

AFRICA

ANGOLA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 481,351 square miles, and its population is approximately 13 million. Christianity is the religion of the vast majority of the country's population, with Roman Catholicism as the country's largest single denomination. The Roman Catholic Church claims 5 million adherents, but such figures could not be verified. The major Protestant denominations also are present, along with a number of indigenous African and Brazilian Christian denominations. The largest Protestant denominations, which include Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists (United Church of Christ), and Assemblies of God, claim to have 3 million to 5 million adherents. The largest syncretic religious group is the Kimbanguist Church, whose followers believe that a mid-20th century Congolese pastor named Joseph Kimbangu was a prophet. A small portion of the country's rural population practices animism or traditional indigenous religions. There is a small Islamic community based around migrants from West Africa. There are few atheists in the country.

In colonial times, the country's coastal populations primarily were Catholic while the Protestant mission groups were active in the interior. With the massive social displacement caused by 26 years of civil war, this rough division no longer is valid.

Foreign missionaries were very active prior to independence in 1975, although the Portuguese colonial authorities expelled many Protestant missionaries and closed mission stations based on the belief that the missionaries were inciting pro-independence sentiments. Missionaries have been able to return to the country since the early 1990s. Following the signing of the April 4, 2002 cease-fire agreement between the Government and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), missionaries returned to the interior of the country as the security situation improved.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government requires religious groups to register with the Ministries of Justice and Culture by providing general background information. The Government has closed unregistered religious groups. In May, a draft law to establish stricter criteria for the registration of religious groups was sent by the Council of Ministers to the National Assembly for approval. The legislation sets benchmarks for the number of adherents and congregations around the country in order to qualify for legal status. Colonial-era statutes banned all non-Christian religious groups from the country; while those statutes still exist, they no longer are in effect. In early 2002, the colo-

nial-era law granting civil registration authority to the religious groups was put back into effect.

The Government permits religious organizations and missions to establish and operate schools.

The country's religious leaders have taken an active role in promoting the peace and national reconciliation process.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Minister of Justice has publicly warned that the colonial-era law banning non-Christian religions, while not enforced, still was the law and could be enforced against any radical religious groups advocating terrorism or public disturbances.

Members of the clergy regularly use their pulpits to criticize government policies. In February, government officials sharply criticized Catholic Church-owned Radio Ecclesia for broadcasting criticism of the Government by participants of call-in shows.

Following the demobilization of UNITA after the April 4, 2002 cease-fire, there were no reports of restrictions on religious freedom in former UNITA-held territory.

In October 2002, the provincial government of Cabinda banned 17 religious groups for not being registered, for endangering lives with the unauthorized practice of medicine on the groups' members, and for illegally holding religious services in residences.

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. There is a functioning ecumenical movement, particularly in support of the peace and reconciliation movement. Groups involved include the ecumenical Inter-Church Committee for Peace in Angola (COIEPA) and the Catholic Pro Peace movement.

Clergy members continued to criticize the growing number of unregistered religious groups in rural provinces. There also was growing hostility against traditional religions that involve shamans.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

Embassy officials and official visitors from the United States routinely meet with the country's religious leaders in the context of peacekeeping, democratization, development, and humanitarian relief efforts. Church groups are key members of the country's civil society movement and are consulted regularly by embassy officials. Embassy officials, including the Ambassador, the Country Director of the U.S. Agency for International Development, and others, maintain an ongoing dialog with the leaderships of all of the country's religious denominations. The U.S. Government provides financial support to Radio Ecclesia to increase their public affairs and news programming as an independent alternative source of information to citizens.

BENIN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 42,711 square miles, and its population in 2000 was 6,396,591. Reliable statistics on religious affiliation are not available; however, according to recent estimates, approximately 30 percent of the population nominally are Christian, and approximately 20 percent nominally are Muslim. The remaining 50 percent of the population adheres to some form of traditional indigenous religion. Many persons who nominally identify themselves as Christian or Muslim also practice traditional indigenous religions. Among the most commonly practiced traditional indigenous religions is the animist “vodoun” system of beliefs. Almost all citizens appear to be believers of a supernatural order. There are practically no atheists.

More than half of all Christians are Roman Catholics. Other groups include members of the Baptist, Methodist, Assembly of God, Pentecostal, the Church of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Celestial Christians, Seventh-day Adventists, Rosicrucian, the Unification Church, Eckankar, and the Baha’i Faiths. Nearly all Muslims adhere to the Sunni branch of Islam. The few Shi’a Muslims primarily are Middle Eastern expatriates.

There are Christians, Muslims, and adherents of traditional indigenous religions throughout the country. However, most adherents of the traditional Yoruba religion are in the south, while other traditional indigenous faiths are followed in the north. Muslims are represented most heavily in the north and in the southeast. Christians are prevalent in the south, particularly in Cotonou, the economic capital. It is not unusual for different members of the same family to practice Christianity, Islam, traditional indigenous religions, or a combination of any or all of these. Foreign missionary groups known to be operating in the country include the Watchtower Society, Adventist Frontier Missions, Society in Mission (SIM), and the Evangelical Baptist Mission.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state-sponsored religion.

On May 31, 2002, the Constitutional Court ruled that persons whose constitutionally-protected human rights have been violated by “cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment” may claim compensatory damages. At the end of the period covered by this report, several cases involving religious freedom were pending before the court, including a case in which a group of traditional religious adherents were alleged to have prevented Christians from traveling through their village to attend church services. The court ruled in this case that it is unconstitutional to block the access of any group from religious services.

Persons who wish to form a religious group must register with the Ministry of the Interior. Registration requirements are identical for all religious groups, and there were no reports that any group had been refused permission to register or had been subjected to unusual delays or obstacles in the registration process. Religious groups are free from taxation. The Government accords respect to prominent religious leaders and different faiths.

Missionary groups operate freely throughout the country.

In accordance with Article 2 of the Constitution, which provides for a secular state, public schools are not authorized to provide religious instruction.

One indigenous, three Muslim, and six Christian holidays are observed officially: Traditional Religions Day, Ramadan, Tabaski, Maouloud, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, Whit Monday, Assumption Day, All Saints Day, and Christmas.

State-run television features coverage of the celebration of religious holidays and special events in the lives of prominent religious leaders, including ordination anniversaries and funerals.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious tolerance at all levels of society. Religious tolerance is widespread at all levels of society and in all geographic regions.

Interfaith dialog occurs regularly, and citizens respect different religious traditions and practices, including syncretistic beliefs.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

BOTSWANA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 227,344 square miles, and its population is 1.67 million. Approximately half of the country's citizens identify themselves as Christians. Anglicans, Methodists, and the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa—formerly the London Missionary Society—claim the majority of Christian adherents. There also are congregations of Lutherans, Roman Catholics, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, the Dutch Reformed Church, Mennonites, and other Christian denominations. Most other citizens adhere to traditional indigenous religions or to a mixture of religions. In recent years, the number of new churches, some of West African origin, has increased; these churches have begun holding services and drawing good-sized crowds with a charismatic blend of Christianity and traditional indigenous religions. There is a small Muslim community—approximately 23,000 practitioners, a little more than 1 percent of the total population—primarily of South Asian origin; a Hindu population of approximately the same size and ethnic composition; and a very small Baha'i community. It is unknown whether there are any atheists in the country.

Religious services are well attended in both rural and urban areas.

Foreign missionary groups operate in the country, including Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Quakers, Baptists, Lutherans, Catholics, Mennonites, and a number of independent evangelical and charismatic Christian groups.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion. The Constitution also provides for the protection of the rights and freedoms of other persons, including the right to observe and practice any religion without the unsolicited intervention of members of any other religion.

All organizations, including religious organizations, must register with the Government. To register, a group submits its constitution to the Registrar of Societies within the Ministry of Labor and Home Affairs. After a generally simple, but slow, bureaucratic process, the organization is registered. There are no legal benefits for registered organizations, although an organization must be registered before it can conduct business, sign contracts, or open an account in the local banks. Unregistered groups potentially are liable to penalties including fines up to \$200 (BWP 1,000), up to 7 years in jail, or both. In 2002, 17 religious organizations were registered; 3 were denied registration on the grounds that they provided false information or information under forged signatures.

The Constitution provides that every religious community may establish places for religious instruction at the community's expense. The Constitution prohibits forced religious instruction, forced participation in religious ceremonies, or taking oaths that run counter to an individual's religious beliefs.

There are no laws against proselytizing.

Only Christian religious holidays are recognized as public holidays—Christmas Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, and Ascension Day; however, members of other religious groups are allowed to commemorate their particular religious holidays without government interference.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

The Constitution provides for the suspension of religious freedom in the interests of national defense, public safety, public order, public morality, or public health; however, any suspension of religious freedom by the Government must be deemed "reasonably justifiable in a democratic society." This provision of the Constitution has not been invoked since 1984 when the Unification Church was denied registration.

In 1984 the Unification Church was denied registration by the Ministry of Labor and Home Affairs on the public order grounds stipulated in the Constitution. The Government also perceived the Unification Church to be anti-Semitic and denied it registration because of another constitutional provision that protects the rights and freedoms of individuals to practice their religion without intervention. Between 1984 and 1999, the Unification Church petitioned the offices of the President and Vice President without success, but made no effort to challenge the Ministry's decision in the courts. It was unclear whether the Unification Church maintained a presence in the country during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. During the period covered by this report, the Embassy met with Islamic leaders to expand a dialog between Americans and Botswanaans on Islam in both countries. U.S. Embassy representatives maintain regular contact with leaders and members of all religious communities in the country.

BURKINA FASO

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 105,689 square miles, and its total population is 12,200,000. There is no single dominant religion. Exact statistics on religious affiliation are not available; however, based on the information from 1998, the Government estimates that approximately 55 to 60 percent of the population practice

Islam, approximately 15 to 20 percent practice Roman Catholicism, approximately 5 percent are members of various Protestant denominations, and 20 to 25 percent exclusively or principally practice traditional indigenous religions. Statistics on religious affiliation are very rough because syncretistic beliefs and practices are widespread among both Christians and Muslims. A majority of citizens practice traditional indigenous religions to varying degrees, and adherence to Christian and Muslim beliefs is often nominal. Almost all citizens are believers in a supernatural order, and atheism is virtually non-existent. The large majority of the country's Muslims belong to the Sunni branch of Islam, while minorities adhere to the Shi'a, Tidjania, or Wahhabite branches.

Muslims are concentrated largely around the northern, eastern, and western borders, while Christians are concentrated in the center of the country. Traditional indigenous religions are practiced widely throughout the country, especially in rural communities. Ouagadougou, the capital, has a large Christian population, and Bobo-Dioulasso, the country's second largest city, is mostly Muslim. The country has a small Lebanese immigrant community, whose members are both Muslim and Christian.

Members of the dominant ethnic group, the Mossi, belong to all three major religions. Fulani and Dioula groups overwhelmingly are Muslim. There is little correlation between religion and political affiliation. Religious affiliation appears unrelated to membership in the ruling party, the Congress for Democracy and Progress, or any other party. Government officials belong to all of the major religions.

Foreign missionary groups are active in the country, and include the Assemblies of God, the Campus Crusade for Christ, the Christian Missionary Alliance, Baptists, the Wycliffe Bible Translators, the Mennonite Central Committee, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), the Pentecostal Church of Canada, the World Evangelical Crusade, the Society for International Missions, Seventh-day Adventists, and numerous Roman Catholic organizations. Islamic missionary groups active in the country include the African Muslim Agency, The World Movement for the Call to Islam, the World Islamic League, and Ahmadia.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. Islam, Christianity, and traditional indigenous religions are practiced freely without government interference. There is no official state religion, and the Government neither subsidizes nor favors any particular religion. The practice of a particular faith is not known to entail any advantage or disadvantage in the political arena, the civil service, the military, or the private sector.

The Government requires that religious groups register with the Ministry of Territorial Administration. Registration confers legal status but entails no specific controls or benefits. There are no penalties for failure to register. All groups are given equal access to registration, and the Government approves registrations in a routine fashion. Religious groups are taxed only if they carry on lucrative activities, such as farming.

Religious groups enjoy freedom of expression in their publications and broadcasts unless the judicial system determines that they are harming public order or committing slander; this has never occurred. The Ministry of Security grants publishing licenses, and the Superior Council of Information (CSI) grants broadcasting licenses. The Government never has denied a publishing or broadcasting license to any religious group that has requested one. The procedures for applying for publishing and broadcasting licenses are the same for both religious groups and commercial entities. Applications first are sent for review to the Ministry of Information and then forwarded to the Ministry of Security. If the Government does not respond to the application for a publishing license within the required timeframe, the applicant can begin publishing automatically. For radio licenses, before beginning broadcasts the applicant must wait until the Authority for the Regulation of Telecommunications (ARTEL) assigns a frequency and determines that the group's broadcasting equipment is of a professional quality. The Ministry of Security has the right to request samples of proposed publications and broadcasts to verify that they are in accordance with the stated nature of the religious group; however, there were no reports of religious broadcasters experiencing difficulties with this regulation. In the case of radio stations, the CSI must be informed of the name of the broadcasting director as well as of the general programming content. Once the broadcast license is grant-

ed, the Government regulates the operation of religious radio stations in accordance with the same rules that apply to commercial and state-run stations. Stations must show that their workers are employed full-time, that ARTEL has been paid for the use of assigned frequencies, and that employee social security taxes and intellectual property fees have been paid. There are no special tax preferences granted to religious organizations operating print or broadcast media.

Religious instruction is not offered in public schools; it is limited to private schools and to the home. Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant groups operate primary and secondary schools. The State monitors both the nonreligious curriculum and the qualifications of teachers employed at these schools. Although school officials must submit the names of their directors to the Government, the Government never has been involved in appointing or approving these officials. The Government does not fund any religious schools. Unlike other private schools, religious schools pay no taxes if they do not conduct any lucrative activities. The government tries to ensure that religiously oriented schools offer the full standard academic curriculum.

Foreign missionary groups, including Protestants, operate freely and face no special restrictions. The Government neither forbids missionaries from entering the country nor restricts their activities; however, missionary groups occasionally face complicated bureaucratic hurdles in pursuit of particular activities. For example, some Christian medical missionaries have difficulty operating in the country because of a partial restriction on foreign physicians. The restrictions are not aimed at religious groups.

The Government has established the following religious holidays as national holidays: Eid Al-Adha, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, Mouloud, Assumption Day, All Saints' Day, Ramadan, and Christmas Day. There is no evidence that these holidays have a negative effect on any religious group.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Religious tolerance is widespread, and members of the same family often practice different religions.

There were no significant ecumenical movements during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious conflict or ritual murders during the period covered by this report; however, there were allegations of witchcraft. The Ministry of Social Action and the Family maintains a shelter in Ouagadougou for women forced to flee their villages because they were suspected of being sorceresses.

In the past, there occasionally were violent clashes within sectors of the Muslim community, and tensions still exist between and within some groups of Muslims due to leadership disputes. There were no reports of violent clashes within sectors of the Muslim community during the period covered by this report.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses issues of religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Embassy also maintains contacts with leaders of all major organized religious denominations and groups in the country.

BURUNDI

The Transitional Constitutional Act, promulgated in October 2001, provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Act does not provide for any official state religion, and discrimination on the basis of religious conviction is prohibited.

There was no change in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 10,745 square miles, and its population is approximately 6.3 million. Although reliable statistics on the number of followers of various religions are not available, a Roman Catholic official has estimated that 60 percent of the population is Catholic, with the largest concentration of adherents located in the center and south of the country. A Muslim leader has estimated that up to 10 percent of the population is Muslim, a majority of whom lives in urban areas. The remainder of the population belongs to other Christian churches, practices traditional indigenous religions, or has no religious affiliation. In recent years, there has been a proliferation of small indigenous groups not affiliated with any major religion, some of which have won adherents by promising miracle cures for HIV/AIDS and other ailments. A good proportion of persons who have access to formal religious services attend them.

Foreign missionary groups of many faiths are active in the country, including Bahá'ís, Baptists, members of Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, the Society of Friends, and Seventh-day Adventists.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Transitional Constitutional Act, promulgated in October 2001, provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice, within the bounds of public order and the law. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse. Discrimination on the basis of religious conviction is prohibited. During the year a new bill specifically guaranteeing religious freedom and detailing the registration and regulation of religious organizations was drafted by the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security; however, the bill had not been presented to the Council of Ministers by the end of the period covered by this report.

There is no state religion. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church, which represents approximately 60 percent of the population, is predominant.

The Government requires religious groups to register with the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security. Each association with a religious nature must file the following with the Ministry: the denomination of the religious institution or affiliation, a copy of its statutes, address of its headquarters in the country, an address abroad if the religious institution is a subsidiary, and information about the association's governing body and legal representative, all of whom must have completed secondary school and have no criminal records. If an association with a religious character fails to register with the Ministry, its representative will be reminded of the requirement to do so; if the representative does not comply, the place of worship or association will be asked to close down; if it does not close down when ordered to do so, the representative of the religious institution or association can be jailed for a period of six months to five years.

The Government requires that religious groups maintain a headquarters in the country.

While there is no law that accords tax exemptions to religious groups, the Government often waives taxes on imported religious articles used by religious institutions and also often waives taxes on the importation by religious institutions of goods destined for social development purposes. These exemptions are negotiated with the Finance Ministry on a case-by-case basis, and there is no indication of religious bias in the awarding of such exemptions.

The heads of major religious organizations are accorded diplomatic status. Foreign missionary groups openly promote their religious beliefs. The Government has welcomed their development assistance.

The Government recognizes religious holidays that primarily are Catholic, including the Assumption, the Ascension, All Saint's Day, and Christmas.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were no known abuses of religious freedom by the Government during the period covered by this report.

In August 2002, rebels from the Forces for the Defense of Democracy (FDD) in Kigihu, Rutana Province, reportedly killed parish priest Peter Tondo. The motive appears to have been robbery, and there is no indication that the killing was motivated by the religious affiliation of the victim.

In June 2001, rebels killed a nun in the area of Mutambara in an ambush on a vehicle belonging to the Roman Catholic bishop of Bururi. In June 2001, FDD rebels killed Anglican archdeacon Jodl Beheda and two other persons in an ambush on their van near Makamba. Robbery was believed to be the sole motive of both attacks, as neither vehicle carried any markings that would indicate the identity of the occupants. Highway banditry is a significant problem in Burundi. No action was taken against the responsible members of the rebel forces by the end of the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religious groups in society contributed to religious freedom.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy officials also maintain regular contact with leaders and members of the various religious communities.

CAMEROON

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were a few exceptions.

There was a slight improvement in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. In the past, religious sites and personnel were subjected to abuses by government security forces; however, there were no such reports during the period covered by this report.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, some religious groups face societal pressure and discrimination within their regions, although this may reflect ethnic more than religious differences.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 183,568 square miles, and its population is approximately 15,422,000. Muslim centers and Christian churches of various denominations operate freely throughout the country. Approximately 40 percent of the population is at least nominally Christian, approximately 20 percent is at least nominally Muslim, and approximately 40 percent practices traditional indigenous religions or no religion. The Christian population is divided approximately equally between Catholic and Protestant denominations.

Christians are concentrated chiefly in the southern and western provinces. The two Anglophone provinces of the western region largely are Protestant; the Francophone provinces of the southern and western regions largely are Catholic. In the northern provinces, the locally dominant Fulani (or Peuhl) ethnic group overwhelmingly is Muslim. Other ethnic groups, known collectively as the Kirdi, generally practice some form of Islam. The Bamoun ethnic group of the western province also largely is Muslim. Traditional indigenous religions are practiced in rural areas throughout the country but rarely are practiced publicly in cities, in part because many such religions are intrinsically local in character.

Missionaries are present throughout the country, including Catholic, Muslim, the Baha'i Faith, Baptist, Presbyterian, Evangelic, and the New Church of God.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were a few exceptions. There is no official state religion.

The Law on Religious Congregations governs relations between the State and religious groups. Religious groups must be approved by and registered with the Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT) in order to function legally; there were no reports that the Government refused to register any group. It is illegal for a religious group to operate without official recognition, but the law prescribes no specific penalties. Although official recognition confers no general tax benefits, it does allow religious groups to receive real estate as tax-free gifts and legacies for the conduct of their activities.

In order to register, a religious denomination must fulfill the legal requirement to qualify as a religious congregation. This definition includes "any group of natural persons or corporate bodies whose vocation is divine worship" or "any group of persons living in community in accordance with a religious doctrine." The denomination then submits a file to the MINAT. The file must include a request for authorization, a copy of the group's charter describing planned activities, and the names and respective functions of the group's officials. The Minister reviews the file and sends it to the Presidency with a recommendation for a positive or negative decision. The President generally follows the recommendation of the Minister, and authorization is granted by a presidential decree. The approval process may take up to several years, due primarily to administrative delays.

The only religious groups known to be registered are Christian and Muslim groups and the Baha'i Faith. According to MINAT statistics released in April 2002, there are 38 officially registered denominations, most of which are Christian. There also are numerous unregistered small religious groups that operate illegally but freely. The Government does not register traditional religious groups on the grounds that the practice of traditional religions is not a public but rather a private affiliation for members of a particular ethnic or kinship group, or for the residents of a particular locality.

Disputes within registered religious groups about control of places of worship, schools, real estate, or financial assets are resolved primarily by the MINAT rather than by the judiciary.

Missionary groups are present in the country and operate without impediment. The licensing requirements for foreign groups are the same as those for domestic religious denominations.

Several religious denominations operate primary and secondary schools. Although post-secondary education continues to be dominated by state institutions, private schools affiliated with religious denominations, including Catholic, Protestant, and Koranic schools, have been among the country's best schools at the primary and secondary levels for many years. The Ministry of Education is charged by law with ensuring that private schools run by religious groups meet the same standards as state-operated schools in terms of curriculum, building quality, and teacher training. For schools affiliated with religious groups, this oversight function is performed by the Sub-Department of Confessional Education of the Ministry's Department of Private Education.

School attendance—public, private, or parochial—is mandatory through junior high school.

The Catholic Church operates two of the country's few modern private printing presses (one in Yaounde and one in Douala), and a weekly newspaper, *L'Effort Camerounais*. A 2000 government decree requires potential commercial radio broadcasters to submit a licensing application, pay a fee when the application is approved, and pay an annual licensing fee of \$15,600 (10 million CFA francs). Two private religious radio stations that had been broadcasting illegally, the Pentecostal Radio Bonne Nouvelle and Radio Reine, which is managed by a Catholic priest although not officially sponsored by the Catholic Church, continued to broadcast while awaiting official authorization. A new private Catholic radio station, Radio Veritas, submitted its application to broadcast in January 2001, and is currently awaiting official licensing before broadcasting.

Religious holidays of both the Christian and Muslim faiths are considered national holidays. These include: the Feast of the Lamb (Muslim), Good Friday (Christian), Ascension Day (Christian), Assumption Day (Christian), End of Ramadan

(Muslim) and Christmas Day (Christian). None negatively impacts those religious groups not celebrating the holiday.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In the past, government officials have disapproved of and questioned criticism of the Government by religious institutions and leaders; however, there were no reports that government officials used force to suppress such criticism.

