

## **GUINEA-BISSAU 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT**

### **Executive Summary**

The constitution establishes separation of religion and state and the responsibility of the state to respect and protect legally recognized religious groups. There were no reports of government actions affecting the constitutional provisions for freedom of conscience, religion, and worship.

Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant leaders occasionally met informally to discuss issues of common interest.

There was no permanent U.S. diplomatic presence in the country. U.S. embassy personnel from Dakar met with high-level government officials as well as leaders of various religious communities to promote religious freedom and tolerance.

### **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 1.7 million (July 2014 estimate). Estimates of the religious composition of the population vary widely, but according to the Pew Research Center, approximately 50 percent follows indigenous religious practices, 40 percent is Muslim, and 10 percent Christian.

The Fula (Peuhl or Fulani) and Mandinka (Malinke) ethnic groups are the most numerous followers of Islam. Muslims generally live in the north and northeast, and most Muslims are Sunni. Adherents of indigenous religious beliefs generally live in all but the northern parts of the country. The Christian population, including Roman Catholics and Protestants, is concentrated in Bissau and other large cities or towns.

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

#### **Legal Framework**

The constitution stipulates the state shall be separate from religious institutions and shall respect and protect legally recognized religious groups, whose activities shall be subject to the law. It holds freedom of conscience and religion as inviolable, even if the state declares a state of siege, and provides for freedom of worship, as long as it does not violate the fundamental principles cited in the constitution. It establishes that all citizens are equal under the law with the same rights and

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obligations, irrespective of their religion. Political parties and labor unions are barred from affiliating with a particular religious group. The constitution recognizes the freedom of religious groups to teach their faith.

The government requires religious groups to obtain licenses. There were no reports from religious leaders or other sources of difficulties for religious groups in obtaining licenses, which the government reportedly issued routinely.

There is no religious instruction in public schools.

### **Government Practices**

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

### **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

There was no formal interfaith consultative mechanism, but Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant leaders occasionally met informally to discuss issues of common interest.

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

There was no permanent U.S. diplomatic presence in the country. Representatives from the U.S. embassy in Dakar, Senegal discussed religious freedom with government officials, including the minister of justice and the attorney general. Embassy representatives also met with and discussed religious activity and religious freedom with representatives of an Islamic women's organization, the head of the Islamic Council, U.S. Protestant missionaries, and the Bishop of Bissau, the country's leading Roman Catholic official.