

TANZANIA 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitutions of the Tanzanian government and the semi-autonomous government in Zanzibar prohibit religious discrimination and provide for freedom of religious choice. The two governments made little progress in prosecuting new or outstanding cases involving violent attacks against religious targets. The Zanzibar government warned media outlets not to cover public events arranged by a self-described Islamic community development organization whose leaders have been arrested and charged with being connected with incidents of violent religious extremism.

Religious leaders reported tensions between religious groups seemed to have subsided. Though there were fewer incidents involving attacks against religious freedom than in the previous year, there were reports of two injuries as a result of religiously-motivated violence and four incidents where explosives detonated at or near houses of worship.

The U.S. embassy continued to support religious freedom across all religious groups and advocate for religious peace and tolerance with the government and religious groups. The Ambassador hosted an iftar focused on religious freedom in Zanzibar in which a Muslim leader who was the victim of an acid attack spoke about the need for all citizens to exercise their religion freely. The embassy continued to sponsor the restoration of a cathedral in Zanzibar by Muslim artisans. Embassy officers also met regularly with religious leaders to develop interfaith community development projects. The embassy completed work on a project focusing on youth and designed to counter violent extremism.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 50 million (July 2014 estimate). 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 other religious groups. There are no domestic polls covering religious affiliation.

On the mainland, large Muslim communities are concentrated in coastal areas, with some large Muslim minorities also located inland in urban areas. Zanzibar's one

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million residents are 99 percent Muslim according to a U.S. government estimate, of which two-thirds are Sunni, according to a 2012 Pew Forum report. The remainder consists of several Shia groups, mostly of Asian descent. Christian groups nationwide include Roman Catholics, Protestants (including Pentecostals), Seventh-day Adventists, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah's Witnesses. Other groups include Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, Bahais, and those who did not express a religious preference.

The country's three largest political parties are secular, but include the opposition Civic United Front party, historically associated with Zanzibar's Muslim community, and the opposition Chadema party, historically associated with the Christian majority on the mainland.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitutions of Tanzania and semi-autonomous Zanzibar provide for equality for all regardless of religion, prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion, and stipulate freedom of conscience or faith and choice in matters of religion, including the freedom to change one's faith.

The law prohibits religious groups from registering as political parties. In order to register as a political party, an entity cannot use religion as a basis to approve membership nor can the promotion of religion be a policy of that entity.

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 Muslims may choose sharia. In 16 mainland regions, a *qadi* (Islamic court or judge) court system hears civil cases concerning Muslims. Judges trained in Islamic legal traditions administer the *qadi* courts. If the parties do not agree with a *qadi* court decision, secular magistrate courts hear the appeals.

In Zanzibar, which, while also subject to the Tanzanian constitution, has its own president, court system, and legislature, Muslims have a parallel system of *qadi* courts for matters of divorce, child custody, inheritance, and other issues covered by Islamic law. All cases tried in Zanzibar courts, except those involving Zanzibari constitutional matters and sharia, can be appealed to the Union Court of

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Appeals on the mainland. Decisions of Zanzibar's *qadi* courts can be appealed to a special court consisting of the Zanzibar chief justice and five other sheikhs. The president of Zanzibar appoints the chief *qadi*, who oversees the *qadi* courts and is recognized as the senior Islamic scholar responsible for interpreting the Quran.

Religious groups must register with the registrar of societies at the Ministry of Home Affairs on the mainland and with the Office of the Registrar General on Zanzibar. Registration is required by law on both the mainland and in Zanzibar, but the penalties for failing to comply with this requirement are not stated in the law.

To register, religious groups must provide the names of at least 10 members, a written constitution, resumes of their leaders, and a letter of recommendation from the district commissioner. In addition, Muslim groups registering on the mainland must provide a letter of approval from the National Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA), a government body. 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 in Zanzibar can register directly to the registrar general. 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 official national curriculum. School administration or parent and teacher associations must approve such classes, which are taught on an occasional basis by parents or volunteers.

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. Public school registration forms must specify a child's religious affiliation so administrators can assign students to the appropriate religion class if one is offered. Students may also choose to opt out of religious studies.

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Applications for medical care must specify religious affiliation so that any specific religious customs may be observed.

Government Practices

Police investigations and prosecutions of past shootings, acid attacks, and bombings against religious leaders and institutions continued but made little progress.

The Office of the Mufti of Zanzibar tried to prevent guest imams from preaching what it considered extremism, and occasionally prevented imams whom it had not approved from preaching in mosques.

The Zanzibari government restricted press coverage of the activities of the Association of Islamic Mobilization and Propagation (popularly known as Uamsho, meaning “Awakening” in Swahili), a Muslim community development organization whose leaders have been arrested in connection with alleged terrorist offenses. Government officials enforced media laws to deny press outlets permission to publicize news of the events in the belief that the news would exacerbate tensions between religious groups. Religious leaders often accused Uamsho leaders of preaching anti-Christian extremism.

Between July 2013 and March 2014, the registrar of societies received 102 registration requests from religious entities. Of those, 19 were accepted, 34 were rejected, and 49 were still pending at year’s end. Determinations on complete applications were often made in a matter of months, but if the registrar required further information, the follow-up process could take years. There were reports that some religious organizations operated for more than four years without full registration. Registrations in Zanzibar were generally quick, often taking no more than a week.