The practice of witchcraft is a criminal offense under the national penal code; however, persons generally are prosecuted for this offense only in conjunction with some other offense, such as murder. Witchcraft traditionally has been a common explanation for diseases of unknown origin.

In April 2002, the Government banned the Ma'alah, a nontraditional religious body, following the March 2002 death of a 6-year-old girl whose mother and other members of the religious group had tortured her to death. The group believed that severe beating could extract the devil from a possessed body. Both the Government and the girl's father have since sued the mother and her accomplices. At the end of the period covered by this report, court action was still pending.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In the past, the sites and personnel of religious institutions were not exempt from the widespread human rights abuses committed by government security forces; however, there were no reports of such abuses during the period covered by this report.

On July 26, 2002, the GSO, a special Yaounde police unit, arrested 21-year-old Robert Ndoumbe Elimbi for the April 2001 murder of Appolinaire Ndi, a parish priest in the Yaounde diocese. Elimbi remained in detention at the end of the period covered by this report.

There were no developments in the May 2001 case of the shooting death of Father Henri Djeneka.

According to press reports, in April 2002, the Muslim authorities of Bui Division in the North West province tortured six members of the Dariga Tijaniya, a schismatic Islamic group. According to the Bui authorities, during certain worship rituals, male members of the religious group were having sex with female members in mosques, where sexual activity is unlawful. The Bui authorities further alleged that the six members had killed several persons in Nigeria and continued to cause serious turmoil in Foumban, a Muslim chiefdom in the West province. The six members, who were released, denied all charges and stated that the Bui Muslim authorities had fined them 24 cows. The Bui authorities denied the fine allegation. Central government authorities did not involve themselves in the case.

In December 2001, Njoya Abdellaziz, Youonyon Idriss, Ngoussou Inoussa, and Moussa Kalamop, imams of the Muslim Chiefdom of Foumban, were arrested on charges of disturbance of public order and subsequently jailed at the Foumban prison in the West province. According to a member of the royal Foumban family who was interviewed by the press, local Muslim authorities accused the four imams of creating disorder and sabotaging the December 2001 Ramadan ceremonies when a malfunctioned microphone rendered the officiating imam's sermon inaudible. The local Administrative and religious authorities peacefully settled the case in November 2002 and released the four imams. There were no reports of reprisal within the Muslim Foumban community. This case arose from the sectarian-Muslim confrontation that beset the Foumban Sultanate from 2000 through 2001. During the period covered by this report, no inter-Muslim conflicts in Foumban were reported.

In July 2001, police arrested and detained overnight approximately 60 persons who were leaving the Douala Cathedral after the evening Mass. The Police Commissioner claimed that the sweep was undertaken to deter bandits from operating in the area.

There were no reports of the Government approving religious licenses or registration in an arbitrary or discriminatory manner.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, some religious groups faced societal pressures within their regions. In the northern provinces, especially in rural areas, societal discrimination by Muslims against persons who practice traditional indigenous religions is strong and widespread, and some Christians in rural areas of the north complained of dis-

crimination by Muslims. However, no specific incidents or violence stemming from religious discrimination was reported during the period covered by this report, and historical discrimination may reflect ethnic as much as religious differences.

The northern region suffers from ethnic tensions between the Fulani, a Muslim group that conquered most of the region 200 years ago, and the Kirdi, the descendants of groups that practiced traditional indigenous religions. The Fulani conquered or displaced many Kirdi based on religious grounds. Although some Kirdi subsequently have adopted Islam, the Kirdi remain socially, educationally, and economically disadvantaged relative to the Fulani. The slavery still practiced in parts of the north is reported to be largely enslavement of Kirdi by Fulani.

The multiplication of new unaffiliated religious groups, most of which are Protestant, has led established churches to vigorously denounce what they label "sects" or "cults." Leaders of established religious organizations characterize and denounce these "sects" as detrimental to societal peace and harmony. The Archbishop of Yaounde warns his congregations during major celebrations like Christmas, Easter, or Pentecost to beware of such groups.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Embassy maintained regular contact with religious groups in the country and monitored religious freedom.

Embassy officials met on several occasions with Douala Archbishop Cardinal Christian Tumi to discuss various issues including religious freedom, human rights, freedom of the press, and the democratization process in Cameroon. In addition, during their frequent trips within Cameroon's 10 provinces, Embassy officials frequently meet local religious officials to discuss their work and any problems they may be experiencing at the hands of government officials and individuals belonging to other faiths and denominations.

CAPE VERDE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country, which consists of 9 inhabited islands, has a total area of 1,557 square miles, and its population is estimated at 480,000. The overwhelming majority (more than 90 percent) of the population is at least nominally Roman Catholic. The largest Protestant denomination is the Church of the Nazarene. Other Christian churches include the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), the Assemblies of God, and various other Pentecostal and evangelical groups. There also are small Muslim and Baha'i communities. There is no information available regarding the number of atheists in the country.

There is no association between religious differences and ethnic or political affiliations; however, it generally is understood that the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the country is sympathetic to the Movement for Democracy (MPD) party, which formerly ruled the country. While many Catholics once were hostile toward the Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV), which became the governing party in 2001, some have become supporters of the PAICV due to conflict within the MPD party and dissatisfaction over the MPD's performance.

There are some foreign missionary groups operating in the country, including evangelical groups from Brazil and United States.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Constitution also provides for the separation of church and state and prohibits the State from imposing any religious beliefs and practices. There is no state religion.

It generally is recognized that the Catholic Church enjoys a privileged status in national life. For example, the Government provides the Catholic Church with free television broadcast time for religious services and observes its holy days as official holidays.

Violation of religious freedom is a crime subject to a penalty of between 2 and 8 years' imprisonment.

To be recognized as legal entities by the Government, religious groups (as well as other organized groups of citizens) must register with the Ministry of Justice. To register, a religious group must submit a copy of its charter and statutes, signed by the members of the group, to the Minister of Justice. The Constitution sets forth the criteria for all associations, including religious ones, and states that the association may not be military or armed; may not be aimed at promoting violence, racism, xenophobia, or dictatorship; and may not be against the penal law. Failure to register with the Ministry of Justice does not result in any restriction on religious belief or practice.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

More than 20 cases involving the desecration of Catholic churches have been reported to the police over the years. While some cases date from 1975, after 1990 the rate of incidence increased. There have been no new reports of desecration since 2000. The persons responsible for the desecrations never have been identified, and the topic has remained a controversial electoral issue since the MPD accused supporters of the PAICV of involvement in the crimes; however, the courts have dismissed every formal accusation that has been brought against PAICV members, usually for lack of evidence.

In 1999 four Adventists were accused of desecration of a Catholic Church on Boa Vista Island. The case initially was tried and dismissed in the lower court; however, on the Government's appeal, the Supreme Court ruled that the case be retried on the grounds that pertinent evidence was not considered in the first trial. The trial began in November 2001 and delivery of the verdict for the retrial was postponed due to the absence of defendants' counsel at the scheduled session.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Until it was suspended following a March 15 seizure of power, the Constitution provided for freedom of religion. However, the Constitution had established legal conditions and prohibited what the now-deposed Government considered religious fundamentalism or intolerance. The constitutional provision prohibiting religious fundamentalism was understood widely to have been aimed at Muslims. Prior to the

seizure of power, in practice the Government permitted adherents of all religions to worship without interference.

On March 31, General Francois Bozize, who seized the presidency from President Ange-Felix Patasse, established a 63-member National Transitional Council. Bozize stated that the Council was to serve as an advisory and transitional law-making organ, and was intended to assist the presidency in drafting a new constitution.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report; however, following the seizure of power, a church that the Patasse Government had closed in October 2001 was authorized to operate. The Patasse Government had closed the church due to political differences with its founders; Bozize was one of the cofounders and operators of the church.

Although in general there is religious tolerance among members of different religious groups, there were several reported mob killings of persons suspected of practicing witchcraft during the period covered by this report. There also were occasional reports that villagers believed to be witches were harassed or beaten.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 242,000 square miles, and its population is approximately 3.6 million, of which an estimated 690,000 live in the capital, Bangui. Approximately 50 percent of the population are Christian, approximately 15 percent are Muslim, and approximately 35 percent practice traditional indigenous religions or no religion. Most Christians also practice some aspects of traditional indigenous religions. The Government does not keep data on the number of nontraditional religious groups in the country, and there is no data available on active participation in formal religious services or rituals. There is anecdotal evidence of an increase in conversions to Islam by younger persons.

In general, immigrants and foreign nationals in the country who practice a particular religion characterize themselves as Catholic, Protestant, or Muslim.

There are many missionary groups operating in the country, such as the Lutherans, Baptists, Catholics, Grace Brethren, and Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as missionaries from Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and other African countries. However, during November and December 2002 many missionaries left the country as a result of fighting between government forces and rebels led by General Bozize, particularly in western areas of the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

Until it was suspended following a March 15, seizure of power, the Constitution provided for freedom of religion. However, the Constitution had established legal conditions and prohibited what the Patasse Government considered religious fundamentalism or intolerance. The constitutional provision prohibiting religious fundamentalism was understood widely to have been aimed at Muslims. Prior to the seizure of power, in practice the Government permitted adherents of all religions to worship without interference. There is no state religion. There is no indication that the Government favors any particular religion; however, during the period covered by this report, at least one minority religion complained that the Government granted free time each week on the official radio station to Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim speakers, but required the representatives of smaller religions to pay.

Religious groups (except for traditional indigenous religious groups) are required by law to register with the Ministry of Interior. This registration is free and confers official recognition and certain limited benefits, such as customs duty exemption for the importation of vehicles or equipment, but does not confer a general tax exemption. The administrative police of the Ministry of Interior keep track of groups that have failed to register; however, the police have not attempted to impose any penalty on such groups.

Religious organizations and missionary groups are free to proselytize, worship, and construct places of worship.

Although the Government does not prohibit explicitly religious instruction in public schools, religious instruction is not a part of the overall public school curriculum. There are approximately 12 Catholic schools in Bangui.

Religious holidays celebrated as national holidays include Christmas, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, the Monday after Pentecost, and All Saints Day.

In the past, the Government has taken positive steps to promote interfaith dialog, including organizing interfaith masses to promote peace.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Any religious or nonreligious group that the Government considers subversive is subject to sanctions. The Ministry of Interior may decline to register, suspend the operations of, or ban any organization that it deems offensive to public morals or likely to disturb the peace. The Ministry of Interior also may intervene to resolve internal conflicts about property, finances, or leadership within religious groups. The Government has banned the Unification Church since the mid-1980's as a subversive organization likely to disturb the peace, specifically in connection with alleged paramilitary training of young church members. However, the Government imposed no new sanctions on any religious groups during the year. In October 2001, President Patasse fired General Bozize, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. The following week, government forces closed a Christian church that Bozize cofounded and operated. Following the March seizure of power by Bozize, the church was authorized to operate.

The practice of witchcraft is a criminal offense under the Penal Code; however, persons generally are prosecuted for this offense only in conjunction with some other offense, such as murder. Witchcraft traditionally has been a common explanation for diseases of which the causes were unknown. Although many traditional indigenous religions include or accommodate belief in the efficacy of witchcraft, they generally approve of harmful witchcraft only for defensive or retaliatory purposes and purport to offer protection against it. The practice of witchcraft is understood widely to encompass attempts to harm others not only by magic, but also by covert means of established efficacy such as poisons.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In October 2001, in Bangui, the Mixed Commission of Judicial Inquiry arrested Father Tomino Falagoista, director of the Catholic radio station Radio Notre Dame. After a May 2001 coup attempt, Radio Notre Dame broadcast a report that criticized the killing of members of the Yakoma ethnic group during and following the coup attempt and alleged that there were three mass graves of victims of the security forces in Bangui. Falagoista, who reportedly was arrested because he had failed to send the Commission a written denial that he had authored or approved the broadcast, was released in December 2001.

Unlike in the period covered by the previous report, there were no reports that Muslim Chadian commercial traders were being attacked in the commercial section of Bangui. Although the attacks in the past were commercially motivated, they seemed to be aggravated and tolerated because the Chadians are Muslims. It was unclear if police or private citizens perpetrated the attacks.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

During November and December 2002, many missionaries left the country as a result of fighting between government forces and rebels linked to an October 2002 coup attempt led by General Bozize. Missionaries working near the area of the insurrections in the western part of the country were reportedly attacked and their stations experienced severe looting. In December 2002, Father Jean Claude Kilamong was found dead in Bossangoa; the priest reportedly had been taken hostage by rebels linked to an October 2002 coup attempt, which was led by General Bozize. Two weeks prior to the priest's death, a Franciscan community near Bossangoa was reportedly attacked by the same rebels; three missionaries were beaten and threatened with death before fleeing to Bangui.

There were no developments, and there are unlikely to be any, in the case of the six armed men, alleged to be soldiers from the DRC, who in 1999 allegedly raped three foreign nuns and beat a local priest at their residence in Bangassou, near the border with the DRC.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Although in general there is religious tolerance among members of different religious groups, there have been occasional reports that some villagers who were believed to be witches were harassed, beaten, or sometimes killed by neighbors. Courts have tried, convicted, and sentenced some persons for crimes of violence against suspected witches. There were several reported mob killings of persons suspected of practicing witchcraft in recent years. For example, *Le Citoyen* newspaper reported that in July 2001 an angry mob killed two elderly women suspected of practicing

witchcraft; no action was taken in the case by the end of the period covered by this report.

In recent years, bandits have attacked missionaries on several occasions. For example, in January 2002 in Yaloke and in February 2002 in Bangassou, armed bandits broke into the residences of missionary families and stole money, radios, and other items at gunpoint. The motive for the attacks is believed to be criminal rather than religious. Investigations into both incidents were conducted; however, no arrests were made. In October 2001 armed highway bandits stopped a vehicle near Grimari carrying several missionaries. The bandits assaulted and injured one of the missionaries and looted the vehicle; government soldiers arrived two hours later, and shot at and dispersed the bandits. There were no arrests or reports of any action taken against the perpetrators.

The Government conducted a full investigation into the February 2000 cases in which armed bandits attacked vehicles transporting religious personnel, killing one nun and injuring another; however, no further action was taken during the period covered by this report, and the results of the investigation were not released publicly.

When serious social or political conflicts have arisen, simultaneous prayer ceremonies have been held in churches, temples, and mosques to ask for divine assistance. The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace often conducts developmental and educational programs and seminars throughout the country. The members work closely with other church groups and social organizations on social issues. Unlike in recent years, there were no large-scale ecumenical services.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Embassy maintains contact with religious groups, especially American missionaries in the country, and monitors human rights developments. In October 2001, Embassy personnel met with the imam of Bangui and his council to facilitate greater understanding between the Muslim community and the U.S. Government.

CHAD

The Constitution provides for religious freedom, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, at times the Government limited this right.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Although the different religious communities generally coexisted without problems, there were reports of occasional tension between Christians and Muslims in reaction to the proselytizing by evangelical Christians.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 495,755 square miles, and its population is approximately 8,997,237. Of the total population, 54 percent are Muslim, approximately one-third are Christian, and the remainder practice traditional indigenous religions or no religion at all. Most northerners practice Islam and most southerners practice Christianity or a traditional indigenous religion; however, population patterns are becoming more complex, especially in urban areas. Many citizens, despite stated religious affiliation, do not practice their religion regularly.

The vast majority of Muslims are adherents of a moderate branch of mystical Islam (Sufism) known locally as Tidjani, which originated in 1727 under Sheik Ahmat Tidjani in present-day Morocco and Algeria. Tidjani Islam, as practiced in the country, incorporates some local African religious elements. A small minority of the country's Muslims (5 to 10 percent) are considered fundamentalist.

Roman Catholics make up the largest Christian denomination in the country; most Protestants are affiliated with various evangelical Christian groups.

Adherents of two other religions, the Baha'i Faith and Jehovah's Witnesses, also are present in the country. Both faiths were introduced after independence in 1960 and therefore are considered to be "new" religions. Because of their relatively recent origin and their affiliation with foreign practitioners, both are perceived as foreign.

A representative of the religious community sits on the Revenue Management College, the body that oversees the allocation of oil revenues. The seat will rotate among Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant leaders.

There are foreign missionaries representing both Christian and Islamic groups. Itinerant Muslim imams also visit, primarily from Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for religious freedom, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, at times the Government limited this right. The Constitution also provides that the country shall be a secular state; however, despite the secular nature of the State, a large proportion of senior government officials are Muslims, and some policies favor Islam in practice. For example, the Government sponsors annual Hajj trips to Mecca for certain government officials.

The Government requires religious groups, including both foreign missionary groups and domestic religious groups, to register with the Ministry of the Interior's Department for Religious Affairs. Registration confers official recognition but does not confer any tax preferences or other benefits. There are no specific legal penalties for failure to register, and there were no reports that any group had failed to apply for registration or that the registration process is unduly burdensome.

In 2000 the Supreme Court rejected a request from one branch of a Christian evangelical church to deny government recognition to its independent sister branch. In 1998 the Eglise Evangelique des Freres (EEF) split into moderate and fundamentalist groups. The moderate branch of the EEF retained the legal registration for the Church, but in 1999 the Ministry of Interior also awarded recognition to the fundamentalist branch; the fundamentalist branch received recognition under a new name, Eglise des Freres Independants au Tchad (EFIT). Since 1999 the EEF branch has sought to bar the EFIT church legally from practice. The case ultimately went before the Appeals Court in February 2002, which upheld the rights of the EFIT to continue its religious work and its right to function.

Foreign missionaries do not face restrictions but must register and receive authorization from the Ministry of Interior. There were no reports that authorization was withheld from any group. Muslim, Catholic and Protestant missionaries proselytize in the country.

The country has both Christian and Muslim holidays that are considered national holidays. Muslim national holidays include: Aid-Al-Adha (February), Maouloud-Al-Nebi (May), and Aid-Al-Fitr (November). Christian holidays include: Easter Monday (April), All Saint's Day (November), and Christmas Day (December).

Religious instruction is prohibited in public schools. All religions are permitted to operate private schools.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In July 2002 the Minister of Territorial Administration formally admonished the Catholic Church to stay out of all political activities. The Minister was reacting specifically to a "train the trainers" program that the Church conducted for election observers in advance of the municipal elections scheduled for late 2002 (a representative from the Ministry attended both the opening and the closing of the workshop, at the Church's invitation). According to the Minister, the Catholic Church was trying to become a political party or a civil society organization, which would illegally confound religion and politics. However, during the 2001 presidential elections, the head of the Superior Council of Islamic Affairs advocated on behalf of a Muslim candidate without a similar rebuke from the Government.

In 2001 the Minister of Interior formally banned the Islamic religious group Faïd al-Djaria (also spelled Faydal Djaria), a Sufi group that adheres to a mystical form of Islam. The group arrived in the country from Nigeria and Senegal and incorporates singing and dancing into its religious ceremonies and activities. Male and female members of the group freely interact with one another during religious gatherings. The group is found from the Kanem region around Lake Chad into neighboring Chari Baguirmi. Acting at the request of the Director of Religious and Traditional Affairs, the Superior Council for Islamic Affairs, and certain ulama (Muslim religious authorities) who objected to Faïd al-Djaria's religious customs that they deemed un-Islamic, particularly that both men and women sang and danced with each other, the Interior Ministry declared that the group lacked the proper authorization to practice. According to a Faïd al-Djaria member, part of the Council's objection derives from a personal conflict with Faïd al-Djaria's leaders. The September 2001 ban was the latest in a series of government actions taken against the group.

The Minister of Interior previously had banned the group in 1998; however, from the beginning of 2000, the group increasingly became active, resulting in a number of arrests in the Kanem. The 2001 ban was implemented on technical grounds, and the Government did not recognize the group's registration. According to one Faïd al-Djaria member, the group plans to ignore the ban and continue to worship as they have in the past.

According to a Protestant pastor in N'Djamena, while differing faiths or denominations are treated equally by the Government, Islamic congregations appear to have an easier time obtaining official permission for their activities. Non-Islamic religious leaders also claim that Islamic officials and organizations receive greater tax exemptions and unofficial financial support from the Government. State lands reportedly were accorded to Islamic leaders for the purpose of building mosques, while other religious denominations must purchase land at market rates to build places of worship. However, in 2001 at least one Christian congregation was able to reclaim a former building that was being used by a Muslim congregation, because the Government found that the Christian church had a stronger legal claim to the building.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In February, a church in the predominantly Muslim town of Abeche was burned; it was the most serious event in a series of acts of vandalism against the church. The Church of Christian Assemblies in Chad (ACT) had recently built the structure following a conflict with Abeche's Islamic Affairs Committee that dates back several years. When ACT left Abeche for the southern part of the country during the civil war of 1979, the church was converted into a mosque and Islamic school. Upon returning to Abeche in 1999, ACT members challenged the Islamic Affairs Committee's legal right to the structure; the courts ruled in ACT's favor in April 2001. When the Islamic Affairs Committee refused to abide by the court's ruling, the two sides agreed upon a compromise solution: they would cede the disputed site to the State, and build new houses of worship. ACT built its church in the same neighborhood as the original church, although they were forced to begin anew three times when vandals destroyed the foundation.

There are an undetermined number of followers of Faïd al-Djaria, the banned Islamic group, who were prisoners in the Kanem. In 2000 the Sultan of Kanem arrested a number of adherents of the group Faïd al-Djaria. In addition the Chadian Superior Council of Islamic Affairs, which believes that the group does not conform to Islamic tenets, requested that the Ministry of Interior arrest the group's spiritual leader, Ahmat Abdallah. In September 2001, the Council successfully petitioned the Interior Ministry to ban the group.

The Government has imprisoned and sanctioned fundamentalist Islamic imams believed to be promoting conflict among Muslims. The Government restricted a fundamentalist imam in N'Djamena, Mahamadou Mahamat, also known as Sheikh Faki Suzuki, from preaching from October 1998 to March 1999. At that time, the authorities also placed him under house arrest, charging that he was inciting religious violence. In July 2002, Faki Suzuki and Haroun Idriss Abou-Mandela, another imam whom the Superior Council of Islamic Affairs has prohibited from preaching, were rebuked by the Council once again. After the imams participated in a weekly program on religion aired by the private radio station FM Alnassr, the Council protested. According to the Grand Imam, who heads the Council, only those authorized by the Council can speak in the name of Islam on the radio. The Council accused Faki Suzuki of making improper remarks about other ethnic and social groups. In 1999 the Government arbitrarily arrested and detained in prison for 1 year Imam Sheikh Mahamat Marouf, the fundamentalist Islamic leader of the northeastern town of Abeche, and refused to allow his followers to meet and pray openly in their mosque. Since his release, Sheikh Marouf may pray but is not permitted to lead prayers. His followers were allowed to pray in their mosques, but were forbidden from debating religious beliefs in any way that might be considered proselytizing; however, the Tidjani followers were allowed to proselytize.

