Ministry of Justice and Parliamentary Affairs (MOJ). Once the group obtains authorization, it must submit the following package to a notary public: the MOJ's approval letter, the group's statutes, the minutes or report from a meeting attended by all group members and signed by its president and secretary, a list of board members, copies of the national identity cards of all members, and a certificate from the registrar's office attesting that no existing organization has the same name. After payment of applicable notarial

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fees, the announcement is published in the government gazette and the group can then operate fully as a registered group.

### **Government Practices**

There were no reports of significant government actions affecting religious freedom.

### **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.

### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy**

There is no permanent U.S. diplomatic presence in the country. U.S. embassy representatives resident in Libreville, Gabon, engaged with government officials, the Roman Catholic bishop, and an imam to discuss religious freedom.