On August 16, 2014, Victor Ambrose Kalisti and 12 other suspects appeared before a resident magistrate to hear charges against them in the 2013 bombing of St. Joseph’s Roman Catholic Church near Arusha, which killed three and injured 60.

The case of a suspect arrested in 2013 for alleged involvement in a clash between Muslims and Christians near Mwanza that led to the death of a pastor, injuries, and property damage had not gone to trial by year’s end, and the government had not

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made any more arrests. The government made little progress in prosecuting the 2013 murder of a Catholic priest in Zanzibar. The government released a suspect on bail that it had arrested in 2013 and made no other arrests in the case. Police continued their investigation into a 2013 acid attack against a Catholic priest in Zanzibar, but made no arrests in the case.

Religious leaders from various faiths continued their dialogue in Zanzibar to discuss tensions in the community. The Bishop of the Anglican Church of Zanzibar and the Office of the Mufti of Zanzibar maintained the Zanzibar Interfaith Committee, which includes Muslim and Christian leaders, though the group did not formally meet during the year.

On July 15, a representative of the Office of the Mufti of Zanzibar addressed a meeting of Catholic bishops of Tanzania in Bagamoyo. During the meeting the representative discussed Muslim teachings about Christianity and issues related to religious expression. On October 6, Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete gave the keynote speech at the government-organized National Interfaith Initiative (NII) conference, which assembled religious leaders of various faiths. The NII held additional regional seminars during the reporting year.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Attacks against religious institutions continued though there were fewer than in past years. Many community leaders expressed frustration at the lack of completed investigations or convictions to date.

On February 23 and August 17, mobs threw explosives at a church in Pangawe, Zanzibar used by the Evangelistic Assemblies of God. No injuries or damage to property were reported. Police later arrested several teenage boys who admitted to throwing the explosives, and said there was a religious motivation behind the attacks. At year's end the case continued in the court system.

On February 24, a bomb exploded at the entrance of the Mkunazini Cathedral in Zanzibar; there were no injuries and no damage to property. No arrests were made, and the investigation continued at year's end. Police officials stated that religious motives may not have been behind the attack but offered no evidence for that viewpoint.

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On July 3, unknown assailants threw a bomb into the home of a leading Muslim cleric in Arusha, injuring him and another person. A police investigation was ongoing, but no suspects had been arrested at year's end.

Both Christian and Muslim leaders said on several occasions that tensions between religious groups had subsided during the year, especially as measured by incidents of violence. The leaders emphasized, however, that interfaith dialogue efforts should continue, since religious tensions could rise again ahead of national elections in 2015.

Civil society organizations promoting interfaith tolerance and cooperation continued to work freely throughout the country. For example, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), an international, interfaith NGO, worked with mosques and churches to promote religious tolerance by supporting income-generation projects among religious groups in different districts across the country and sponsoring interfaith dialogue programs. The Zanzibar Interfaith Center allowed for Christian and Muslim leaders to continue an open dialogue on religious freedom issues, although the center did not conduct any large activities during the year.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

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

Embassy representatives met regularly with religious leaders, emphasizing the importance of religious tolerance and encouraging leaders to make public statements condemning religiously-motivated attacks. The embassy provided technical and capacity-building support to Tanzanian law enforcement to enhance the government's ability to take adequate measures to protect citizens and prosecute human rights abuses, including those against freedom of religion. Embassy officers also encouraged police to prioritize ongoing investigations of incidents of violence against religious leaders that occurred several years ago.

Work continued on the embassy-supported rehabilitation of the Christ Church Anglican Cathedral in Stone Town, Zanzibar. The cathedral, which sits on the site of the former Zanzibar slave market, remains a key symbol of the tradition of religious tolerance within Zanzibari society. Work on the cathedral continued throughout the year and will continue into 2015. The project promoted Muslim-

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Christian cooperation and trained and employed Muslim artisans in the community to restore and renovate the Cathedral.

The Ambassador hosted an iftar on July 9, which included leaders from both the Muslim and Christian communities and focused on religious freedom issues in Zanzibar. Sheikh Soraga, the Secretary to the Mufti of Zanzibar and a victim of an acid attack at the hands of as-yet-unknown perpetrators, gave the keynote speech and highlighted the need for the Zanzibar Interfaith Committee to continue its work to promote peace and tolerance.

The embassy completed implementation of a \$150,000 grant to support efforts to counter violent extremism in youth populations in Zanzibar. The grant supported activities at two youth centers in Stone Town to engage youth and community police with local interfaith and human rights organizations in several events, including a soccer tournament, training sessions on human rights, including religious freedom, and the rule of law, a training program for a youth parliament, and an examination of the role of youth in the history of Zanzibar.

Embassy officers held several meetings with religious leaders throughout the year to discuss religious freedom issues and identify community projects that would unite leaders from different religious groups. Leaders discussed projects to counter religious extremism by improving economic opportunities and combatting corruption. An embassy-supported interfaith anticorruption roundtable spearheaded the latter effort.