Several human rights organization reported on the problem of the "mahadjir" children. Teachers force these children, who attended certain Islamic schools, to beg for food and money. There were no real estimates as to the number of mahadjir children; however, UNICEF was conducting a study on children's status that was expected to include figures on mahadjir children.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion or attempts at forced conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed

from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Although the different religious communities generally coexisted without problems, there were reports of occasional tension between Christians and Muslims due to the proselytizing by evangelical Christians.

Former Islamic adherents who have converted to Christianity as well to other religions were shunned by their families and sometimes were beaten; however, there were no reported incidents of beatings during the period covered by this report.

Most interfaith dialog happens on an individual level and not through the intervention of the Government.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. In the period covered by this report, the Embassy widely distributed electronic journals on freedom of religion. The Embassy also sponsored two workshops on conflict resolution in the country, both of which addressed the issue of religious freedom.

During the past two years, Embassy officials have increased their outreach efforts, particularly among Muslim leaders. As part of this strategy, the Embassy donated books and posters on Islam in America to key Muslim leaders and local schools. One of the country's prominent Muslim academics participated in the U.S. Government-sponsored International Visitor Program, traveling to the U.S. to learn about the role of religion in a democracy.

COMOROS

The Constitution, which was voted into effect in December 2001, specifically provides for freedom of religion; however, authorities continued to infringe on this right.

There was no change in the status of what is at times limited respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. An overwhelming majority of the population is Sunni Muslim; government authorities continued to prohibit Christians from proselytizing, and the local authorities and population restricted the right of Christians to practice their faith in parts of the country. In the past, police regularly threatened and sometimes detained practicing Christians; however, there were no reports of such incidents during the period covered by this report.

There is widespread societal discrimination against Christians.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 838 square miles, and its population is approximately 685,000. An overwhelming majority—almost 99 percent—of the population is Sunni Muslim. There are fewer than 300 Christian citizens (less than 1 percent of the population). There are fewer than 200 foreigners who are Hindus, members of Jehovah's Witnesses, Protestants, Catholics, and members of other Christian religious groups who live on the islands. There are no known atheists.

A few foreign religious groups maintain humanitarian programs in the country and, through an agreement with the Government, do not engage in religious proselytizing.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution, which was promulgated in 2000 by the head of the military after the 1999 coup, did not provide specifically for freedom of religion, and authorities infringed on this right. The new Constitution, which was voted into effect in December 2001 and reincorporates Anjouan, Grand Comoros, and Moheli into a new federation that grants the islands greater autonomy, specifically provides for freedom of religion; however, the new Constitution also proclaims Islam the official religion of the country, and the Government discouraged the practice of other religions. Government authorities continued to prohibit Christians from proselytizing, and the

local authorities and population restricted the right of Christians to practice their faith in parts of the country.

Prior to the incorporation of Anjouan into the federation, the Constitution, written by the separatist leadership of Anjouan, provided for freedom of religion; however, separatist leadership discouraged the practice of religions other than Islam.

The Ulamas council, which had advised the President, Prime Minister, President of the Federal Assembly, the Council of Isles, and the island governors on whether bills, ordinances, decrees, and laws conformed to the principles of Islam, no longer exists. Since December 2001, the Grand Mufti consults with a group of elders periodically to assess whether the principles of Islam are respected, and he regularly addresses the nation on the radio to answer calls and letters.

The tenets of Islam are taught in conjunction with Arabic instruction in public schools for students at the middle level. Almost all children between the ages of 4 and 7 also attend Koranic schools to learn how to recite and understand the Koran.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government discouraged the practice of religions other than Islam. Christians, in particular, faced restrictions on their ability to practice their faith. There are two Roman Catholic churches, one in Moroni, on the island of Grande Comore, and one in Mutsamudu, on the island of Anjouan. There is one Protestant church in Moroni. Many Christians practiced their faith in private residences as the Government continued to restrict the use of the country's three churches to non-citizens. Foreigners were allowed to practice their faith, but they were not allowed to proselytize.

Local authorities and religious leaders continued to harass Christians on Anjouan where suspicion of Christians appeared to be stronger. Some community authorities on Anjouan banned Christians from attending any community events and banned Christian burials in a local cemetery; however, in general Christians were allowed to attend community events and be buried in local cemeteries.

Bans on alcohol and immodest dress are enforced sporadically, usually during religious months, such as Ramadan. Alcohol can be imported and sold with a permit from the Government.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In the past, the Government arrested and convicted individuals with Christian affiliations on charges of "anti-Islamic activity," and police regularly threatened and sometimes detained practicing Christians; however, there were no reports of such incidents during the period covered by this report. Usually the authorities held those detained for a few days and often attempted to convert them forcibly to Islam.

On Anjouan, local authorities continued to attempt to suppress or convert the local Christian minority. In the past, there have been accounts of police and quasi-police authorities, known as embargoes, arresting, beating, and detaining Christians on the island of Anjouan. There were no reports of Christians being detained on Anjouan during the period covered by this report.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There is widespread societal discrimination against Christians in all sectors of life. In Grand Comoros, Christians are free to attend church, and non-citizen Christians are allowed to practice their faith so long as they do not attempt to convert citizens; however, Christians face insults and threats of violence from members of their communities. Christians have been harassed by mobs in front of mosques and called in for questioning by religious authorities. Citizens who convert to Christianity have been rejected by family and village. In some instances, families have forced Christian family members out of their homes or threatened them with a loss of financial support. Some Christians have had their Bibles taken by family members. Local government officials, religious authorities, and family members have attempted to force Christians to attend services at mosques against their will. This was particularly the case in Anjouan, although no incident was reported during the period covered by this report. There is some indication that young citizens who return from Islamic theological studies abroad attempt to impose a more fundamentalist adherence to Islamic religious law on their family members and associates.

In April 2001, in Domoni on Anjouan, a local Christian leader was summoned before local Islamic leaders and threatened. The Christian leader's father was forced

to pay a fine, and the leader's family had to leave Domoni for 1 month. In the past, religious leaders on Anjouan and Grande Comore made threats against Christians during radio broadcasts; however, there were no reports of such threats during the period covered by this report.

Unlike in previous periods covered by this report, there were no reports of unofficial campaigns against Christians or efforts to isolate Christians from village life during the period covered by the report.

Islamic fundamentalism is increasing as more students return to the country after studying in colleges and universities in more fundamentalist Islamic countries.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Although there was no constitution in effect during the period covered by this report, the Government generally respected freedom of religion in practice, provided that worshipers neither disturbed public order nor contradicted commonly held morals. Unlike in the period covered by the previous report, there were no reports of government soldiers committing abuses in government-controlled territory. There were reports of abuses by rebel troops in territories not controlled by the Government.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom in government-controlled areas during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion. However, in areas of the country under the military occupation of Rwanda and the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) rebel groups, respect for religious freedom continued to be poor. Before Rwanda officially announced on September 21, 2002, that it had withdrawn its troops to Rwanda, credible reports indicated that Rwandan troops and Rwandan-backed RCD troops based in Goma (RCD/Goma) deliberately targeted churches and religious leaders in the towns and villages under their control. These actions were believed to be part of an attempt to intimidate and control communities and leaders who opposed the Rwandan presence in the country; there was no apparent religious motivation. Unlike during the period covered by the previous report, violence and banditry in Bunia, Beni and Butembo, although continuing, did not target churches or religious groups.

There was a generally amicable relationship among religions in society. However, there continued to be credible reports that a significant number of children were accused of witchcraft and abandoned by their families. There has been a decrease in the number of incidents reported in which persons suspected of witchcraft were attacked, tortured, killed, or driven from their homes.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 905,000 square miles, and its population is approximately 52 million. Approximately 55 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, 25 percent is Protestant, and 2.5 percent is Muslim. The remainder largely practice traditional indigenous religions. There are no statistics available on the percentage of atheists. Minority religious groups include, among others, Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons).

There are no reliable data on active participation in religious services. Ethnic and political differences generally are not linked to religious differences.

Foreign missionaries operate within the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Legal/Policy Framework

Although there was no constitution in effect during the period covered by this report, the Government generally respected freedom of religion in practice, provided that worshipers neither disturbed public order nor contradicted commonly held morals. Unlike the period covered by the previous report, there were no reports of government forces restricting religious freedom. There is no state religion.

The establishment and operation of religious institutions is provided for and regulated through a statutory order on the Regulation of Non-profit Associations and Public Utility Institutions. Requirements for the establishment of a religious organization are simple and generally are not subject to abuse. Exemption from taxation is among the benefits granted to religious organizations. A 1971 law regulating religious organizations grants civil servants the power to recognize, suspend recognition of, or dissolve religious groups. There have been no reports that the Government suspended or dissolved a religious group since 1990, when the Government suspended its recognition of Jehovah's Witnesses; that suspension subsequently was reversed by a court. Although the law restricts the process of recognition, officially recognized religions are free to establish places of worship and to train clergy.

The Government requires practicing religious groups to be registered; however, in practice unregistered religious groups operate unhindered.

Although the Government requires foreign religious groups to obtain the approval of the President through the Minister of Justice, foreign religious groups generally operate without restriction once they receive approval from the Government. Many recognized churches have external ties, and foreign missionaries generally are allowed to proselytize. The Government generally did not interfere with foreign missionaries.

The Government promoted interfaith understanding by supporting and consulting with the country's five major religious groups (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Muslim, and Kimbanguist). The Consortium of Traditional Religious Leaders serves as a forum for religious leaders to gather and discuss issues of concern, and it advises and counsels the Government while presenting a common moral and religious front.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In 1999 former President Laurent Kabila promulgated a decree that restricted the activities of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including religious organizations, by establishing requirements for them; however, existing religious organizations were exempt, and the decree subsequently was not enforced. In 2001 President Joseph Kabila issued a decree that allows nonprofit organizations, including religious organizations, to operate without restriction provided they register with the Government by submitting copies of their bylaws and constitution.

While the Government generally did not interfere with foreign missionaries, foreign missionaries have not been exempt from general restrictions by security forces, such as freedom of movement imposed on all persons by security force members who erect and man roadblocks, at which they often solicit bribes.

The Government banned the group "Bundu dia Kongo" on the basis of its separatist political beliefs. On July 15, 2002, 45 of the leaders of the group in 7 localities were arrested and imprisoned. Of the 45, 4 subsequently died in prison of "illness." On April 24, the remaining 41 were released. Although the group has both religious and political beliefs, the group was banned and members were jailed for their political beliefs.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Unlike the period covered by the previous report, there were no reports of religious officials being abused or religious property destroyed in government-controlled territory in the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees, excepting the "Bundu dia Kongo," in government-controlled areas.

The ongoing war broke out in 1998 between the Government and rebel forces; by the end of the period covered by this report, rebel forces backed by Rwanda and Uganda continued to control more than half of the country. The Government exercises no authority in areas east and north of the disengagement line. In areas of the country that were under the military occupation of Rwanda, respect for religious freedom was poor; in areas that continue to be under the occupation of Rwanda's respective rebel clients, respect for religious freedom continued to be poor. RCD/Goma rebels and their Rwandan allies continued to commit significant abuses in these areas. Credible reports indicate that RCD/Goma and Rwandan troops deliberately targeted churches and religious leaders in the towns and villages under their control. Such actions were believed to be part of an attempt to intimidate the population and retaliate for the growing role of churches as the only safe zones for community discussion and peaceful activism against the presence of Rwandan and RCD/Goma forces in the country. Abuses took the form of arbitrary killings, arrests, and disappearances of pastors, priests, and laymen; public threats against the lives of religious leaders; pillaging and destruction of church property; and the use of armed soldiers to disperse forcibly religious services.

On May 10, 10 tribal militiamen attacked the parish of Nyakasanza in Bunia, killing 14 people and looting and destroying the parish; the dead included 2 priests, Father Aime Ndjabu and Father Francis Mateseso. Four days prior to the attack, Father Raphael Ngona was also killed in Bunia. No further information is available and the attacks appear to have been politically or ethnically motivated, not on religious grounds.

On April 6, 12 people were killed in an attack on Bukavu by fighters from a local militia known as Mudundu 40. RCD/Goma and Rwandan Patriotic Front soldiers reacted by attacking Mushinga and Burhale, killing 60 people and destroying churches, parishes and schools.

On July 20, 2002, Bunda dia Kongo followers reportedly clashed with police in Louzi and Moanda; 10 of the demonstrators in Luozi and 4 in Moanda were killed, and numerous others were injured by gunshot. One policeman reportedly also was killed.

There were several incidents of abuse in the RCD/Goma controlled territory in 2000. In May 2002, bodyguards of the RCD/Goma's 13th Brigade Commander Mwilambwe beat two priests and two Catholic laymen in the presence of RCD/Goma Deputy Director of Security and Information Bampa, who had ordered the beatings. Mwilambwe reportedly told the victims that the beatings were in response to Catholic criticism of the RCD/Goma.

In May 2002, in Kisangani, troops from the RCD/Goma and the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) seized Xavier Zabalo, a Spanish Jesuit priest, transferred him to several different detention locations, and pillaged his parish and personal home; Zabalo was released 24 hours later following strong international pressure. Also in May, RCD/Goma and RPA forces in Kisangani seized and beat Guy Verhaegen, a Belgian Catholic priest, who later required hospitalization for his injuries.

In May 2002, RCD/Goma Brigade Commander Eric Ruhorimbere issued a public statement that accused the clergy in North Katanga Province of "misleading" the public through their preaching. The statement, which was delivered in the presence of the RCD Governor and Vice Governor of North Katanga, included a death threat against the clergy.

In April 2002, in Bukavu, Rwandan and RCD/Goma soldiers surrounded the congregations of several Catholic churches and forcibly dispersed, beat, and kicked parishioners. The Catholic Church in Bukavu originally had organized a Mass at which Catholics from all parishes in South Kivu Province were to assemble and pray for peace. Although the Catholic Church had applied for and received permission from the Mayor of Bukavu and the Vice Governor of South Kivu Province to hold the Mass, Rwandan and RCD/Goma soldiers announced on the radio that the Mass was forbidden. During the broadcast, RCD/Goma Commander Chuma Balumisa issued threats against the Catholic Church, specific priests, including Monseigneur Maroyi, and anyone who participated in the Mass. The Catholic Church cancelled the Mass and told parishioners to pray instead at their local parishes. On the morning of April 12, Rwandan forces armed with guns and RCD/Goma soldiers and police armed with batons surrounded the main religious centers in each parish and lined the main roads in Bukavu. In the Cahu Parish, soldiers entered the church, beat parishioners and priests, and destroyed the statue outside the Church. In Nyamwera Parish, Rwandan soldiers used tear gas to disperse a group of young students. In Mater Dei of Muhungu Parish, soldiers chased parishioners from their church, beat them, and fired shots in the air. Soldiers at the same parish violently kicked a group of children between the ages of 8 and 12 who were marching toward the church chanting, "We ask for peace." Numerous persons were injured, including two priests, a 14-year-old girl, and a 17-year-old boy.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Although there is a generally amicable relationship among religions in society, there continued to be credible reports that significant numbers of children throughout the country were accused of being witches and then driven from their homes by their families. Accusations of child sorcery can be made when death, disease, or unemployment strikes the home. Some of the accused children who are not abandoned reportedly are taken to special religious groups to undergo exorcisms. During the exorcisms children may be locked in boxes for long periods of time, starved for

several days, or receive other harsh treatments. No further information was available at the end of the period covered by this report.

There has been a decrease in the number of incidents reported in which persons suspected of witchcraft were attacked, tortured, killed, or driven from their homes. In June 2001, in Orientale Province, there were reports of witch hunts that resulted in the killing of several hundred persons; more than 150 persons were arrested for suspected involvement by the end of 2001. The local population targeted the victims because they suspected and feared that they were casting spells on others. There is a common belief in the region that some persons have the power to cast spells on others; this fear sometimes rises to mass hysteria. No further information was available at the end of the period covered by this report.

In April 2002, unidentified persons shot and killed Catholic priest Romain Kahindo Kyavuyirwe while he was driving in an area controlled by RCD/ML rebels. A local human rights group believed the attack to be a result of the general state of violence in the area, rather than a deliberate targeting of religious leaders.

In March 2002, in Goma, unidentified persons threw a hand grenade into a Catholic religious procession; 1 priest and 2 children were killed, and 11 persons, including 3 priests, were injured. The RCD/Goma investigation, which was viewed as not credible, placed responsibility for the incident on human rights activists and U.N. personnel; RCD/Goma forces subsequently arrested at least six human rights activists. The motivation for the attack was believed to be political, rather than religious. No further information was available at the end of the period covered by this report.

Leaders of major religions consult with one another through the Consortium of Traditional Religious Leaders.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of the promoting human rights.

On numerous occasions, the U.S. Government continued to voice its opposition to the presence of hostile foreign troops in the country. The U.S. Government also publicly criticized the war and launched a number of diplomatic initiatives, in concert with the U.N., to bring the conflict to an end.

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The Constitution, approved in January 2002, provides for freedom of religion and the Government continued to generally respect this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

While the generally amicable relations among religions in society contributed to religious freedom, the close link between certain self-proclaimed messianic groups and opposition political movements at times was a source of tension during the period covered by this report. Toward the end of the reporting period, the Government and the last remaining armed opposition group took substantial steps toward a peace accord, reducing these tensions.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 132,047 square miles, and its population is approximately 3 million. Approximately half of its citizens are Christian; of these about 90 percent are Roman Catholic. There is a small Muslim community estimated at 25,000 to 50,000 persons, most of whom are immigrants from North and West Africa who work in commerce in urban centers. The remainder of the population is made up of practitioners of traditional indigenous religions, those who belong to various messianic groups, and those who practice no religion at all. A small minority of the Christian community practices Kimbanguism, a syncretistic movement that originated in the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo. While retaining many elements of Christianity, Kimbanguism also recognizes its founder (Simon Kimbangu) as a prophet and incorporates African traditional beliefs, such as ancestor worship.

Mystical or messianic practices (especially among the ethnic Lari population in the Pool region) have been associated with opposition political movements, including some elements of the armed insurrection in the southern part of the country during 1998–99.

Several Western Christian missionary groups are active in the country, including members of Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Salvation Army, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and several Catholic religious orders.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

Title II, Article 8 of the Constitution provides for freedom of religion and specifically forbids discrimination on the basis of religion. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no official state religion.

All organizations, including religious organizations, businesses, unions, and charitable or non-profit societies, are required to register with and be approved by the Government. There were no reports of discrimination against religious groups in this process, though all admit it is time-consuming and lengthy. Penalties for failure to register involve fines and potential confiscation of goods, invalidation of contracts, and deportation for foreigners, but no criminal penalties are applicable.

The Government recognizes the Christian holidays of Christmas, Ascension, and Pentecost as national holidays.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion. Of note, there is a growing Muslim community in the country, comprised predominantly of West Africans (Maliens and Senegalese being the most numerous) and Lebanese. They are able to practice freely and although their holidays are not nationally observed, they are respected.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The “Ninja” rebel militia group, which is led by self-proclaimed prophet Frederic Bitsangou, also known as Pasteur Ntumi, was responsible for certain human rights abuses in the Pool region of the country in 2002. However, there were additional reports that some of the human rights abuses blamed on the Ninjas were actually carried out by government forces. In March 2002, the Ninjas took hostage a French priest who later died while in captivity. The motivation for the kidnapping was believed to be political, rather than religious. There were other reports in 2002 that Ntumi desecrated churches by practicing in them his own religion, which is a mixture of Christianity, ancestor worship, and indigenous religion. Toward the end of the reporting period, however, Ntumi’s group and the Government have taken substantial steps to make peace and stabilize the country. Since the March 17 peace accords, there have been no reports of abuse and desecration of churches.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relations among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, the close link between certain messianic groups and armed opposition political movements, including the “Ninjas,” at times was a source of tension.

All organized religious groups are represented in a joint ecumenical council, which meets periodically.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. These discussions include highlighting the importance of the issues with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Presidency, and members of the National Assembly. The U.S. Embassy also has executed public diplomacy programs with key civil society groups that address these issues.

COTE D'IVOIRE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respected that right; however, after September 19, the Government targeted persons perceived to be perpetrators or supporters of the rebellion, who often were Muslims.

The status of respect for religious freedom deteriorated somewhat during the period covered by this report. The Government is facing its greatest political crisis since independence following a failed coup attempt and mutiny in September 2002 that led to a division of the country. After the onset of the crisis, the Government cracked down on persons perceived to be associated with the rebellion, the majority of whose supporters appear to be Muslim citizens of northern origin. The repression directed against Muslims during the crisis, which included the killings of several Muslim leaders, eased by the end of the period covered by this report. Strong efforts by religious and civil society groups have helped prevent the crisis from turning into a religious conflict. The establishment of a Ministry of Religion in March highlights the Government's efforts to deal with religious strains.

Before the crisis began, the Government had undertaken a major effort to promote religious harmony among the country's various religious groups in order to counter efforts by groups using religion as a political tool. The Government followed up the Forum for National Reconciliation, which took place between October and December 2001, with several programs and initiatives aimed at improving relations between the Government and religious groups. Nonetheless, some Muslims believe that their religious and ethnic affiliation makes them targets of discrimination by the Government in practice with regard to both employment and the renewal of national identity cards.

Relations among the various religious groups have become strained at times since the onset of the national crisis; there is some societal discrimination against Muslims and followers of traditional indigenous religions.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 122,780 square miles, and its population is approximately 16 million. Religious groups in the country include Islam, the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant churches, and traditional indigenous religions. Major Protestant groups include the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Assemblies of God, the Southern Baptist Church, the Autonomous Church of Celestial Christianity of Oschoffa, the Union of the Evangelical Church of Services and Works of Cote d'Ivoire, the Unification Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Harrist Church (an African Protestant denomination founded in the country in 1913 by a Liberian preacher named William Wade Harris), the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), the Protestant Methodist Church of Cote d'Ivoire, the Coptic Church, the Pentecostal Church of Cote d'Ivoire, the Interdenominational Church, the Yoruba First Church, the Church of God International Missions, and the Baptist Church Missions. Other religions include Buddhism, the Baha'i Faith, the Church of the Prophet Papa Nouveau (a syncretistic religion founded in the country in 1937 that combines Christian doctrine, traditional indigenous rituals, and practical concern for social, political, and economic progress for Africans), the Messianic Church, Bossonism (the traditional religious practices of the Akan ethnic group), the Limmoudim of Rabbi Jesus (a small Christian group, the origins of which are unknown), the Eckankar religion (a syncretistic religion founded in 1965 in Nigeria that sees human passion as an obstacle to uniting a person's divine qualities), and the Movement of Raelis. Many religious groups in the country are associated with American religious groups.

The published results of the most recent national census, conducted in 1998, indicated that Muslims make up approximately 38.6 percent of the country's resident population; Catholics, 19.4 percent; practitioners of traditional indigenous religions, 11.9 percent; Protestants, 6.6 percent; other Christians, 3.1 percent; practitioners of other religions, 1.7 percent; Harrists, 1.3 percent; and persons without religious preference or affiliation, 16.7 percent. Among citizens, 27.4 percent are Muslim, 20.8 percent are Catholic, 15.4 percent practice traditional indigenous religions, 8.2 percent are Protestant, 3.4 percent are of other Christian affiliations, 1.9 percent practice other religions, 1.6 percent are Harrist, and 20.7 percent are without religious affiliation. Foreigners living in the country are 70.5 percent Muslim and 15.4 percent Catholic with small percentages practicing other religions.

Most of the country's many syncretistic religions are forms of Christianity that contain some traditional indigenous practices and rituals. Many such religions were

founded by local or other African prophets and are organized around and dependent upon the founder's personality. Some emphasize faith healing or the sale of sacred objects imbued with supernatural powers to bring health and good luck. Many nominal Christians and Muslims practice some aspects of traditional indigenous religions, especially in difficult times.

Generally there has been a trend towards conversion by practitioners of traditional religions to Christianity and Islam. Missionary work, urbanization, immigration, and higher education levels have led to a decline in the percentage of practitioners of traditional religions from 37 percent in 1975 to 11.9 percent in 1998.

Muslims are found in the greatest numbers in the northern half of the country, although they also are becoming increasingly numerous in the cities of the south, west, and east due to immigration, migration, and inter-ethnic marriages. In 1998 Muslims composed 45.5 percent of the total urban population and 33.5 percent of the total rural population. Catholics live mostly in the southern, central, and eastern portions of the country, though recently some animists in the north have converted to Catholicism. Practitioners of traditional indigenous religions are concentrated in rural areas of the country's north, west, center, and east. Protestants are concentrated in the central, eastern, and southwest regions. Members of the Harrist Church are concentrated in the south.

Political and religious affiliations tend to follow ethnic lines. As population growth and movement have accentuated ethnic distinctions between the groups of the Sahel and those of the forest zone, those distinctions sometimes have been expressed in terms of religion such as northern Muslims and southern Christians and traditionalists.

Immigrants from other parts of Africa generally are at least nominally Muslim or Christian. The majority of foreign missionaries are European or American representatives of established religions, but some Nigerians and Congolese also have set up churches.

In the past, Catholic priests were better educated than leaders of other religions. Numerous Catholic schools were founded in the country in the early 1900s during French colonial rule, and people who attended these schools generally received good educations and became a disproportionately large part of the country's elite. Many senior government officials, including all four heads of state since independence, have been Catholics. The Baoule ethnic minority, which has dominated the State and the Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI), that governed the country from independence in 1960 until 1999 largely is Catholic, although some Baoules continue to practice traditional indigenous religion and a few practice Islam. After 39 years of political dominance, the PDCI was driven from power in a military coup in 1999. Following 10 months of transitional military rule, the country elected a new president from the FPI, another political party composed primarily of Christians and individuals practicing traditional indigenous religions. In January 2002, the country became a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

On September 19, 2002, a coup attempt led by exiled military members and co-conspirators quickly evolved into a rebellion. In Abidjan, government forces stopped the coup attempt within hours, but the rebel forces established control over the northern half of the country. In late November 2002, the rebel movement opened to the west, as fighting erupted in the region between government and rebel forces. The opposing sides signed cease-fire agreements in October 2002 and January. On January 25, all major parties to the crisis signed the Linas-Marcoussis Accord, which aimed to end the crisis and bring about national reconciliation.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution, implemented in August 2000, provides for freedom of religion; however, at times the Government limited this right in practice. There is no state religion; however, for historical and ethnic reasons the Government informally favors Christianity. For example, the Government continues to subsidize both Roman Catholic and other Christian schools, although at lower levels than in the past; it does not subsidize Muslim schools.

In past years, the Government has paid for the construction of Catholic cathedrals; however, the Government also sponsors or finances the construction of shrines for groups other than the Catholic Church. During the period covered by this report, the Government was directing the construction of the Plateau Mosque in central Abidjan and financing it with the help of governments or government-affiliated religious organizations of some largely Islamic Arab countries.

The Government established registration requirements for religious groups under a 1939 French law. All religious groups wishing to operate in the country must sub-

mit to the Ministry of the Interior a file including the group's bylaws, the names of the founding members, the date of founding (or date on which the founder received the revelation of his or her calling), general assembly minutes, the names of members of the administrative board, and other information. The Interior Ministry investigates the backgrounds of the founding members to ascertain that the group has no politically subversive purpose. However, in practice the Government's regulation of religious groups generally has not been restrictive since 1990. Although non-traditional religious groups, like public secular associations, are required to register with the Government, no penalties are imposed on a group that fails to register. In practice registration may bring advantages of public recognition, invitations to official ceremonies and events, publicity, gifts, and school subsidies. No religious group has complained of arbitrary registration procedures or recognition; however, the Government does not register traditional indigenous religious groups.

The Government grants no tax or other benefits to religious groups; however, some religious groups have gained some favors after individual negotiations. Examples include reductions in the cost of resident alien registration, customs exemptions on certain religious items, diplomatic passports for major religious chiefs, and, in some cases, privileges similar to those of diplomats. No particular religion is favored consistently in this manner.

Foreign missionaries must meet the same requirements as any foreigner, including resident alien registration and identification card requirements. There were no reports that foreign missionaries were denied such registration arbitrarily.

Religious instruction is permitted in public schools and usually offered after normal class hours. Such instruction is offered by established Islamic, Catholic, and Protestant groups. While in practice a 1966 government decree that allows for "only" Catholic and Protestant teachings in schools no longer is enforced, several Muslim leaders complain that the Government has not yet eliminated the decree.

The Government has taken some positive steps to promote interfaith understanding. Government officials, including the President and his religious advisers, appear at major religious celebrations and events organized by a wide variety of faiths and groups. The Government often invites leaders of various religious communities (but not of traditional indigenous religious groups) to attend official ceremonies and to sit on deliberative and advisory committees, including the Mediation Committee for National Reconciliation.

In March, following the signing of the Marcoussis agreement, the Government created a Ministry of Religion to improve interfaith understanding. The Ministry sought to promote national reconciliation and to help prevent the national crisis from turning into an inter-ethnic and religious conflict. The Government created the Ministry to emphasize the secular nature of the state, because both Muslim and Christian groups believe the State disproportionately favors the other.

Some groups opposed the creation of the Ministry of Religion, most notably, a fundamentalist Christian group called The Limmoudim de rabbi Jesus, which released a lengthy press statement saying that their religious doctrine predicted the ministry would be dangerous and destabilizing.

Along with the creation of the Ministry of Religion, several other programs have helped to further interfaith understanding during the crisis. In early April, the Government hosted an international colloquium for West African religions on "The Role of Religions in the Resolution of Regional Conflicts." The colloquium concluded that religion needs to be more of a force for cohesion rather than division. The colloquium praised the local religious communities for putting aside their differences and working together for peace.

During the period covered by this report, some Muslims continued to claim that the country is not a true secular state, but rather a Judeo-Christian state, with a preference given to the Catholic religion. Muslim leaders claimed that many state institutions, particularly the national television and radio stations, were dominated by Christian programming, including broadcasts of Catholic masses, choirs, religious services, and Christian music. Specifically, the Islamic National Council (CNI) and the Muslim community questioned why Catholics have more than 10 radio frequencies, while Muslims had only 1 frequency. However, Muslim leaders do appear on state television, and the Government has recognized all major Muslim religious holidays.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government monitors minority religious groups for signs of political activity that it considers subversive. The Government has expanded its surveillance of Islamic associations during the crisis.

Traditionally the Government informally has favored the Roman Catholic Church. Catholic Church leaders have had a much stronger voice in government affairs than

their Islamic counterparts, which led to feelings of disenfranchisement among some in the Muslim population. President Gbagbo continues to meet with Muslims leaders to discuss their concerns. In late June 2002, Gbagbo met Imam Idriss Kone Koudouss, President of the National Islamic Council, and proposed to create a new national Islamic center.

Some Muslims believe that their religious or ethnic affiliation makes them targets of discrimination by the Government with regard to both employment and the renewal of national identity cards. Due to the tense political situation in the country and the ethnic and religious divisions along which political party lines are drawn, some Muslims are scrutinized more closely in the identity card application process. As most Muslims share names, style of dress, and customs with several of the country's predominantly Muslim neighboring countries, they sometimes are wrongly accused of attempting to obtain nationality cards illegally in order to vote or otherwise take advantage of citizenship. The Marcoussis agreement calls for the resolution of the national identity question and improved implementation of naturalization laws to ensure the granting of citizenship in an equitable manner to those qualified.

Muslims often have had to struggle for state benefits that came more easily to practitioners of other religions. For example, Catholic and Protestant schools are regarded as official schools supervised by the Ministry of Education and subsidized by the Government. The Government allows Islamic schools that follow an official curriculum but does not subsidize them. Churches organize Christian pilgrimages without government supervision; however, in 2001 the Government paid for a pilgrimage to Rome for 81 Roman Catholics. Muslim organizations continue to view the Government's pilgrimages as unnecessary and unwarranted interference.

Traditional indigenous religions rarely are included in official or unofficial lists of the country's religions. There is no generally accepted system for classifying the country's diverse traditional religious practices, which vary not only by ethnic group, but also by region, village, and family, as well as by gender and age group. In addition, members of the country's largely Christian or Islamic urban elite, which effectively control the State, generally seem disinclined to allow traditional indigenous religions the social status accorded to Christianity and Islam. For example, no traditional indigenous religious leader (except for traditional rulers, who also may perform some traditional religious functions) is known to have been invited to present New Year's greetings to the President or to take part in a government advisory council. However, traditional Akan chiefs very often are invited to participate in traditional libation ceremonies aimed at recognizing ancestors at the beginning of important ceremonies.

The Government does not prohibit links to foreign coreligionists but informally discourages connections with politically radical fundamentalist movements, such as Islamic groups based in Iran or Libya.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Following the September 19, 2002, rebellion, there were credible reports of military and security forces committing abuses, including reprisal killings, against presumed rebel sympathizers, which included many Muslims. In October 2002, security forces reportedly killed more than 100 noncombatants, mostly Muslims, in Daloa in evident reprisal against northerners living in the town, following their alleged support of advancing rebel forces. Witnesses reported that uniformed forces took from their homes individuals of northern descent or foreign Africans (often Muslim, generally called Dioulas); their bodies were found in the streets the following day. A Muslim cleric, Gaoussou Sylla, was arrested at home with five other persons, including the Malian honorary consul, Malian merchants, and the Burkinabe owner of a transport company. The bodies of Sylla and the other five subsequently were found along a road out of town; the businesses of the victims were looted. Uniformed forces also killed a number of Guinean Muslims in Daloa. Hundreds of Daloa residents took shelter in a mosque while government forces ransacked and burned their homes. The Governments of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea lodged formal protests with the Government over the deaths in Daloa and the harassment and abuse of northerners in Abidjan and other cities.

The Government denied that its forces were responsible for the Daloa killings. The Government criticized such actions as flagrant violations of human rights committed by men "wearing fatigues." However, the international press and human rights organizations reported that security forces were responsible for the killings in Daloa, citing multiple eyewitnesses who saw the men who carried out the killings arrive in clearly marked military vehicles. Amnesty International noted that military authorities stopped the killings when pressed by Muslim leaders who underscored the responsibility of government authorities to ensure that security forces protected civilians and prevented harassment. On October 25, 2002, the Govern-

ment announced an investigation into the killings, which so far has yielded no results.

During the current crisis, according to credible reports, government forces, along with unknown assailants, have killed several Muslim leaders. In January gendarmes arrested Mamadou Ganame, a Koranic instructor in Bianoua, Ayame (in the southeast) during a graduation ceremony for his students. His body later was found in the Aboisso morgue. Also in January, four armed gunmen killed Imam Mahmoud Samassi, founder and Imam of the Lycee Technique Mosque in Abidjan at his residence. On January 8, CNI and the High Council of Imams (COSIM) marched in Abidjan to protest Samassi's murder. In February unknown assailants in gendarme uniforms killed Mohamed Sangare, the assistant Imam for the Adobo Mosque in Abidjan. The gunmen shot Sangare twice when he refused to get into their car. Also in February, during curfew hours, several gendarme and police officers searched and looted several residences in Anyama, a predominantly Muslim district in Abidjan. During the search, gendarme officers killed Mory Fanny Cisse, an Islamic preacher, when he refused to open his door. Two others were injured when security forces shot several rounds to disperse the crowd that had gathered in an attempt to stop the removal of Cisse's corpse.

In addition, according to the CNI, government security forces "forcibly searched" seven mosques and reportedly looted residences of at least 10 Muslim leaders in Abidjan. In late October 2002, CNI said that government forces searched all mosques in the western town of Man. There are no known reports that the Government found weapons in any of the mosques.

On October 30, 2002, the CNI issued a statement asserting that since the September 19 rebellion, the Muslim community had fallen under "unfair suspicion" and was suffering arbitrary arrests, beatings, and killing by security forces. The CNI statement claimed that state television and radio had created a climate of hatred. Also in October, Mamadou Sy, Imam for the central mosque of Bouake, called on all sides to cease violence and "hateful rhetoric."

In March CNI President Imam Idriss Koudouss Kone again severely criticized what he claimed was the targeting of Muslim leaders and said that security forces were acting "with impunity" because no one had been charged in any of the murders of Muslims. Imam Cisse Djiguiba, Imam of the Plateau Mosque in Abidjan, insisted that it was the Government's responsibility to protect all citizens without exception.

In April Minister of National Reconciliation Dano Djedje met with Muslim leaders to hear their grievances. El Hadj Diaby Abass, the Imam for the central mosque in Daloa, told Dano Djedje that gendarmes regularly enter Daloa mosques during curfew hours and conduct weapons searches. He claimed that churches were not searched. Diaby also reported that when he traveled from Daloa to Abidjan, he was the only passenger on the bus asked for identity papers, which he presumed was because of his religion and dress. Minister Djedje undertook to examine the Muslims' grievances; however, no action had been taken by the end of the period covered by this report.

There were credible reports that security forces detained and questioned Islamic leaders on suspicions that they were plotting with the rebels. One prominent case was Sylla Baba, principal Imam in the western town of Bonon, who was arrested and released three times without charges being filed. In October 2002, security forces arrested Mamadou Fofana and Diarrassouba Mohamed, two Imams from the western coastal town of San Pedro, on suspicion of aiding rebel forces. Fofana subsequently was released, but Mohamed remained in detention at a military camp at the end of the period covered by this report. In December 2002, government security forces arrested Tiesibiry Kone, president of the Man chapter of CNI, and held him without charges for 2 days before releasing him.

The FESCI has perpetrated violence against competing or constituent student groups, including the Association of Muslim Students. The latter complained that FESCI confused being a member of the Republican Rally (RDR) political party with being Muslim. While there is a high correlation, they are not synonymous.

There were no reports of persons detained solely on religious grounds.

Information gathering is more difficult in the rebel-held north and west, but there have been several reports of religious violence. Rebels in Bouake and elsewhere in the north executed more than 100 persons, most of whom were Christian, who were members of the armed forces or persons thought to be loyal to the Government. In April rebel Patriotic Movement for Cote d'Ivoire (MPCI) forces detained several Buddhist missionaries traveling to Bouake, accusing them of being loyalist gendarmes in disguise. The MPCI forces reportedly beat at least one of the Buddhists before releasing them. Also in April, MPCI forces severely beat and tortured three Christian priests at the Saint Jean Bosco Mission in the northern city of Korhogo while searching for an escaped prisoner. The MPCI security forces also beat mem-

bers of the congregation that tried to assist the priests. The rebel forces searched the mission, then abducted the three priests, placing them in a prison cell. After several hours of further beatings, they released the three priests. In April Maurice Dodo, a church leader in the western town of Daloa, reported that western rebels held him for 12 days. He reported being tortured and threatened with death before being released. Also in April, rebel forces searched and damaged a Catholic church in the northern city of Tengrela. In June rebel forces looted a church still under construction in Bouake.

In February after the murder of a prominent Muslim comedian Camara Yerefe, unknown assailants used clubs and machetes to attack an Abidjan church, leaving several injured, including the church's pastor.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among the various religious groups have become strained since the onset of the national crisis in September 2002; there is some societal discrimination against Muslims and followers of traditional indigenous religions.

The country's Islamic communities are subject to some societal discrimination. Some non-Muslims have objected to the construction of mosques, such as the new mosque in Abidjan's Plateau district, expressing concerns that the Islamic duty to give alms daily may attract beggars to neighborhoods containing mosques. Some non-Muslims also object to having to hear the muezzins' calls to prayer. Some persons consider all Muslims as foreigners or fundamentalists, and Muslims sometimes are referred to as "destabilizing forces." Muslim citizens often are treated as foreigners by their fellow citizens, including by government officials, because most Muslims are members of northern ethnic groups that also are found in other African countries from which there has been substantial immigration into the country. Muslims also frequently are discriminated against because of ethnic origin or presumed support for the presidential candidacy of former Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara, a Muslim. Many Muslims are northerners and tended to support the presidential candidacy of Ouattara and the RDR and opposed the ruling FPI.

Followers of traditional indigenous religions also are subject to societal discrimination. Many leaders of religions such as Christianity or Islam look down on practitioners of traditional indigenous religions as pagans and practitioners of black magic or human sacrifice. Some Christians or Muslims refuse to associate with practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. The practices of traditional indigenous religions often are secret and include exclusive initiation rites, oaths of silence, and taboos against writing down orally transmitted history. However, there have been no reports of human sacrifice in the country since well before independence. Although the purported practice of black magic or witchcraft continues to be feared widely, it generally is discouraged by traditional indigenous religions, aspects of which commonly purport to offer protection from witchcraft. Traditional indigenous religions commonly involve belief in one supreme deity as well as lesser deities or spirits that are to be praised or appeased, some of which may in some religions be believed to inhabit or otherwise be associated with particular places, natural objects, or man-made images. However, many practitioners of traditional indigenous religions are unaware of, or do not see their problems resulting from, societal discrimination and have not complained.

Conflicts between and within religious groups have surfaced occasionally. The Celestial Christians have been divided because of a leadership struggle. In June followers of rival leaders Blin Jacob Edimou and Louis Akeble Zagadou clashed over the ownership of a church under construction. Police officers arrested six men. Construction on the church remains suspended until the Minister of Religion has examined the dispute. In February 2002, the Church reunified after the head of the church in Nigeria reinstated Blin Jacob Edimou, the founding priest of the Ivoirian Celestial Church, to his position as head of the Church. Edimou had been removed in 1987 following accusations of impropriety. There were no further developments on the Harrist leadership struggle during the period covered by this report.

Some human rights groups report that relations between Muslims and Christians, specifically Catholics, have improved at the end of the period covered by this report since the first few months after the national crisis began in September 2002. There have been many examples of interfaith cooperation during the crisis. Since October 2002, Cardinal Bernard Agre and El Hadj Idriss Koudouss Kone, two of the coun-

try's most prominent religious leaders, have met once a week and regularly participate in the celebration of each other's main religious events. On October 14, 2002, the Catholic Church of Cote d'Ivoire released a statement asking for tolerance and dialog among the parties. The church asked all citizens to put aside their differences and work to return the country to the peaceful existence it had enjoyed for many years. On November 15, 2002, on the occasion of the celebration of the National Day of Peace, Christians and Muslims participated in an ecumenical mass in Yamoussoukro. On February 11, to celebrate the Muslim holiday of Tabaski, several leading Catholic and other religious leaders attended the Muslim religious observances conducted by Imam Koudouss at his mosque in the Yopougon section of Abidjan.

Prior to the crisis, there were examples of longstanding interfaith cooperation. Once a year, on New Year's Eve, members of all Christian religious groups gather in the National Stadium in Abidjan to keep a night-long vigil and pray. When serious social problems have arisen, simultaneous Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim prayer ceremonies have been held in churches, temples, and mosques to ask for divine assistance. Kouassi-Datekro, a town in the Akan region in the eastern part of the country, is famous for ecumenical events involving simultaneous prayer services of all faiths. Religious leaders from diverse groups have assembled on their own initiative to mediate in times of political conflict; however, no leaders of traditional indigenous religious groups have been included.

The Forum of Religious Confessions, created by the Research Group in Democracy and Social and Economic Development of Cote d'Ivoire (GERDDES-CI), a democracy and civic education group, includes the leaders of many of the country's religious faiths, including Catholics, Muslims, various Protestant groups, several syncretist groups, the Association of Traditional Priests, and the Bossonists, an association of indigenous Akan religious priests. The Forum is headed by the leader of the Celestial Christian Church, and its objective is to promote dialog, increase understanding, and improve religious leaders' and groups' relationships.

GERDDES-CI helped to create the Collective of Civil Society for Peace (CCSP), which has worked since the beginning of the September 2002 crisis to promote national reconciliation. Some observers believe that the CCSP's work helped prevent the national crisis from turning into a religious war. The CCSP conducted "tolerance workshops" in 20 of the country's 58 departments, in response to the violence in Daloa and the high tension throughout the country. Six-person teams, comprised of Christians, Muslims, and human rights representatives, traveled to deliver a message of unity and showed local leaders how to exercise and teach tolerance. In October 2002, President Gbagbo publicly announced his support for the tolerance workshops.

In January the CCSP organized a national ecumenical prayer service for peace, led by President Gbagbo. The prayers took place in a football stadium in Abidjan and Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist religious leaders participated.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government has monitored and reported on the status of religious freedom, developed and maintained contacts with leaders of diverse religious groups, sent several religious leaders to the United States on International Visitor programs, and discussed religious freedom issues with government officials in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Since the onset of the crisis, the U.S. Embassy has assisted efforts by the Government and nongovernmental organizations to mitigate religious tensions in the country. The U.S. Ambassador regularly meets with religious leaders.

DJIBOUTI

The Constitution, while declaring Islam to be the state religion, provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, proselytizing is discouraged.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and unlike in the period covered by the previous report, there were no reports that the police targeted Ethiopian Pentecostal Christians when conducting the apprehension and deportation of persons living illegally in the country.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 9,000 square miles, and its population is approximately 650,000. More than 99 percent of the population are Sunni Muslim. There are a small number of Catholics, Protestants, and followers of the Baha'i Faith, together accounting for less than 1 percent of the population. There are no known practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. Because all citizens officially are considered Muslims if they do not adhere to another faith, there are no figures available on the number of atheists in the country.

The sizable foreign community supports the Roman Catholic, Protestant, Greek Orthodox, and Ethiopian Orthodox churches.

A small number of foreign Christian missionary groups operate in the country, including the Eastern Mennonite Mission, Red Sea Team International, and Life International.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution, while declaring Islam to be the state religion, provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, proselytizing is discouraged. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

Although Islam is the state religion, the Government imposes no sanctions on those who choose to ignore Islamic teachings or practice other faiths. The Government maintains diplomatic relations with the Vatican.

The Qadi is the country's senior judge of Islamic law and is appointed by the Minister of Justice. The current Qadi was appointed in June 1999. His predecessor was named Minister of State for Charitable and Religious Affairs under the Ministry of Justice, a position created in May 1999, when President Ismail Omar Guelleh formed his Cabinet and declared that Islam would be a central tenet of his Government.

The Government requires that religious groups be registered with the Ministry of the Interior. Baha'i leaders reported that they were refused the right to register.

Foreign clergy and missionaries are permitted to perform charitable works and to sell religious books. These groups, which focus on humanitarian services in the education and health sectors, reportedly faced no harassment during the period covered by this report. Foreign missionary groups are licensed by the Government to operate schools.

Religion is not taught in public schools.

The country observes the Muslim holidays of Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, the Prophet Mohammed's birthday, and the Islamic new year as national holidays. The country also celebrates Christmas as an official holiday.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

There is no legal prohibition against proselytizing; however, proselytizing is discouraged.

Islamic law based on the Koran is used only with regard to family matters and is administered by the Qadi. Civil marriage is permitted only for non-Muslim foreigners. Muslims are required to marry in a religious ceremony, and non-Muslim men may marry a Muslim woman only after converting to Islam.

The Ministry of Muslim Affairs monitors the activities of Muslims, but it does not restrict their religious practices.

The President is required to take a religious oath at inauguration; however, other government employees are not required to do so.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. The large presence of French Catholics and Ethiopian Orthodox

Christians for almost a century has led to considerable familiarity with and tolerance of other faiths by the Muslim majority. Persons born as Catholics face no discrimination from Muslim relatives. In many cases, these Catholics are children or grandchildren of persons raised in French Catholic orphanages during the colonial period.

In Djiboutian Somali society, clan membership has more influence over a person's life than does religion. Djiboutian Somalis who are Christians often are buried according to Islamic traditions by relatives who do not recognize their non-Muslim faith.

There is no formal interfaith dialog. The Catholic Church organizes an annual celebration with all the other Christian churches. The Qadi receives Ramadan greetings from Pope John Paul II. He meets with the heads of other faiths only at government-organized ceremonies.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. Embassy representatives periodically meet with leaders and members of religious communities and with U.S. nongovernmental organizations with a missionary component. The U.S. Embassy invited leaders from the Muslim and Catholic faiths to say prayers during Embassy ceremonies to promote interfaith understanding.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, in practice the Government limited this right in some respects.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Government regulation of religion is generally exercised via administrative registration controls. Beyond this, the Government discourages criticism by religious groups and restricts activities outside church premises.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government during periodic visits to the country in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 10,827 square miles, and its population is approximately 474,200. The population is approximately 93 percent Christian and 5 percent practitioners of traditional indigenous religions; Muslims, members of the Baha'i Faith, members of other religions, and those who are nonreligious each make up less than 1 percent. The principal religion is Roman Catholicism, dating from the Spanish colonial period, when almost the entire population was baptized into this faith. Of the Christian population, approximately 87 percent at least nominally are Catholic, and approximately 4.5 percent belong to Protestant denominations. In practice the actual number of practitioners of traditional indigenous religions is much higher, although the exact figure is unknown. Many baptized Catholics reportedly still follow traditional beliefs. There is no known organized Christian worship in large parts of the country. The ethnic minorities, such as the Ngumba, Yaka, Puku, and Benga, have no known organized religious congregations.

Foreign missionary groups operate in the country, both in Bioko and on the mainland, including Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, Assemblies of God, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Nondenominational evangelical Christian groups also are present.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, in practice the Government limited this right in some respects. A 1992 law includes a stated official preference for the Catholic Church and the Reform Church of Equatorial Guinea due to their traditional roots and well-known influence in the social and cultural life of the populace. For example, a Roman Catholic mass normally is part of any major ceremonial function, such as on the October 12 national day. This law also regulates the registration of religious groups.

The Government generally allows preaching, religious teaching, education, and practice by believers. The Government requires permission for any activities outside the confines of places of worship; however, in practice this requirement does not appear to hinder organized religious groups.

A religious organization must be registered formally with the Ministry of Justice and Religion before its religious activities are allowed. While religious groups must be approved and registered to function legally, there were no reports during the period covered by this report that the Government refused to register any group.

Though required by the 1992 law regulating religions, exact registration procedures are enforced inconsistently at the whim of the bureaucracy. In 2002, the Director General of the Ministry of Justice and Worship, who is charged with administering registration procedures for religious groups, declared that, in addition to the existing fee required to register a religious organization nationally, churches would now be required to pay a fee to register each individual congregation. The Director General claimed that this requirement was contained in the 1992 law, but had never been enforced. Consequently, he proposed applying this fee retroactively to all congregations established after a religious organization gained national recognition. However, within 2 months the Director General was removed from office due to heavy protests from the religious community. Since then, no action has been made to apply the former Director's General original proposal.

To register, churches must make a written application to the Ministry of Justice and Worship. This application was not required of the Catholic and Reform Churches because of their long-established presence in the country and because the law contains official preferences for these churches. The application and approval process usually takes several years, but such delay appears to be the result of general bureaucratic inefficiency and not of a policy designed to impede the operation of any religious group. Unregistered groups operating in the country can be fined; however, such fines are rarely applied. For example, the Assemblies of God received official recognition in 1993; however, from 1987 through 1993, the group was able to operate although it had not been recognized officially. The degree of enforcement of registration requirements appears to be dependent upon the whim of the Ministry of Justice and Worship.

The exact number of registered denominations is not publicly available.

Foreign missionaries work throughout the country, generally without impediment.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government and President Teodoro Obiang Nguema's ruling Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) have reacted defensively to any criticism, and the Government continued to restrict freedom of expression of the clergy, particularly any open criticism of the Government. According to Jose Maguga, the director of the Autonomous Rural Development (DAR), a Catholic nongovernmental organization (NGO), Church representatives practiced self-censorship on these issues during the year. Government agents sometimes officially or unofficially visit churches to monitor church behavior or request a timetable of church activities. The Government requires permission for any religious or faith-based social assistance activity outside the confines of places of worship; however, in practice this requirement did not appear to hinder organized religious groups. There were some reports that a growing international presence and the Government's focus on petroleum exploration and development resulted in a reduction of religious restrictions during the period covered by this report; however, these reports could not be confirmed.

Religious study is required in schools and is usually, but not exclusively, Catholic.

In 2002, the DAR was required to have a government delegate present at its meetings. This restriction apparently was in response to government fears that DAR encourages antigovernment sentiment. The Government required that the DAR office in the diocese of Ebibeyin inform the local delegate each time it held a board meeting. The DAR complied with the requirement and received permission to meet, but the local delegate insisted on being present during the meetings. The DAR refused to hold meetings with the delegate present, and consequently it did not hold official meetings during 2002.

In 2001 some citizens working as missionaries received nonspecific warnings from the Ministry of Justice and Religion against voting for candidates who were not PDGE members; most missionaries were told to appear before the Ministry. None of the missionaries were made to appear before the Ministry and no further warnings were issued during the remainder of the reporting period.

Recently, church leaders and foreign missionaries complained that U.S. citizens affiliated with their organizations had been threatened with denial of entry by immigration officials at Malabo's international airport. Some religious leaders feared that these denials were motivated by a bias against Protestant denominations.

Foreign missionaries also complained of the length of time and new costs required to obtain previously no-cost residence permits.

Some individual government officials defended the sudden full enforcement of church registration requirements in terms of the need to “control” rapid growth of new and unfamiliar sects or religions in the country. However, shortly after foreign diplomats and church officials complained of the sudden registration requirement change, the Director General who had made this policy change was removed from his posting.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relations among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Some religious groups believe that they face societal pressures within their regions; however, no specific incidents or violence stemming from religious discrimination have been reported, and such concerns may reflect ethnic or individual differences as much as religious differences.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. During the period covered by this report, Embassy staff met with various church and missionary leaders, as well as government officials responsible for religious activity. The U.S. Embassy based in Yaounde, Cameroon, maintains contact with religious groups, especially American missionaries in the country, and monitors religious initiatives during periodic visits.

ERITREA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, its provisions have not yet been implemented and in practice the Government restricted this right in the case of several Protestant denominations, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and for other religious groups that do not have a long history in the country.

Respect for religious freedom continued to deteriorate during the period covered by this report. The Government harassed, arrested, and detained members of non-sanctioned Protestant religious groups locally referred to collectively as “Pentes,” reform movements from and within the Coptic Church, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and adherents of the Baha’i Faith. There were also numerous reports of forced recantations and physical torture. Only the four government-sanctioned religious groups—Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Catholics, and members of the Evangelical Church of Eritrea (which has affiliation with the Lutheran World Federation)—were allowed to meet freely during the period covered by this report. Following a May 2002 government decree that all religious groups must register or cease all religious activities, all religious facilities not belonging to the four sanctioned religious groups were closed. These closures and the restriction on holding religious meetings continued during the period covered by this report.

Citizens generally are tolerant of one another in the practice of their religion; however, societal attitudes toward Jehovah’s Witnesses are an exception to this general tolerance. There was some societal prejudice against members of the non-sanctioned religious groups including individual cooperation with government authorities to report on and harass those worshipers. There also were reports that some Orthodox Christian priests encouraged harassment of these non-sanctioned religious groups and reported their activities to the Government.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 48,489 square miles, and its population is approximately 3.5 million. Although reliable statistics are not available, approximately 50 percent of the population is Sunni Muslim, and approximately 40 percent is Ortho-

dox Christian. The population also includes a small number of Eastern Rite and Roman Catholics (5 percent), Protestants (2 percent), smaller numbers of Seventh-day Adventists, and fewer than 1,500 Jehovah's Witnesses. Approximately 2 percent practices traditional indigenous religions. Also present in very small numbers are practicing Buddhists, Hindus, and Baha'is. The population in the eastern and western lowlands predominantly is Muslim and in the highlands predominantly is Christian. There are very few atheists. Religious participation is high among all ethnic groups.

Within the country's geographic and ethnic groups, the majority of the Tigrinya is Orthodox Christian, with the exception of the Djiberti Tigrinya, who are Muslim. The majority of the Tigre, Saho, Nara, Afar, Rashaida, Beja, and Blen is Muslim. Approximately 40 percent of the Blen is Christian, the majority of whom is Catholic. The majority of the Kunama is Roman Catholic, with a large minority of Muslims and some who practice traditional indigenous religions. The central and southern highland areas, which generally are more economically developed than the lowlands, predominantly are populated by Christian Tigrinyas and some Muslim Djiberti and Saho. The Afar and Rashaida, as well as some of the Saho and Tigre, live in the eastern lowlands. The Blen live on the border between the western lowlands and the central highlands and are concentrated in the Keren area, which also includes a significant minority of Tigre and Tigrinya speakers. The Beja, Kunama, Nara, and the majority of Tigre live in the western lowlands.

Foreign missionaries operate in the country, including representatives of the Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim faiths. Some missionaries and representatives of the restricted non-sanctioned religious groups work in the country but keep a low profile for fear of abuse of their congregations. There also are several international faith-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that provide humanitarian aid, including Mercy Corps, Caritas, Dutch Interchurch Aid, Norwegian Church Aid, Lutheran World Federation, Catholic Relief Services, and the Islamic Mufti's Relief Organization.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Government drafted and approved a Constitution in 1997 that provides the freedom to practice any religion; however, its provisions have not yet been implemented. The Government restricted this right in the case of numerous small Protestant churches and the Jehovah's Witnesses.

In May 2002, the Minister of Information issued a decree that all religious groups must be registered. Leaders of the non-sanctioned religious groups were warned that, until the registration applications were received and approved, no religious activities or services could be held. Registration requirements include: history of the religious group in the country, explanation of the "uniqueness" or benefit that the group offers compared to other religious groups already in the country, names and personal information of religious leaders, a list of group members, detailed information on assets and property owned by the group, and sources of funding from outside the country. A government committee reviews the applications, which will be approved only if they conform to local culture. The Mehrete Yesus Presbyterian Church, Faith Mission Church, Seventh-day Adventists, and Baha'i Faith each submitted a complete registration application during the period covered by this report. The Kalehiwot, Full Gospel, Mesert Cristos, Tinsai, and Philadelphia churches submitted registration packages that did not include individual member names, while the Rhema Church and two other groups reportedly submitted blank registration forms. No decisions were made by the end of the period covered by this report, despite the fact that several religious groups submitted their registration documents over one year ago and continued to inquire with the relevant government offices. Unofficial comments from senior government officials suggest that groups without significant historical ties to the country will not be licensed to operate.

The four government-sanctioned religious groups—Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Catholics, and members of the Evangelical Church of Eritrea—were not required to register and their services and activities were allowed to continue.

In 1994 in accordance with a presidential decree, the Government revoked the trading licenses of some Jehovah's Witnesses and dismissed most of those who worked in the civil service. This government action resulted in economic, employment, and travel difficulties for many members of Jehovah's Witnesses, especially former civil servants and businessmen.

The Government owns all land, and any religious organization that seeks facilities for worship other than private homes must obtain government approval to build such facilities.

Religious organizations, including faith-based NGOs, do not receive duty-free privileges, although they sometimes are allowed to import items under the reduced duty structure used for companies.

The Government prohibits political activity by religious groups. The Directorate of Religious Affairs in the Ministry of Local Government monitors religious compliance with this proscription.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Islam and Christianity are practiced widely and largely are tolerated throughout the country, with persons free to worship at the religious service of their choice; however, in 2001 the Government began closing religious facilities of non-sanctioned religious groups—those not belonging to the four principal religions in the country. Following the May 2002 government decree that all religious groups must register or cease all religious activities, religious facilities not belonging to the four sanctioned religious groups were closed. Authorities also informed non-sanctioned religious groups that a standing law would be used to stop political or other gatherings in private homes of more than three or five persons. Authorities enforced this law during the period covered by this report.

The Government closely monitors the activities and movements of non-sanctioned religious groups and individual members, including non-religious social functions attended by members. The Government also harassed and monitored some Orthodox churches whose religious services it did not approve.

The Government denied visa applications by representatives of the Jehovah's Witnesses and other groups who applied to travel to the country to meet with their congregations or discuss religious freedom issues with government officials.

A 1995 proclamation bans religious organizations from involvement in politics and restricts the right of religious media to comment on political matters. Faith-based organizations are permitted to fund, but not initiate or implement, development projects; however, this proclamation was not enforced in practice—several religious organizations executed small-scale development projects without government interference. The proclamation also set out rules governing relations between religious organizations and foreign sponsors.

The Roman Catholic Church and Muslim organizations were required to pay a rehabilitation tax to recover properties that were expropriated by the previous regime; however, this tax was not enforced as rigorously against Orthodox Church properties.

The military has no chaplains. Military personnel are free to worship at nearby houses of worship for the four sanctioned religions.

The Government also restricts what it deems to be fundamentalist forms of Islam. Most foreign preachers of Islam are not allowed to proselytize, and funding of Islamic missionary or religious activities is controlled.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were numerous credible reports that over 300 followers of various non-sanctioned religious groups were detained or harassed. These reports came from foreign media, human rights groups, individual religious leaders and members, and their families. Government officials declined to comment on specific details of reported abuses.

For example, on January 1, 50 members of the Rhema Church in Asmara were detained for 10 days without charge. On February 16, an additional 17 Rhema Church members were detained for 15 days after meeting in a private residence; some of the members reportedly were beaten while in detention.

On March 16, more than 70 members of different Protestant churches (Rhema, Full Gospel, Kalehiwot, and Mesert Cristos churches) in Asmara were detained for 10 days. This group reportedly was held in a metal shipping container without ventilation or sanitation facilities.

On March 23, 40 members of the Philadelphia Church in Asmara were detained for 8 days, and some reportedly were subjected to physical torture and pressured to recant their faith. The pastor and other church leaders who went to inquire on their behalf also were detained. Members reported that their pastor was forced to walk barefoot over sharp stones. After 8 days, relatives were forced to sign papers stating that those detained would not attend church services or meet in their homes with other church members.

On April 16, approximately 160 Jehovah's Witnesses were detained while meeting in a private home in Asmara. Most were released within a week, but 5 who apparently were considered "elders" were detained for 28 days.

On April 17, 15 members of a splinter group of the Orthodox Church in Kushte were attacked while meeting in a private residence. A few of the members were ad-

mitted to the hospital for treatment as a result of the attacks. On the same day in Asmara, 11 members of the Mesert Cristos Church were arrested while meeting at their church building and detained for 1 day.

Over the Orthodox Easter weekend, two members of the government-sanctioned Evangelical Church were arrested and detained for 3 days. The two young men were singing traditional Easter songs in the streets, which reportedly offended a police officer.

There were several reports that on occasion police tortured those detained for their religious beliefs, including using bondage, heat exposure, and beatings. There also were credible reports that some of the detainees were required to sign statements repudiating their faith or agreeing not to practice it as a condition for release. In some cases where detainees refused to sign, relatives were asked to do so on their behalf. Some of these statements reportedly threatened execution for those who continued to attend unsanctioned religious services or meetings.

The Government does not excuse individuals who object to national service for religious reasons or reasons of conscience, nor does the Government allow alternative service. Most Jehovah's Witnesses have refused on religious grounds to participate in national service or to vote, which has led to widespread criticism that Jehovah's Witnesses collectively were shirking their civic duty. Some Muslims also have objected to universal national service because of the requirement that women perform military duty.

Although members of other religious groups, including Muslims, reportedly have been punished in past years for failure to participate in national service, the Government has singled out Jehovah's Witnesses who were conscientious objectors for harsher treatment than that received by followers of other faiths for similar actions. Only Jehovah's Witnesses who did not participate in national service have been subject to dismissal from the civil service, revocation of their trading licenses, eviction from government-owned housing, and denial of passports, identity cards, and exit visas.

At the end of the period covered by this report, 11 Jehovah's Witnesses remained in detention without charge and without being tried for failing to participate in national service. These individuals have been detained for varying periods, some for more than 8 years. The maximum penalty for refusing to perform national service is 3 years. Ministry of Justice officials have denied that any Jehovah's Witnesses were in detention without charge, although they acknowledge that some Jehovah's Witnesses and a number of Muslims were jailed for evading national service. There were no reports that Jehovah's Witnesses who performed national service and participated in the national independence referendum were subject to discrimination.

The army resorted to various forms of extreme physical punishment to force objectors, including some Jehovah's Witnesses, to perform military service.

In February 2002, 74 military and national service personnel were arrested in February 2002 and remained imprisoned near Assab during the period covered by this report. Reports suggest that they are being detained until they repudiate their faith. Some of the detainees reportedly have been rolled around in oil drums, abused by fellow prisoners, and the women sexually abused; some of the detainees reportedly suffer from partial paralysis and other physical injuries as a result of their torture. Other reports describe other individuals and groups in the military and national service who have been detained, harassed, and physically tortured for practicing non-sanctioned religions.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were reports that police forced some adherents of non-sanctioned (mostly Protestant) religious groups to sign statements that they would abandon their faith and return to the Orthodox Christian Church.

There were no reports of forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Citizens generally are tolerant of one another in the practice of their religion, particularly among the four government-sanctioned religious groups. Mosques and the principal Christian churches coexist throughout the country, although Islam tends to predominate in the lowlands and Christianity in the highlands. In Asmara, Christian and Muslim holidays are respected by all religions. Some holidays are celebrated jointly.

Societal attitudes toward Jehovah's Witnesses are an exception to this general religious tolerance. Jehovah's Witnesses generally are disliked and face some societal

discrimination because of their refusal to participate in the 1993 independence referendum and to perform national service, a refusal that is seen widely as unpatriotic. There was some social prejudice against members of the non-sanctioned religious groups including individual cooperation with government authorities to report on and harass those members. There also were reports that some Orthodox Christian priests encouraged harassment of these non-sanctioned religious groups and reported their activities to the Government.

Leaders of the four principal religions meet routinely and engage in efforts to foster cooperation and understanding among those religions. Of these religions only the Catholic Church has publicly defended the right of freedom of conscience. Leaders of the four principal religious organizations enjoy excellent interfaith relations.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy meets regularly with leaders of the religious community, but has been unsuccessful at arranging meetings with the Government's Director of Religious Affairs.

The U.S. Ambassador and other Embassy officers have raised the cases of detentions and restrictions on non-sanctioned religious groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses, with government officials in the President's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the High Court, the Ministry of Justice, and in media interviews.

ETHIOPIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, on occasion local authorities infringed on this right.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. While some Muslim leaders continued to complain that public school authorities sometimes interfered with their free practice of Islam because they prohibited the wearing of headscarves in school, others accepted that school officials do so to keep better track of their students. Some Protestant and Muslim groups continued to complain that local officials discriminate against them when seeking land for churches and cemeteries.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, interreligious tension and criticism increased between followers of evangelical and Pentecostal churches, on the one hand, and Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, on the other. During the period covered by this report, there were at least two deadly clashes between Protestants and members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. During the period covered by the previous report, there were also reports of clashes between Muslims and members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 699,946 square miles, and its population is approximately 71 million. Approximately 40 to 45 percent of the population adhere to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC); however, the EOC claims 50 percent of the country's total population, or more than 31 million adherents, and 110,450 churches. The EOC is predominant in the northern regions of Tigray and Amhara. Approximately 45 percent of the population is Muslim, although many Muslims claim that the actual percentage is higher. Islam is most prevalent in the Somali and Afar regions, as well as in parts of Oromia. Evangelical and Pentecostal Protestantism are the fastest growing faiths and constitute approximately 10 percent of the population. According to the Evangelical Church Fellowship, there are 7.4 million Protestants, although this figure may be a high estimate. Established Protestant churches such as Mekane Yesus and Kale Hiwot are strongest in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Regional State (SNNPRS), western and central Oromia, and in urban areas around the country. There are more than 6,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in the country. Oriental Rite and Latin Rite Roman Catholics, Jews, animists, and other practitioners of traditional indigenous religions make up most of the remaining population. There are very few atheists. Although precise data is not available, active participation in religious services is high throughout the country.

In Addis Ababa and western Gondar, in the Amhara region, there are very small concentrations of Ethiopian Jews (Falashas) and those who claim that their ancestors were forced to convert from Judaism to Ethiopian Orthodoxy (Feles Mora).

A large number of foreign missionary groups operate in the country, including Catholic and Protestant missionaries. Protestant organizations, operating under the umbrella of the 12-member Evangelical Church Fellowship of Ethiopia, sponsor or support missionary work: the Baptist Bible Fellowship; the New Covenant Baptist Church; the Baptist Evangelical Association; Mekane Yesus Church (associated with the Lutheran Church); Kale Hiwot Church (associated with SIM-Service in Mission); Hiwot Berhan Church (associated with the Swedish Philadelphia Church); Genet Church (associated with the Finnish Mission); Lutheran-Presbyterian Church of Ethiopia; Emnet Christos; Muluwongel (Full Gospel) Church; and Messerete Kristos (associated with the Mennonite Mission). There also is missionary activity among Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons).

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, on occasion local authorities infringed on this right. The Constitution requires the separation of religion and the state and prohibits a state religion, and the Government respects these rights in practice.

The Government requires that religious groups be registered. Religious institutions, like nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), are registered with the Ministry of Justice and must renew their registration every year. Unlike NGOs, religious groups are not subject to a rigorous registration process. Under current law, any religious organization that undertakes development activities must register its development wing separately as an NGO. The Roman Catholic Nuncio in Ethiopia has written repeatedly to the Prime Minister's office seeking a reversal of this policy; however, there was no change in the government policy during the period covered by this report.

To register, each religious organization must complete an application form and submit a copy of its bylaws, a curriculum vitae of the organization's leader, and a copy of the leader's identity card. Failure to register results in the lack of any legal standing of the organization in the Government's eyes. For example, any organization that does not register with the Ministry of Justice would not be allowed to open a bank account and would be severely disadvantaged in any court of law.

However, the EOC has never registered and has never suffered ramifications for not registering. Similarly, the Supreme Islamic Council, after registering 8 years ago, has never reregistered since it protested this requirement to the Prime Minister's Office. Protests from other religious groups over these exceptions have not resulted in equal treatment from the Government.

Religious groups are not accorded duty-free status. Religious groups are given free government land for churches, schools, hospitals, and cemeteries; however, schools and hospitals, regardless of how long they have been in operation, are subject to closure by the Government at any time, and the land taken back. Land used for prayer houses and cemeteries is protected from government reclamation, unless they were built illegally. Religious groups, like private individuals or businesses, must apply to regional and local governments for land allocation. An interfaith effort to promote revision of the law in order for religious organizations to obtain duty-free status continued during the period covered by this report.

In most interreligious disputes, the Government maintains neutrality and tries to be an impartial arbitrator. Some religious leaders have requested the establishment of a federal institution to deal with religious groups. The Government considered the request; however, no action was taken to establish such a federal institution by the end of the period covered by this report.

The Government officially recognizes both Christian and Muslim holidays, and continues to mandate a 2-hour lunch break on Fridays to allow Muslims to go to a mosque to pray. The Government also agreed to a request from Muslim students at Addis Ababa Commercial College to delay the start of afternoon classes until 1:30 p.m. to permit them to perform afternoon prayers at a nearby mosque.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government bans the formation of political parties based on religion.

The Government does not issue work visas to foreign religious workers unless they are attached to the development wing of a religious organization licensed by the Government. The Government requires religious organizations to separate their

development activities from their religious ones and imposes different licensing processes for each. The Government is issuing licenses for religious organizations' development activities but not for its religious activities.

Under the press law, it is a crime to incite one religion against another. The press law also allows for defamation claims involving religious leaders to be prosecuted as criminal cases. In 2001 two journalists were detained and charged with defamation after writing articles critical of the EOC. Tilahun Bekele, publisher of Netsanet, was charged with libel against the pastor of the Kirkos Church, an EOC parish in the Addis Ababa diocese. Daniel Gezahegn, deputy editor-in-chief of Magedwere, was arrested because of an article that was critical of the EOC and was accused of slandering Major-General Bacha Debella, a government official. Both were released on bail in 2001; however, the charges against them were pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

Evangelical leaders have complained of strict regulations on the importation of Bibles, as well as heavy customs duty on Bibles and other religious articles; however, Bibles and religious articles are subject to the same customs duty as all imported books, donated or otherwise.

While some Muslim leaders continued to complain that public school authorities sometimes interfered with their free practice of Islam because they prohibited the wearing of headscarves in school, others accepted that school officials do so to keep better track of their students. Certain public school teachers in the SNNPRS, Addis Ababa, and the Amhara region objected to Muslim schoolgirls covering their heads with scarves while at school. According to Muslim leaders, school officials negatively react to the practice of fully covering the face and hands of female students. Muslim leaders stated that in some schools, Muslim girls go without head coverings in order to avoid similar problems.

The Government has interpreted the constitutional provision for separation of religion and state to mean that religious instruction is not permitted in schools, whether they are public or private schools. Catholic, Orthodox, evangelical, and Muslim-owned and operated schools are not permitted to teach religion as a course of study. Most private schools teach morals courses as part of school curricula, and the Government Education Bureau in Addis Ababa has complained that such courses are not free of religious influence. Churches are permitted to have Sunday schools, the Koran is taught at mosques, and public schools permit the formation of clubs, including those of a religious nature.

Minority religious groups have complained of discrimination in the allocation of government land for religious sites. Protestant groups occasionally complain that local officials discriminate against them when seeking land for churches and cemeteries. Evangelical leaders have complained that because they are perceived as "newcomers" they remain at a disadvantage compared with the EOC and the Supreme Islamic Council when it comes to the allocation of land. The Supreme Islamic Council has complained that it has more difficulty obtaining land from the government bureaucracy than the EOC; others believe that the Supreme Islamic Council is favored for mosque locations. While local authorities in the northern town of Axum, a holy city for the EOC, continued to deny Muslim leaders' repeated requests to allocate land for the construction of a mosque there, they have said that they will consider the request as soon as Saudi Arabian officials allow a church to be built in Mecca, a holy city for Muslims. Members of Jehovah's Witnesses have said that due to the lack of suitable plots in the capital that the Government was willing to allocate, they have leased their own.

In 1998 the Government returned Evangelical Church property that was seized under the Mengistu regime (including the Mekane Yesus Church headquarters, which served as Federal Police headquarters until 1997); however, the Government still has not returned other properties to the Mekane Yesus Church, including three student hostels and two schools. The Government also has not returned to the Seventh-day Adventists properties taken by the prior regime, including two hospitals. The Supreme Islamic Council continued to try to obtain properties that were confiscated outside of the capital under the Dergue regime. A March 2002 declaration by the Oromia Regional State Parliament called for the return of all nationalized property originally belonging to religious organizations; however, no property was returned by the end of the period covered by this report. Similar provisions were instituted in the Southern Region last year.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In 2002 Full Gospel Church members complained that district level officials in Merawi, Mecha district, West Gojam Zone, Amhara Region, refused to heed their warnings that Orthodox Church members were plotting to take violent measures against their members. The Full Gospel Church had been awarded a plot of land

in Merawi over the objections of 42 Orthodox congregations. The failure of Mecha district officials to take action in response to the Full Gospel Church's concerns led to the July 2002 killing of a Full Gospel fellowship leader at the hands of an Orthodox mob (see Section III).

In April 2002, police arrested evangelical church leaders Kiros Meles and Abebayeh Desalegn as suspects in the killing of an Orthodox church member. The incident happened during a rampage by an Orthodox mob that attacked five evangelical churches in Maychew, Tigray region. Police apparently tried to suppress evidence linking the killing to a fellow police officer, who fired his gun in the air in a vain attempt to disperse the crowd. The two men were held for 1 year without any evidence being produced by the police. They were released in April 2003 without any charges ever filed against them.

In January 2001, in Harar, a riot broke out between Muslims and Christians (see Section III); the army was called in to restore order and reportedly shot and killed five persons. No action was taken against any of the army officers who were involved in the incident, and the case officially was closed.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, open conflict among religious groups increased during the period covered by this report. These occurred most noticeably between Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and evangelical Protestants, and between Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and Muslims. In addition there continued to be pockets of interreligious tension and criticism among some religious groups. For example, members of newer faiths, such as Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses, have encountered overt opposition from the public. Muslims and Orthodox Christians complain about proselytization by Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses. Ethiopian Orthodox leaders complain that sometimes Protestants fail to respect Orthodox holy days and Orthodox customs. Muslims complain that some Pentecostal preachers disparage Islam in their services. There were complaints by Muslim leaders that the EOC's desire to "show supremacy" sometimes caused irritation in the regions.

In most sections of the country, Orthodox Christians and Muslims generally respect each other's religious observances, and there was tolerance for intermarriage and conversion in certain areas, most notably in Welo, in the Amhara region, as well as in urban areas throughout the country. In the capital, Addis Ababa, persons of different faiths often lived side-by-side. Most urban areas reflect a mixture of all religious denominations. The Roman Catholic Church and evangelical Protestant denominations, particularly the Mekane Yesus Church and Kale Hiwot Churches, provided social services such as health care and education to nonmembers as well as to members. However, there were some clashes between Muslims and Orthodox Christians over the allocation of land during the period covered by this report.

On April 26, on the evening of Ethiopian Orthodox Holy Saturday, Ethiopian Orthodox Christians in the District 28, Ward 4 area of Addis Ababa attacked members of the local Islamic council and destroyed a fence surrounding a plot of land upon which a mosque was to be built. Several persons were injured; at least one Islamic council member was hospitalized for several weeks. Fighting continued for three nights but paused during daytime hours. Police initially reported to the scene of the fighting but left after not witnessing any fighting during daytime hours.

On January 13, a confrontation erupted in the Merkato area of Addis Ababa between Muslims and city officials who had come to demolish an illegally constructed mosque. Muslims defied the authorities' right to tear down the mosque and threw rocks at city and police officials. Police fired into the air, but there were no reported deaths. Police seriously beat at least one man. City officials demolished the mosque and had plans to carry out other demolitions of illegally constructed mosques around the city.

On January 9, a clash occurred during a celebration of Ethiopian Epiphany attended by the Patriarch at Yeka Michael church in Addis Ababa. Many Orthodox followers attending the celebration were beaten up and others imprisoned by police forces when they burned a picture of the Patriarch and started throwing rocks at him.

On December 29, 2002, Orthodox followers clashed with Mekane Yesus Protestant followers in Mekelle, Tigray region. Mekane Yesus Orthodox followers were in the third day of a 3-day open-air prayer service at Mekelle stadium for drought victims. Orthodox religious services underway at nearby St. George Church involved the use of loudspeakers (a common practice of Ethiopian Orthodox, Protestant, and Muslim preachers alike) apparently disturbing the Protestant service. A visit by a Mekane Yesus pastor to St. George Church asking them to lower the noise level was unsuccessful. That afternoon, Orthodox followers approached the stadium and began throwing rocks at Mekane Yesus followers taking part in the service. Regional police arrived on the scene but were unable to control the crowd, even after firing shots in the air. Those shots, when heard by others in the surrounding area, caused the crowd to swell. Police shot and killed two men on the spot. Police severely beat a third man, who died 3 days later in a hospital. Several hundred people were wounded in the fighting. Police detained dozens of individuals, all of whom were released a few days after the incident. The violence took on a political nature when the offices of the ruling party-owned Walta Information Center and the Ethiopian News Agency came under attack. Orthodox crowd members also smashed the windows of buildings in the Jehovah Witnesses' compound in Mekelle. No punitive action has been taken against the police officers responsible for the deaths of the three individuals.

On December 24, 2002, Ethiopian Orthodox Christians opposed to the proposed construction of a mosque in the Ayer Tena neighborhood of Addis Ababa clashed with Muslims there. Several persons were injured.

On November 18 and December 27, 2002, confrontations between members of Lideta Maryam Orthodox Parish in Addis Ababa and Ethiopian Orthodox Church officials over alleged corruption by church officials appointed by the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church turned violent when police raided the church compound and forcibly dispersed members of the congregation who were assembled in prayer. Police killed one man and injured dozens. According to the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), police indiscriminately beat many persons in the compound, including nuns, monks, elderly women, and other bystanders. A Federal Police officer severely beat Voice of America journalist Helen Mohammed when she tried to gain access to the Lideta Church compound on December 27. Police also beat Tobia reporter Yonas Wolde Senbet and confiscated his camera at the church. According to EHRCO, after the raid, police detained approximately 700 persons at Kolfe police training camp and subjected them to physical abuse. Many complained they were doused with water, forced to crawl naked on gravel, and denied food and water for most of the 5 days they were in detention. Police required them to sign statements under duress admitting to their roles in inciting riots at the church before they could be released. All 700 members have reportedly been released.

In October 2002, leaders of the Southern Region Islamic Council complained of the intention of district level authorities in Bonke district, Gamo Gofa Zone in the Southern Region, to demolish a 45-year-old mosque that lies in the heart of the town's business district, ostensibly in order to make room for more small businesses. If carried out, this would contravene Ethiopian law, which has a grandfather clause that protects such religious buildings. When one of the Islamic Council leaders traveled to Bonke district in September 2002 to videotape the mosque, Bonke district officials had him arrested and charged with "illegal photography." He was released from detention after 3 days. Islamic Council officials alleged that local officials were discriminating against Muslim residents of Bonke district not only on religious grounds but also on racial grounds, as most Muslims living in Bonke are not originally from there. The mosque had not been demolished by the end of the period covered by this report.

On July 17, 2002, a Full Gospel Church fellowship leader named Dantew was killed in his home in Merawi, in the Amhara region, in front of his family by a mob of Orthodox Church priests and other adherents wielding machetes and axes. He was left to bleed to death from axe wounds to his head. Eight others were seriously injured. The crowd was angry over the Full Gospel Church's plans to build a church on a plot of land awarded it by the Government. Forty-one persons were detained in connection with the killing; all have been released except one. It is unclear whether charges have been filed against the one person still being held in connection with the killing.

On January 19, 2002, in Kemisse, the capital of the Oromiya Zone, in the Amhara Region, one person was killed during a clash between Muslims and Christians. According to police reports, they arrested several persons for organizing the disruption or throwing rocks at the procession celebrating the Ethiopian Orthodox holiday of Timket or Epiphany; however, all of those arrested subsequently were released. There was still no determination of who was responsible for the killing.

In December 2001, in Addis Ababa, Muslims and Ethiopian Orthodox Christians fought over a parcel of land that both groups claimed to be their own. The disputed parcel originally was allocated to the Muslim community; however, no permission was given to construct a mosque on the property. After 2 years, the Muslim community began constructing the mosque at night without permission, which led to clashes with local members of the EOC. According to reports from the Islamic Affairs Council, 2 Muslims were killed during those clashes, and police arrested an estimated 100 persons. All of those arrested subsequently were released, and construction of the mosque did not resume by the end of the period covered by this report.

In November 2001, in Addis Ababa, Muslims and Orthodox Christians began fighting after Christians in the community requested that the Muslim community demolish a mosque being built without a permit on a small soccer field. One person was killed, several persons were injured, and several persons were arrested. No further action was taken by the end of the period covered by this report.

In August 2001, in Addis Ababa, police ordered a group of Muslims to stop the construction of an unauthorized mosque near an Ethiopian Orthodox church. Fighting began after Orthodox Christians attempted to dismantle the mosque. Construction at the site did not resume by the end of the period covered by this report.

In January 2001, in Harar, a riot broke out between Muslims and Christians after several members of a Christian procession entered a mosque and disrupted Muslim services. Both groups accused each other of destroying religious property. After the local police no longer were able to control the rioting, the army was called in to restore order and reportedly shot and killed five persons; it was not known whether the rioters fired weapons in return. No actions were taken against any of the army officers who were involved in the incident, and the case officially was closed.

The Islamic Affairs Council estimated that 100 mosques were burned in the Oromiya Region during the last 3 years, many by followers of Wahabbist Islam. The Islamic Council continued to investigate the fires at the end of the period covered by this report. Although the identities of those responsible are unknown or not released publicly, 12 executive members of the Oromiya branch of the Supreme Islamic Council were removed from their positions for not stopping the destruction of mosques in the region.

Leaders of the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (EIASC) struggled with Wahhabist fundamentalism within their ranks during the period covered by this report. The growing influence of radical elements within Islamic communities in the country, aided by funding from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states for mosque construction and social services, continued to concern the EIASC.

In February 2002, the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the chairman of the EIASC, the Archbishop of the Ethiopian Church, and the president of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus met with their Eritrean counterparts and officials from the Eritrean Foreign Ministry in Eritrea. The religious leaders then traveled to Ethiopia to continue their discussions. They issued statements appealing for peace and reconciliation between the two countries.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy met with government officials regularly to discuss religious freedom. The U.S. Embassy is also encouraging the Government to expedite the registration process for religious organizations to make sure no religious groups are channeling funds through the country to finance terrorist aims. U.S. Embassy officials also made an active effort to visit all of the religious groups and religious NGOs during the period covered by this report.

The U.S. Ambassador continued to hold regular meetings with religious leaders to promote HIV/AIDS awareness. In addition, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) continued to work with the Ethiopian Orthodox Development Assistance Authority to provide food commodities and grants to support food security programs in four areas. USAID supported a variety of programs through Catholic Relief Services, World Vision International, and Family Health International. USAID continued to work with the EOC and Mekane Yesus Church, as well as with the Ethiopian Kale Hiwot Church and the Missionaries of Charity Sisters, to support HIV/AIDS programs.

GABON

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 103,347 square miles, and its population is approximately 1.2 million. Major religions practiced in the country include Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism), Islam, and traditional indigenous religions. Government statistics indicate that approximately 60 percent of the country's citizens practice Christianity, almost 40 percent practice traditional indigenous religions, and only 1 percent practice Islam. However, Muslims make up a much larger proportion of the total population, especially among noncitizens. Many persons practice both elements of Christianity and elements of traditional indigenous religions. It is estimated that approximately 73 percent of the population, including noncitizens, practice at least some elements of Christianity, approximately 12 percent practice Islam, approximately 10 percent practice traditional indigenous religions exclusively, and approximately 5 percent practice no religion or are atheists.

Noncitizens constitute approximately 20 percent of the population. A significant portion of these noncitizens come from countries in West Africa with large Muslim populations. Approximately 80 to 90 percent of the 12 percent of the total population who practice Islam are foreigners. However, the country's President is a member of the Muslim minority.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. A 1970 decree banning Jehovah's Witnesses, which the Government promulgated on the grounds that Jehovah's Witnesses allegedly do not protect adequately individuals who might dissent from the group's views, remained in effect; however, the Government did not enforce the ban.

The Ministry of the Interior maintains an official registry of some religious groups; however, it does not register traditional religious groups. The Government does not require religious groups to register but recommends that they do so to assemble with full constitutional protection. No financial or tax benefit is conferred by registration.

Islamic, Catholic, and Protestant denominations operate primary and secondary schools in the country. These schools are required to register with the Ministry of Education, which is charged with ensuring that these religious schools meet the same standards required for public schools. The Government does not contribute funds to private schools, whether religious or secular.

Both Catholic and Protestant radio stations broadcast in the country.

The Government promotes interfaith relations by facilitating meetings of leaders of the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy and the Islamic Council. Such meetings are held periodically, usually once every year or every other year.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government has refused to register approximately 10 religious groups. A Government decision on the registration of Jehovah's Witnesses is pending. In practice the Government allows Jehovah's Witnesses to assemble and practice their religion. In addition the Government has made uncorroborated claims that it permitted Jehovah's Witnesses to proselytize.

The government television stations accorded free transmission time to the Catholic Church, some Protestant congregations, and Islamic mosques. Some Protestants alleged that the armed forces favor Roman Catholics and Muslims in hiring and promotion. There were no recent reports by Protestant pastors that local officials discriminated against them by making it difficult to obtain building permits to construct churches.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. There were no reports of interreligious violence or intrareligious incidents during the period covered by this report.

There were occasional incidents of violence in which practitioners of some traditional indigenous religions inflicted bodily harm on other persons. The Ministry of the Interior has stated that violence and bodily harm to others in the practice of a traditional religion is a criminal offense and is prosecuted vigorously. However, little information about such prosecutions or their results was available.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy officials have met with leaders of the Catholic Church, as well as the Islamic Superior Council. Contacts are maintained with the Ministry of Interior to discuss the general state of religion in the country. The Embassy also maintains close contacts with various Christian missionary groups in the country.

THE GAMBIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 3,861 square miles, and its population is 1,364,507. Muslims constitute 95 percent of the population. The main Muslim schools are Tijaniyah, Qadiriya, Muridiyah, and Ahmadiyah. Except for the Ahmadiyah, all branches pray together at common mosques. An estimated 9 percent of the population practice Christianity and 1 percent practice traditional indigenous religions. The Christian community predominantly is Roman Catholic; there also are several Protestant denominations, including Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and various small Protestant evangelical denominations. There is no information available regarding the number of atheists in the country.

Foreign missionary groups operate in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

The Government does not require religious groups to register. Religiously based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are subject to the same registration and licensing requirements as other NGOs.

The Government permits and does not limit religious instruction in schools. Biblical and Koranic studies are provided in both public and private schools throughout the country without government restriction or interference. Religious instruction in public schools is provided at government expense, but is not mandatory.

The Government considers the following religious holidays national holidays: Tobaski (Eid-UL-Adha), Muwlud-Al-Nabi, Koriteh (Eid El-Fitri), Good Friday, As-

sumption Day, and Christmas Day. Religious holidays do not impact any religious group negatively.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

The Government has announced that Gambian men should not marry more than two wives. Many Muslim Clerics have condemned the new government policy, expressing that it violates the Constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion worship and expression.

Leaders of the Christian minority, which comprise no more than 5 percent of the population, praise the Government and people of the Gambia for the friendly protection and accommodation of the Christian minority. Muslims constitute 95 percent of the population. Christian leaders cite the religious tolerance practiced in the Gambia as an example to be followed by other countries in the region.

On April 28, approximately 70 Muslim students at St. Theresa's decided to wear veils to school. School authorities denied them entry to the school because veils violate school uniform requirements that forbid any headwear. The students forced their way into the school, but teachers refused to teach them. Both students and teachers ultimately protested publicly over the issue. On May 19, the Government closed St. Theresa's Upper Basic School, a Catholic Mission school that offers both Koranic and Biblical Studies in addition to national academic curriculum, due to a controversy over Muslim girls wearing veils to school.

During the following two weeks, students and school authorities failed to find a consensus: students maintained that they had a right to religious expression, while school authorities maintained that they had a right to enforce school uniform requirements. While students consider the issue a question of religious tolerance, administrators consider it a question of authority over their own school's policies. They cite the example of Muslim schools in the country, where non-Muslim female students wear veils to conform to school uniform requirements.

On May 31, the Department of State for Education issued a letter of instruction to all schools stating that "veils wearing should be allowed in all schools, regardless of ownership); that no child or student should be sent away from school for wearing a veil." The instructions also dictated that the school be allowed to regulate the color of the veil, and that veils be longer than required to cover head and shoulders and have no additional decoration or adornment not sanctioned by the school authorities. The Education Department also ruled that Muslim students' sleeves and skirts must be the length required by the school uniform code.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Inter-marriage between members of different religious groups is legal and socially acceptable.

Practitioners of female genital mutilation (FGM) and other types of circumcision in the country firmly believe that Islam mandates it and its surrounding rites, although well respected local Muslim leaders have spoken out against it.

Although government programs to promote girls' education and development quietly work toward reducing the prevalence of FGM by changing societal attitudes, it is unlikely the Government will take any further action on the June 2002 case of the forced circumcision of a 13-year-old girl in Tanji Village. The Government's official stance is that female circumcision is a cultural issue, and the Government cannot forbid it.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

GHANA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

The status of respect for religious freedom improved somewhat during the period covered by this report. The Government has increased its prosecution of violent acts, including religious violence, and improved its efforts to resolve religious conflicts.

The general amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, tensions between different branches of the same faith, as well as between Christian and traditional faiths, sometimes occur. There are a number of governmental and nongovernmental efforts to promote inter- and intra-faith understanding.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of approximately 92,000 square miles, and its population 20,467,747. According to the 2000 government census, approximately 69 percent of the country's population is Christian, 16 percent is Muslim, and 9 percent adheres to traditional indigenous religions or other religions. The Muslim community has protested these figures, asserting that the Muslim population is closer to 30 percent. Other religions include the Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Ninchiren Shoshu Soka Gakkai, Sri Sathya Sai Baba Sera, Sat Sang, Eckankar, the Divine Light Mission, Hare Krishna, Rastafarianism, and other international faiths, as well as some separatist or spiritual churches or cults, which include elements of Christianity and traditional beliefs such as magic and divination. Zetahil, a practice unique to the country, combines elements of Christianity and Islam. There are no statistics available for the percentage of atheists in the country. Atheism does not have a strong presence, as most persons have some spiritual and traditional beliefs.

Christian denominations include Roman Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Mennonite, Evangelical Presbyterian, Presbyterian, African Methodist Episcopal Zionist, Christian Methodist, Evangelical Lutheran, F'eden, numerous charismatic faiths, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-day Adventist, Pentecostal, Baptist, and the Society of Friends. Christianity often includes an overlay of traditional beliefs. No figure of the number of persons who attend services was available.

Traditional indigenous religions include a belief in a supreme being, referred to by the Akan ethnic group as Nyame or by the Ewe ethnic group as Mawu, and lesser gods who act as intermediaries between the supreme being and human beings. Veneration of ancestors also is a characteristic of traditional indigenous religions because ancestors also provide a link between the supreme being and the living and at times may be reincarnated. The religious leaders of those sharing these diverse beliefs commonly are referred to as priests and are trained in the arts of healing and divination. These priests typically operate shrines to the supreme deity or to one of the lesser gods, relying upon the donations of the public to maintain the shrine and for their own maintenance. One known group, Afrikania, also known as the Afrikan Renaissance Mission (ARM), actively supports traditional religious practices. Afrikania often criticizes the Government, foreign diplomatic missions, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for corrupting traditional values and imposing foreign religious beliefs. Afrikania leaders claim the movement has more than 4 million followers; however, no independent confirmation of the claim was available.

Three dominant Islamic orientations are represented in the country: the Wahhabi-oriented Ahlussuna, the Tijanis, and the Ahmadis. A small number of Shi'a also are present. The majority of the Muslim population is concentrated in the urban centers of Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, Tamale, and Wa, and in northern areas of the country. The majority of the followers of more traditional religions mainly reside in the rural areas of the country. Christians live throughout the country.

Religions considered to be "foreign" include the Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Ninchiren Shoshu Soka Gakkai, Sri Sathya Sai Baba Sera, Sat Sang, Eckankar, the Divine Light Mission, Hare Krishna, and Rastafarianism.

Foreign missionary groups operate freely in the country, including Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Muslim, and Mormon groups.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. Religious institutions that wish to have formal government recognition are required to register with the Registrar General's Department. The registration requirement for religious bodies at the Office of the Registrar General is the same for any non-governmental organization. The organization pays 35,000 cedis (approximately US\$4) for the actual form and 610,000 cedis (approximately US\$72.70) for the registration. Applicants are required to renew their registration annually for 150,000 cedis (approximately US\$17.40). The content of the registration form include Name of Organization, Date of Formation, Name of Trustees, Membership of an Executive Council, Address, Declaration of Income and Property, and Requirements for an Annual General meeting. This is the process for being recognized as exempt from taxation on non-profit activities. This is a formality only, and there were no reports that the Government denied registration to any group. Most traditional religions, with the exception of the Afrikania Mission, do not register. Formally recognized religions are exempt from paying taxes on ecclesiastical, charitable, and educational activities that do not generate income from trade or business; however, religious organizations are required to pay taxes on business activities that generate income.

Government employees, including the President, are required to swear an oath upon taking office; however, this oath can be either religious or secular, depending on the wishes of the person taking the oath.

Foreign missionary groups operated in the country with a minimum of formal requirements and without restrictions.

The Government often takes steps to promote interfaith understanding. At government meetings and receptions, there generally is a multid denominational invocation usually led by religious leaders from various faiths. Regional and local government authorities successfully have implemented recommendations by a 2001 Joint Parliamentary Committee to resolve problems surrounding the annual ban on drumming in the Ga traditional area prior to the Homowo Festival (see Section III).

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In the past, the Government did not always prosecute those responsible for religious violence; however, the Government increased its prosecution of violent acts, including religious violence, and all incidents of religious violence were prosecuted during the period covered by this report.

In the past, the Government has required that all public school students attend a daily "assembly" or devotional service, which is Christian and includes the recital of The Lord's Prayer, a Bible reading, and a blessing. In 2000 the Ghana Muslim Students' Association petitioned the Director of the Ghana Education Service that these assemblies constituted discrimination against Muslims. The Afrikania Mission also publicly urged the Government to stop requiring Christian "indoctrination" of children in government-funded schools. In response, the Director General of the Ghana Education Service announced new regulations that public school authorities should not force students of minority religious groups to worship with the majority religious groups in school. The Minister of Education also directed all schools to respect the religious rights of all students. During the period covered by this report, Muslim organizations report that while there are a few isolated reports of disrespect for the directive, Muslim students generally experience greater religious freedom in public schools. Students attending government-administered boarding school are required to attend a nondenominational service on Sundays. Muslim students in these boarding schools are exempted from the service, and are permitted to practice daily prayers.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations between the various religious communities, and spokesmen for these communities often advocate tolerance toward different religions; however, there was some tension among some religious groups. Public debate continued over religious worship versus traditional practices and respect for the rights and customs of others in a diverse society.

In the past, there has been tension between practitioners of the ethnic Ga tradition (the Ga are the original inhabitants of Accra, and some consider the Ga tradition to be a religion) and members of some charismatic churches over the annual ban by Ga traditional leaders on drumming and noise-making prior to the Ga Homowo (harvest) festival. Traditionalists maintain that their time-honored beliefs should be accorded due respect, while some Christians resent the imposition of bans, which they believe infringes on their right to worship as they please. In 2000 religious and traditional leaders agreed to modify the ban to allow drumming, if subdued and confined to the churches. On the first day of the 2001 ban, the Ga Traditional Council (GTC) overturned the previous year's agreement, announcing that the ban would apply to all drumming and noise-making. Christian churches claimed that the ban was unconstitutional and that they would not observe it. Several incidents of violence were reported during the 2001 ban on drumming.

Following the violence, the Government made extensive efforts to mediate between charismatic Christians and ethnic Ga traditionalists. A Parliamentary Committee examined the ban on drumming and noise-making and recommended that local government authorities establish a Monitoring Team to enforce by-laws regarding noise all year around, and encouraged dialogue between all parties. Based on these recommendations, the regional government established the Permanent Conflict Resolution Committee to work with Ga traditionalists and the Forum of Religious Bodies. Both sides agreed that during the ban, drumming and noise-making by churches should not exceed the decibel level proscribed by existing law. Regional and city authorities formed a Monitoring Team comprised of police, Environmental Protection Agency, city, and traditional authorities to ensure that existing noise regulations were enforced throughout the year, and not only during the period of the ban. A public education campaign also was launched to urge charismatic churches to respect existing law. As a result of these efforts, there were no incidents of violence during the 2002 ban on drumming.

The Monitoring Team commenced noise abatement exercises on April 16, several weeks prior to the May 5–June 5 ban. The Monitoring Team cautioned, arrested, and fined more than 60 noise offenders from April 16 through June 5. There were no reports of violence during the 2003 ban on drumming.

There were occasional reports of interreligious and intrareligious incidents but no violent incidents based on religious affiliation. There were no reports of intra-Muslim violence during the period covered by this report; however, tensions continued between members of the Tijanniya and Ahlussuna groups throughout the country. Muslims organizations are working to release intra-Muslim tensions through education and conflict resolution exercises.

Trokosi, also known as Fiashidi, is a religious practice involving a period of servitude lasting up to 3 years. It is found primarily among the ethnic Ewe group in the Volta Region. A virgin girl, sometimes under the age of 10, but often in her teens, is given by her family to work and be trained in traditional religion at a fetish shrine for a period lasting between several weeks and 3 years as a means of atonement for an allegedly heinous crime committed by a member of the girl's family. In exceptional cases, when a girl of suitable age or status is unavailable, a boy can be offered. The girl, who is known as a Trokosi or a Fiashidi, then becomes the property of the shrine god and the charge of the shrine priest for the duration of her stay. As a charge of the priest, the girl works in the shrine and undergoes instruction in the traditional indigenous religion. In the past, there were reports that the girls were the sexual property of the priests; however, while instances of abuse may occur on a case-by-case basis, there is no evidence that sexual or physical abuse is an ingrained or systematic part of the practice. Shrine priests generally are male, but may be female as well. The practice explicitly forbids a Trokosi or Fiashidi to engage in sexual activity or contact during her atonement period. During that time, she helps with the upkeep of the shrine, which may include working on the shrine's farm, drawing water, and performing other agricultural or household labor. Trokosi may or may not attend school.

During the atonement period, most Trokosi do not live in the shrines, which generally are little more than fenced-in huts with small courtyards; many remain with their families or stay with members of the shrine who live nearby. During the girl's stay, her family must provide for the girl's needs, including food and clothing; however, in some cases families are unable to do so. After she has completed her service to the shrine, the girl's family completes their obligation by providing items that may include drinks, cloth, money, and sometimes livestock, to the shrine for a final release ritual. After the release ritual, the girl returns to her family and resumes her life, without, in the vast majority of cases, any particular stigma attaching to her status as a former Trokosi shrine participant. In very occasional cases, the family abandons the girl or cannot afford the cost of the final rites, in which case she

may remain at the shrine indefinitely. She also may leave the shrine and return to her village, with her family's association then sundered with the shrine. Even when freed from the shrine, a Trokosi woman generally has few marketable skills and, depending on the customs of her village, may have difficulty getting married. Generally the women continue to associate themselves with the shrine, a voluntary association involving return visits for ceremonies. In many instances, when a Trokosi woman dies, even years or decades after she has completed her service and resumed her life in the village, her family is expected to replace her with another young girl, thus continuing the association of the family to the shrine from generation to generation.

Reports on the number of women and girls bound to various Trokosi shrines vary; however, shrines rarely have more than four girls serving their atonements at any one time. In the past, the local NGO International Needs reported that there were more than 2,000 women or girls in Trokosi shrines; however, according to credible reports from international observers, there were no more than 100 girls serving at Trokosi shrines throughout the Volta Region (see Section IV). In addition, in February and March 2002, several letters to the editor were published in which other local NGO's disputed the claims of International Needs. During the period covered by this report, reports by International Needs and other NGOs indicate that the incidence of Trokosi is declining considerably.

Comprehensive legislation protects women and children's rights and includes a ban on ritual servitude, which many activists interpreted to include Trokosi. According to human rights groups, such as International Needs, that have been campaigning against Trokosi for years, the practice has decreased in recent years because other belief systems have gained followers, and fetish priests who die have not been replaced. Adherents of Trokosi describe it as a practice based on traditional African religious beliefs; however, the Government does not recognize it as a religion.

Belief in witchcraft remains strong in many parts of the country. Rural women may be banished by traditional village authorities or their families for suspected witchcraft. Most accused witches are older women, often widows, who are identified by fellow villagers as the cause of difficulties, such as illness, crop failure, or financial misfortune. Many of these banished women go to live in "witchcamps," villages in the north populated by suspected witches. The women do not face formal legal sanction if they return home; however, most fear that they may be beaten or lynched if they return to their villages. The law provides protection for alleged witches. In the past, human rights NGOs estimated that the number of occupants of the witches' camp was growing; however, there are no definitive statistics regarding the number of women living in northern witchcamps, and international and domestic observers estimate that there are fewer than 850 women in the camps. The Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and human rights NGOs have mounted a campaign to end this traditional practice, but have met with little success. Various organizations provide food, medical care, and other forms of support to the residents of the camps.

In addition to banishment, suspected witches are subject to violence and lynching. For example, in April 2001, a man living in Tongor in the Volta Region chopped off the hands of his 75-year-old aunt, claiming that she was a witch. Police arrested the assailant, who was tried, convicted, and sentenced to 6 years in prison with hard labor. During the period covered by this report, the government continued to prosecute violence against suspected witches.

There were no developments in the January 2001 case in which members of the Christo Asafo Christian church clashed with members of the Boade Baaka traditional shrine at Taifa, greater Accra Region, after shrine members accused a Christian woman of witchcraft.

On July 31, 2002, tensions between a local church and the traditional council led a mob to set fire to the church's worship center in Techiman, Brong-Ahafo Region. No injuries were reported. Traditional authorities have denied involvement in the fire. Those who follow traditional practices in the area have accused the church of preaching against the traditional Apoo Festival and ban on fishing on the Tano River. An investigation by the Techiman District Security Committee (which includes the District Chief Executive, District Police Commander, and others) was ongoing at the period covered by this report, and no arrests have been made due to lack of evidence. However, the Committee has formally cautioned the traditional authorities and is drawing up strategies to prevent further disturbances.

The clergy and other religious leaders actively discourage religiously motivated violence, discrimination, or harassment.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government monitors religious freedom in the country and discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy officers meet periodically with various leaders of religious and traditional communities in the country.

In September 2001 and July 2002, Embassy officers conducted a survey of Trokosi shrines, which included five separate trips to the Volta Region and nearly three weeks in the field, along with extensive interviews of government officials, foreign Embassy officers, religious leaders, shrine priests, NGO representatives, members of civil society, and Trokosis themselves. Embassy officials identified no more than two dozen active Trokosi shrines in the Volta Region, with a total of fewer than 100 girls serving their atonement periods (see Section III).

GUINEA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion; however, the Government reportedly favors Muslims over non-Muslims.

Relations between the various religions are generally amicable; however, in some areas, strong social pressure discourages non-Muslims from practicing their religion openly, and the Government tends to defer to local Muslim sensibilities.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 94,926 square miles, and its population is 7,775,065 based on recent estimate. Islam is demographically, socially, and culturally the dominant religion. According to credible estimates, approximately 85 percent of the population adheres to Islam, 10 percent follow various Christian faiths, and 5 percent hold traditional indigenous beliefs. Muslims in the country generally adhere to the Sunni branch of Islam; adherents of the Shi'a branch remain relatively few, although they are increasing in number. Among the Christian groups, there are Roman Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventist, and evangelical churches active in the country and recognized by the Government. There is a small Baha'i community. There are small numbers of Hindus, Buddhists, and practitioners of traditional Chinese religions among the expatriate community. Few, if any, citizens profess atheism.

Although there are no known organized heterogeneous or syncretistic religious communities, both Islam and Christianity have developed syncretistic tendencies, which reflect the continuing influence and acceptability of traditional indigenous beliefs and rituals.

Geographically, Muslims are a majority in all four major regions. Christians are most numerous in the capital, in the southern part of the country, and in the eastern forest region. Christians are found in all large towns throughout the country, with the exception of the Fouta Jallon region in the middle of the country, where the deep cultural entrenchment of Islam in Pular (Fulani or Peuli) society makes it difficult for other religions to establish religious communities. Traditional indigenous religions are most prevalent in the forest region.

No data is available on active participation in formal religious services or rituals; however, the National Islamic League (NIL), a government sponsored organization, estimates that 70 percent of Muslims practice their faith regularly.

The country's large immigrant and refugee populations generally practice the same faiths as citizens, although those from neighboring Liberia and Sierra Leone have higher percentages of Christians and adherents of traditional indigenous religions.

Foreign missionary groups are active in the country and include Roman Catholic, Philafricaine, Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, and many American missionary societies. Saudi and Kuwaiti groups preaching the Wahhabism form of Islam are also known to operate in various areas of the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion; however, the Government reportedly favors Muslims over non-Muslims.

The Government requires that all recognized Christian churches join the Association of Churches and Missions to benefit from certain government privileges such as tax benefits and energy subsidies. The registration process requires the submission of a Church's bylaws, statutes, and/or covenants for review by the Association. Churches generally receive approvals after an average period of 2 years. Despite the Government's requirement for registration, there are a number of religious groups that operate freely without official recognition or registration.

The small Baha'i community practices its faith openly and freely, although it is not officially recognized; however, it is unknown whether the community has asked for official recognition.

Missionary groups are required to make a declaration of their aims and activities to the Ministry of Interior or to the NIL. With rare exceptions, foreign missionary groups and church-affiliated relief agencies operate freely in the country. There were no reports during the period covered by this report that government officials obstructed or limited missionary activities by Jehovah's Witnesses, although they reported isolated instances of harassment in the past.

The government-controlled official press reports on religious events involving both Islamic and Christian groups.

There is a general tradition of Koranic schools, particularly strong in the Fouta Djallon region that was ruled during the 18th century as an Islamic theocracy. There also are a few scattered "Madrassa" schools usually associated with a mosque in the northern part of the country. Private radical Islamic groups sponsor them with foreign funds, and these schools have no link with the public school system and are not recognized by the Government.

Missionaries also run their own schools with no interference from the Government. Catholic and Protestant schools exist primarily in Conakry, but throughout the country as well. They teach the National Curriculum (which is not influenced by religion), and there is a special education component for Christians. Lack of government investment in education infrastructure makes any kind of schooling attractive for citizens.

Both Muslim and Christian holidays are recognized by the Government and celebrated by the population.

The Government does not have a specific program to promote interfaith understanding; however, the Government utilizes all religious groups in its civic education efforts and national prayers for peace.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The NIL represents the country's Sunni Muslim majority. The NIL distributes official sermons for Friday prayer at mosque and appoints imams to those mosques under its supervision. The NIL's stated policy is to promote better relations with other religious denominations and dialog aimed at ameliorating interethnic and interreligious tensions. The Government and NIL have spoken out against the proliferation of Shi'a fundamentalist groups on the grounds that they "generate confusion and deviation" within the country's Islamic family. On at least one occasion, they have refused to allow the opening of a foreign-funded Shi'a Islamic school, but otherwise have not restricted the religious activities of these groups.

Government support of the powerful, semi-official NIL has led some non-Muslims to complain that the Government uses its influence to favor Muslims over non-Muslims, although non-Muslims are represented in the Cabinet, administrative bureaucracy, and the armed forces. Conversions of senior officials to Islam, such as the former Defense Minister, are ascribed to the NIL's efforts to influence the religious beliefs of senior government leaders. The Government refrains from appointing non-Muslims to important administrative positions in certain parts of the country, in deference to the particularly strong social dominance of Islam in these regions. In July 2000, the Government announced that it would finance the renovation of Conakry's grand mosque, the mosque at which President Conte worships. The renovation was completed in 2002. Identification of the NIL with the Government has led some Muslims to join more independent and fundamentalist mosques not under NIL control.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religions are generally amicable; however, in some parts of the country, Islam's dominance is such that there is strong social pressure that discourages non-Muslims from practicing their religion openly.

There have been no reports of clashes between Christian and Muslim groups during the period covered by this report.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government maintains contact with clergy and religious leaders from all major religious communities, monitors developments affecting religious freedom, and discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

GUINEA-BISSAU

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 10,811 square miles, and its population is 1,285,715. Approximately half the population follows traditional indigenous religious practices. Approximately 45 percent of the population are Muslim and approximately 5 percent are Christian. There are few atheists.

Christians belong to a number of groups, including the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations. The Muslim population is concentrated in the Fula and Mandinka ethnic groups, and Muslims generally live in the north and northeast. Christians are concentrated in Bissau and other large towns. Practitioners of traditional religions inhabit the remainder of the country.

Missionaries from numerous Christian denominations long have been active.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. There is no state religion.

The Government requires that religious groups be licensed; however, no applications have been refused. There were no reports that new applications were made during the period covered by this report.

Historically, political affiliation has not been related directly to ethnic or religious affiliation. Members of all major faiths are represented in the National Assembly.

Numerous foreign missionary groups operate in the country without restriction.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

There were no reports of government harassment or expulsion of religious associations.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Society is tolerant on religious matters.

There have been no reports of significant ecumenical movements or activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

There has been no official U.S. presence in the country since June 1998;¹ however, the U.S. Embassy based in Dakar, Senegal, discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

KENYA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, while groups generally were allowed to worship freely, the Government at times interfered with other activities by religious groups. The Constitution does not provide for any official state religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government at times restricted or disrupted public meetings that religious groups organized or participated in. Muslim leaders charge that the Government is hostile towards Muslims.

There generally is a great level of tolerance among religious groups; however, there were a few instances of violence between Christian groups and between Christian and Muslim groups, and Muslims continued to perceive themselves to be treated as second-class citizens in a predominantly Christian country. There are some interfaith movements and political alliances, but one of the main alliances, the Ufungamano Initiative, faltered during the period covered by this report.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 225,000 square miles, and its population is approximately 29 million, of which approximately 88 percent lives in rural areas. According to rough estimates, Protestants are the largest religious group representing approximately 38 percent of the population. Approximately 28 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, while an estimated 10 to 20 percent is Muslim. Hinduism is practiced by one percent of the population, and the remainder follow various traditional indigenous religions or offshoots of Christian religions. There are very few atheists.

Members of most religious groups are active throughout the country. Certain religions dominate in particular regions of the country. For example, the North Eastern Province is vastly Muslim; the Eastern Province is approximately 50 percent Muslim (mostly in the north) and 50 percent Christian (mostly in the south); and the Coast Province predominantly is Muslim, except for the western areas of the province, which predominantly are Christian. The rest of the country largely is Christian, with some persons practicing traditional indigenous religions.

Many foreign missionary groups operate in the country, and the Government generally has permitted their assistance to the poor and their founding of schools and hospitals. The missionaries openly promote their religious beliefs and have encountered little resistance.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, while groups generally were allowed to worship freely, the Government at times interfered with other activities by religious groups.

¹Note: The U.S. Embassy remains closed following suspension of operations on June 14, 1998, at the outset of civil conflict that ended in May 1999. The U.S. Embassy in Dakar is responsible for U.S. interests in Guinea-Bissau. Sources of information about the situation of religious believers and other circumstances inside Guinea-Bissau are very limited.

Kadhis' courts provide Muslims with a venue to have civil cases adjudicated based on Islamic law. Article 66 of the Constitution provided for the establishment of Kadhis' courts where "all the parties profess the Muslim religion" in suits relating to "questions of Muslim law relating to personal status, marriage, divorce or inheritance." The Kadhis' Courts Act of 1967 established Kadhis' courts.

A conference to draft a new constitution began in April and was to consider a draft constitutional provision that would expand the jurisdiction of the Kadhis' courts to commercial matters and increase their numbers. In April several thousand Muslims demonstrated peacefully across the country to demand that the Kadhis' courts be enshrined by the new constitution; however, the proposal to expand the jurisdiction and role of the Kadhis' courts in the constitution faced stiff opposition from the delegates at the National Constitutional Conference. The Kadhis' courts controversy has highlighted latent religious animosities between the country's Muslims and Christians. The debate on this issue is ongoing.

Opponents of this provision, led by Christian clerics, argue that Muslims will be given preferential treatment if Kadhis' courts are incorporated into a new constitution. They further argue that as a secular nation, there should be a separation of religion and state. Some Muslim leaders have demanded that Shari'a receive formal recognition in the new constitution, while one of the main allegations posed by opponents of Kadhis' courts is that their inclusion could pave the way for the full application of Shari'a law in the country.

Proponents of Kadhis' courts, on the other hand, argue that other religious groups could establish their own courts if necessary. Some also argue that the Kadhis' courts should be seen as a matter concerning the judiciary and not religion. They further contend that the recognition of the Kadhis' courts was a condition for the integration of the coastal strip into Kenya at the time of independence and question why opponents now object to a slight expansion and modification of this system. Moreover, they argue, the proposed constitutional provision does not pave the way for the full application of Shari'a law.

In April the Government published the Suppression of Terrorism Bill. Many observers find the bill objectionable on human rights grounds, arguing that it contains provisions that violate the Constitution. Muslim leaders in particular argue that the bill is specifically targeted at members of their community and have called for a rejection of the bill. The bill has not yet come up for a vote in Parliament, and the debate was still ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report.

The Government requires new religious organizations to register with the Registrar of Societies, which reports to the Office of the Attorney General. The Government allows traditional indigenous religious organizations to register, although many choose not to do so. Once registered, religious organizations enjoy tax-free status, and clergy are not subject to duty on purchased goods. However, some religious institutions, such as the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, accused the former Government of revoking their exempt status on Value Added Tax and custom duties on suspicion that the Presbyterian Church supported opposition political groups. Religious organizations generally receive equal treatment from the Government; however, some small splinter groups have found it difficult to register due to their inability to define their status as more than an offshoot of a larger religious organization. The Government has not granted registration to the Tent of the Living God, a small Kikuyu religious order banned during the single-party era (pre-1992). However, since the arrival of a multiparty system in 1992, membership in the Tent of the Living God has decreased greatly.

Political parties also must register with the Government. Despite 1997 reforms and the subsequent registration of a large number of political parties, the Government has refused to reverse its 1992 denial of registration of the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK) on the grounds that the IPK, which in 1992 was involved in a number of violent confrontations with police, offended the "secular principle" of the Constitution.

In the areas of the country that largely are Christian, there are morning prayers in public schools. All children participate in the assembly but are not punished if they remain silent during prayers. The Government and some churches frequently disagree over school management when both the Government and the church have a stake in the school. Often churches provide the land and the buildings for the schools, and the Government provides the teachers, which has led to disputes over school management and occasionally the closing of schools. The Standing Committee on Human Rights, in its May report on religious freedom in public schools, found that the Africa Inland Church (AIC) infringed on students' freedom of worship. The AIC sponsors a number of schools, some of which are public schools. The report found that the AIC compelled all students admitted to its schools to adhere to AIC beliefs, which contradicts the Constitution.

There are also a few public schools sponsored by Islamic institutions, which are supported by the Government through the employment of teachers and provision of equipment. Some members of the Muslim community have expressed concern that the lack of a university in the Coast Province, which has a large Muslim population, hinders their educational opportunities; however, higher education is available to Muslim students in other regions of the country.

The Ministry of Transport and Communication has approved radio and television broadcast licenses for several Muslim and Christian groups. The Catholic Church has been assigned regional broadcasting frequencies, but not national frequencies; its petition for national frequencies was not resolved by the end of the period covered by this report. However, to date no organization has been granted national frequencies. Rather, organizations have been assigned a series of regional broadcasting frequencies to give their broadcasts national reach.

The Government celebrates several religious holidays as national holidays, including Christmas, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Idd-ul-Fitr, and Idd-ul-Azha.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Muslim leaders have charged that the Government is hostile toward Muslims. Muslims complain that non-Muslims receive better treatment when requesting citizenship documents. According to Muslim leaders, authorities more rigorously scrutinize the identification cards of persons with Muslim surnames and require them to present additional documentation of their citizenship, such as birth certificates of parents and, sometimes, grandparents. The Government has singled out the overwhelmingly Muslim ethnic Somalis as the only group whose members are issued and required to carry an additional form of identification to prove that they are citizens. They must produce upon demand their Kenyan identification card and a second identification card verifying screening. Both cards also are required to apply for a passport. This heightened scrutiny appears to be due to an attempt to deter illegal immigration, rather than to discriminate against the religious affiliation of the ethnic Somalis. In August 2002, Daniel arap Moi, then President of the country, announced that the Government had stopped screening ethnic Somalis, which he argued was necessary during the 1990s to stem the flow of illegal immigrants from neighboring Somalia. Moi said that the Government instead would rely on local elders and leaders to determine the citizenship of ethnic Somalis. However, it is unclear whether this policy is being enforced. Muslim leaders claim that since the 1998 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, the November 2002 terrorist attacks in Mombasa, and terrorist attacks elsewhere, government discrimination against their community has worsened, especially demands for identity documents.

In the past, the misuse of authority by mainly Christian security forces in the northeast, which largely is Muslim and in which banditry is widespread, had contributed to Muslim mistrust. However, during the period covered by this report, there continued to be greater inclusion of Muslims in security forces and provincial administration.

In May 2001, Muslims protested the reported allocation of a public plot of land to a private developer in Mombasa. The grounds traditionally have been used for celebrating Islamic events. Following the protests, the Government apparently ceased developing plans to allocate the land, and the land remained public at the end of the period covered by this report.

In January 2002, former President Moi directed district education boards to return to the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa (AIPCA) those schools that AIPCA had operated prior to the country's independence; however, the President ordered that AIPCA schools already sponsored by other churches should be allowed to remain under such sponsorship. The British colonial government seized the AIPCA schools because of AIPCA's support of the Mau Mau movement. The AIPCA began repossessing its schools in 2002.

The former Minister of Trade and Industry Nicholas Biwott also has been engaged in a public dispute since 1998 with the Catholic Church over an intended project to use public land to create an educational facility to be named after the Minister's mother. Father Michael Rop, who is in charge of the local parish where the facility is proposed, protested the appropriation of public land to honor Biwott's mother. The Bishop of Eldoret, Cornelius Korir, accused Biwott of harassing Father Rop and his supporters, and claimed that the former Minister was persecuting the church and its followers. The dispute culminated in a confrontation between Biwott's supporters and the Catholic Church in July 2001 when armed police attempted to block Bishop Korir from entering Father Rop's church. The dispute was ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report.

In June 2002, in Busia, a district officer, who was a Seventh-day Adventist, was suspended for refusing to perform his official duties on Madaraka Day, which fell

on a Saturday. During the same month, in Nandi, the Board of Governors suspended 10 high school students, who were Seventh-day Adventists, for refusing to take a test on a Saturday. Supporters of the students challenged the Board's decision, arguing that the school did not have the constitutional right to deny individuals the right to observe their religious practices. No further information was available at the end of the period covered by this report.

In January 2002, district officials in Gilgil stopped a religious meeting at the Emmanuel Church of God during a 2-week crusade after community residents complained of continual wailing and screaming coming from the church. Residents charged that the group was a "cult" and that its members had sold their property to prepare for the return of Jesus Christ; the church denied the allegations.

In 2000 after the discovery of "cult" killings in Uganda, William Ruto, then Assistant Minister in the Office of the President, warned that the Government would crack down on religious groups that endangered the safety of their adherents. In January 2002, Odeny Ngure, a former Member of Parliament, called on the Government and mainstream churches to cooperate in formulating policies to eliminate "cults" from the country; however, no action was taken during the period covered by this report.

The Government historically has been unsympathetic to tribal religious groups that have engendered protest movements. The Government frequently harassed and periodically arrested and detained members of the Mungiki, a small, controversial, cultural and political movement based in part on Kikuyu ethnic traditions, which espouses political views and cultural practices that are controversial in mainstream society. While religion may have played a role in the formation of the group, observers believe that it is not a key characteristic of the group. The Mungiki do not adhere to any single religion and members are free to choose their own religion; the group includes Muslims and Christians. The number of Mungiki members is unknown, but the group draws a significant following from the unemployed and other marginalized segments of society.

Practicing witchcraft is a criminal offense under colonial-era laws; however, persons generally are prosecuted for this offense only in conjunction with some other offense, such as murder. Witchcraft traditionally has been a common explanation for diseases for which the causes were unknown. The practice of witchcraft is understood widely to encompass attempts to harm others not only by magic, but also by covert means of established efficacy such as poisons. Although many traditional indigenous religions include or accommodate belief in the efficacy of witchcraft, they generally approve of harmful witchcraft only for defensive or retaliatory purposes and purport to offer protection against it.

In January 2002, in Nyamira, police arrested two persons for possession of witchcraft supplies, including snake skin, tortoise shell, and powders, and for practicing witchcraft. According to the police, a pastor from Butere Mumias Deliverance Church claimed that the two persons had caused the mysterious illness of a man.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Although the Constitution provides for freedom of assembly, at times the Government used sections of the Public Order Act and the Penal Code to restrict or disrupt public meetings that religious groups organized or participated in, primarily for political reasons. In April 2002, police arrested 39 members of the Tent of the Living God for holding an illegal meeting after the group led a demonstration through the center of Nairobi. In May 2002, all 39 were released on condition that they hold no illegal meetings or processions in the future.

In March 2002, government authorities charged Wanjiru Nduhiu, the leader of an unregistered Kikuyu group, with urging her followers to renounce Christianity and to revert to traditional beliefs and practices, such as female genital mutilation. Nduhiu denied the charges and remained in custody at the end of the period covered by this report; her court case was scheduled for April.

In 2000, police in Laikipia broke up a gathering in a Catholic church hall on the grounds that the participants were former freedom fighters holding a secret meeting. The police arrested four men and charged them with holding an illegal meeting; the case was pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

The case of two police officers, Julius Mugambi M'Nabere and Stephan Musau Kilonzo, charged with the 1999 murder of five Muslim worshippers in the Anas Bin Malik mosque in Chai village near Mombasa, remained pending before the court at the end of the period covered by this report.

There were no other reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There generally is a great level of tolerance among religious groups; however, there were a few instances of violence between Christian groups and between Christian and Muslim groups, and Muslims perceive themselves to be treated as second-class citizens in a predominantly Christian country. Intermarriage between members of Christian denominations is common, and interfaith prayer services occur frequently. Intermarriage between Muslims and Christians, although less frequent, also is acceptable socially, and mosques and Christian churches are found on the same city blocks.

For years Muslims and Christians have held an open debate over their respective places in society. Each group claims to have a larger number of adherents than is plausible, and some Muslim groups believe that the Government and business communities deliberately have impeded development in predominantly Muslim areas. Some Muslim leaders claim that discrimination against Muslims has resulted in a greater incidence of poverty among Muslims than among other religious groups; however, there is no statistical evidence to support this claim. At times the debate has undermined mutual trust.

On June 13, five churches reportedly were burned down by Muslims in Bura Division of Tana River District after an Islamic preacher was arrested and briefly interrogated by police. The Muslims were followers of the cleric and were reportedly angered by the arrest. The cleric had converted to Islam from Christianity and had reportedly angered the Christians in the area with his teachings against Christianity; he was released from police custody at the request of a Member of Parliament. The churches that were burned down include the Anglican Church of Kenya in Bura, the Pentecostal Evangelism Fellowship of Africa (PEFA), the East African Pentecostal Church, the Full Gospel Church of Kenya, and the Bethel Church. Reverend Simon Mgumba of PEFA said his congregation was diminishing after the incident, due to fears of additional attacks. Reconciliation efforts between the communities are underway.

In September 2001, Muslim youths were suspected of responsibility for burning down two wooden churches in Isolo. Muslim leaders criticized the attacks and met in an attempt to diffuse tensions and allay concerns of Christians in the area. Police officers did not believe the fire to be religiously motivated.

In December 2001, Muslim demonstrators destroyed a Catholic church in Mandera after authorities arrested Sheikh Ahmed Hassan Mursal, a Muslim cleric. Mursal, who erroneously was identified as a participant in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, subsequently was released.

There were several disputes over land ownership and institutional conflicts between rival religious factions during the period covered by this report; some resulted in violence.

On March 16, Joseph Okech was killed in a fight during Sunday services between two factions of St. Stephen's Church in Dandora, Nairobi. The conflict reportedly came about as a result of a leadership struggle. However, church leaders contend that non-church members were actually responsible for the incident, which remained under investigation during the period covered by this report.

On May 11, rival factions of the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa in Nyeri clashed violently and several worshippers were injured. The two factions are aligned to two feuding archbishops.

In December 2002, eight persons were arrested in connection to the invasion of the African Independent Pentecostal Church during services. Three worshippers and the bishop were injured during the attack and property was damaged. The invasion was suspected to have resulted from an internal church conflict that was sparked when the previous bishop was ordered to retire by church headquarters.

In January 2002, approximately 500 squatters in Nyeri district forcibly dispersed members of the Othaya Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) from the church compound in which the worshippers had assembled for open-air services; several persons, including a priest, were injured. Both the worshippers and the squatters claimed ownership of the church property, which is located on government land. Also in January 2002, in Marakwet, several persons, including a Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) minister, were injured during a land dispute between members of a Catholic church and the PAG. The dispute reportedly began when Catholic wor-

shippers accused PAG members of making too much noise while praying in a building adjacent to the Catholic church.

In January 2002, Egerton University officials barred approximately 300 worshippers from the AIC from conducting services in the Lord Egerton Castle, which has been the subject of a longstanding property dispute between the University and the AIC. According to the AIC, President Moi allocated the castle and the 50 adjacent acres to the Church in 1995; according to records at the Ministry of Lands, the property belongs to the chaplain of the University and two other individuals. President Moi issued a statement soon after the January 2002 incident indicating that the castle and surrounding property belonged to the University; however, AIC leaders urged their followers to ignore the statement. The dispute was ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report.

In March 2002, progovernment youths forcibly dispersed persons worshipping at a church in Nairobi, scattered church property out of the building, and locked worshippers outside the church. The youths charged that the church was located on land belonging to the Kenya African National Union (KANU), the then ruling party, and that the police had failed to assist them in reclaiming the land. No action was taken against the youths by the end of the period covered by this report.

A number of incidents took place in November and December 2000, when a land dispute led to violence between Muslims and Christians in a densely populated neighborhood in Nairobi. At least one person was killed and numerous persons were injured in the riots, including Anglican Archbishop David Gitari. Two days of violent clashes resulted in the burning of several buildings, including a mosque and two churches. After the riots ended, former Cabinet Minister Sharrif Nassir admitted that he had encouraged Muslim youths to retaliate when attacked. Muslim leaders subsequently apologized for the violence and clarified that the dispute originated over land and was not religiously motivated. Following the riots, religious leaders on both sides cited police inaction as a reason for the spread of the violence. No action was taken against those responsible for the incident. One of the churches burned during these riots has since been rebuilt and was reopened in March.

Unlike in previous years, there were no reports of ritual murders associated with aspects of traditional indigenous religious rites during the period covered by this report. In September 2002 three suspected child abductors were captured in Nakuru for allegedly kidnapping a 2-year-old child missing since April 2002. Officers believed the child was to be used for satanic rituals. The child was reunited with his parents.

Occasionally mobs killed members of their communities on suspicion that they practiced witchcraft or were devil worshippers. In April 2002, in Gucha, villagers killed a person they suspected of bewitching a neighbor and then burned his house. In February 2002, community members in Kitutu Masaba doused a married couple with gasoline and then set the couple on fire for allegedly practicing witchcraft. In February 2002, then Member of Parliament George Anyona charged that some of the killings were politically motivated, and that some politicians had attempted to eliminate political rivals by calling them witches and hiring persons to kill them.

In January 2002, an elderly woman suspected of being a sorceress was stoned to death by a mob in Nyabiswa village in Migori district. In January 2002, police in Kitui Central district dispersed with tear gas a mob that had threatened to lynch and burn the shop of a man they accused of "keeping ghosts." Parents in the community subsequently refused to send their children to school until local officials compelled the man to exorcise his evil spirits. Some members of the mob were arrested and fined for fighting with the police; others were detained for 1 month. In August 2001, in Nyamira, Jethiter Mboga was killed by three of his brothers for "bewitching" their mother; his brothers subsequently went into hiding.

There were no developments in the March 2001 case in which Hannah Mungai, a member of the Akorino religious group (a group that mixes traditions based on the Old Testament with indigenous beliefs) was not allowed to reclaim her daughter after leaving her with an evangelist member of the religious group while she toured the country on a preaching mission. Mungai claims that her daughter was given to other religious group members, and she does not know where her daughter is being kept. Mungai did not report the kidnaping to the police because the religious group does not allow challenges to "men of God" once they invoke the name of the Holy Spirit.

There were several reports of the public beating "suspicious-looking" persons who were accompanied by small children. In 2000 a mob of residents of Nairobi's Kariobangi North neighborhood lynched three suspected child abductors (believed to be devil worshippers), including a grandfather who was walking with his grandchild. In late October 2000, in Kisii, police intervened to block villagers from killing seven suspected witches. Also in 2000, the press reported that villagers burned alive

a suspected sorcerer in Kimburini. In another incident in 2000, a mob attacked a group of American missionaries in Kisumu, whom it suspected to be on a mission to abduct children.

No new information was available on the August 2000 case in which Father John Anthony Kaiser, a Catholic priest working in the country for more than 30 years, was found dead near Naivasha town. Father Kaiser was a vocal human rights activist and a critic of key members of the Government. Although there was much public speculation to the contrary, an investigative report released by a foreign government in 2001 concluded that the evidence collected was most consistent with suicide, and that it was unlikely that Father Kaiser had been murdered. The Catholic Church has disputed this report and called for further independent investigation. The newly elected Government, under pressure from the Catholic Church, agreed in April to hold an inquest into Kaiser's death, which was underway at the end of the period covered by this report. The Church has also called for fresh investigations into the deaths of other Catholic priests who it believes died under suspicious circumstances.

There have been reports of intolerance among refugee groups in the country. Somali refugees reportedly have attacked relatives who marry refugees belonging to faiths other than Islam. Somali refugees at the Dadaab camps also reportedly have attacked verbally and physically Sudanese refugee women who wear Westernized clothing considered "too revealing" by Somali standards.

There have been societal efforts to bridge religious divides. The Inter-Faith Peace Movement represents a broad religious spectrum, and its members include the Anglican Church of Kenya, the Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims, the Muslim Consultative Council (MCC), the Methodist Church, the Catholic Church, the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), the AIC, the PCEA, and the Hindu Council. The NCCCK generally is involved in a variety of civil society initiatives, including conflict resolution. The Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, the MCC, and the NCCCK launched a pilot program in 2002 to promote interfaith dialog and reduce ethnic conflict in Isiolo district, during the period covered by the previous report. There are other cooperative efforts among religious groups to work on societal problems, including the Inter-Religious Steering Committee for Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), formed in April.

In April the Ufungamano Initiative—an inter-faith movement that in 1999 helped spur the current constitutional review process—essentially ended when the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) pulled out. SUPKEM quit Ufungamano after some Christian members of the group decided to oppose the inclusion of Kadhis' courts in a new constitution.

No known action was taken against progovernment youths who forcibly disrupted a meeting of the Ufungamano Initiative in Kisumu in 2000. The youths threw homemade bombs, burned a vehicle, and beat several persons severely.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy made a concerted effort to bridge the gaps that exist between Muslims and Christians. Embassy officials maintain regular contact with all religious communities, and the Ambassador regularly hosts meetings with religious leaders to discuss issues affecting their communities. The Ambassador and Embassy officials also routinely travel throughout the country to meet with various religious and community leaders in an effort to facilitate dialog on religious freedom.

LESOTHO

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 11,720 square miles, and its population is approximately 2.1 million. Christianity is the dominant religion. Approximately 90 percent of the population are Christian, and 70 percent of Christians are Roman Catholic. Muslims, members of other non-Christian religions, and atheists constitute the remaining 10 percent. Christians are scattered throughout the country, while Muslims live mainly in the northeastern part of the country. Most practitioners of Islam are of Asian origin, while the majority of Christians are the indigenous Basotho.

Many devout Christians still practice their traditional cultural beliefs and rituals along with Christianity. The Catholic Church has fused some aspects of local culture into its services. For example, the singing of hymns during services has developed into a local and traditional way of singing (a repetitive call and response style) in Sesotho—the indigenous language—as well as English. In addition priests are seen dressed in local dress during services.

Missionary groups active in the country are evangelical, traditional Protestant, and Catholic from North America, Europe, and South Africa.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There is no state religion and no evidence that the Government favors any particular religion.

There are four religious holidays that are also national holidays: Christmas, Good Friday, Easter Monday, and Ascension Day. The observance of these holidays does not negatively impact any religious group.

The Government does not establish requirements for religious recognition. Generally the Government does not provide benefits to any religious groups. Any religious group may apply for a waiver of taxes on charitable donations from outside the country; however, in practice few, if any, waivers are given.

Under the Societies Act of 1966, any group may register with the Government, regardless of the purpose of the organization. The only requirements are a constitution and a leadership committee. Unregistered groups are not recognized as official for any government benefits, such as duty-free import permits for donated items or tax relief on donated funds. There are no punishments for not registering and it is common for informal church groups not to register.

The strong Catholic presence in the country led to the successful establishment of Catholic schools in the last century and their influence over education policy. However, the influence of the Catholic Church has decreased in recent years, and the Catholic Church now owns less than 40 percent of all primary and secondary schools in the country. Moreover, a standard curriculum for both secular and parochial schools is required by the Ministry of Education, and all teachers are paid and certified by the Ministry of Education.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

There generally was mutual understanding and cooperation between Christians and Muslims. There were efforts within the ecumenical community to promote tolerance and cooperation on social issues. Although there were some tensions between Christians and Muslims in previous years, there were no reports of such tensions during the period covered by this report.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

LIBERIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some exceptions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Islamic leaders continued to complain of government discrimination against Muslims.

Societal discrimination against Muslims continued to be a problem. Ethnic tensions along religious lines between Muslim and non-Muslim groups also continued to be a problem, particularly between the Lormas and the Mandingos.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 43,000 square miles, and its population is 3,164,156. As much as 40 percent of the population practice either Christianity or elements of both Christianity and traditional indigenous religions. Approximately 40 percent practice traditional indigenous religions exclusively. Approximately 20 percent of the population practice Islam, although Islam continued to gain adherents. The Lutheran, Baptist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, United Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal (AME), and AME Zion denominations, as well as several Pentecostal churches are represented in the Christian community. Some of the Pentecostal movements are independent, while others are affiliated with churches outside the country. There also is a small Baha'i community.

Christianity, traditional indigenous religions, and syncretistic religions combining elements of both Christianity and traditional indigenous religions are found throughout the country. Islam is prevalent only among members of the Mandingo ethnic group, who are concentrated in the northern and eastern counties, and among the Vai ethnic group in the northwest.

Foreign missionary groups in the country include Baptists, Catholics, and members of Jehovah's Witnesses.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some exceptions. There is no established state religion. However, government ceremonies invariably open and close with prayer and may include the singing of hymns. The prayers and hymns usually are Christian but occasionally are Muslim.

All organizations, including religious groups, must register their articles of incorporation with the Government, along with a statement of the purpose of the organization; however, traditional indigenous religious groups are not required to register, and generally do not register. Registration is routine, and there have been no reports that the registration process is burdensome or discriminatory in its administration.

After Charles Taylor became President, he effectively divided the National Muslim Council by working behind the scenes to seed the Council with his loyalists. Specifically, to undermine the independence of the Council, President Taylor sponsored the expulsion of Sheik Kafumba Konneh as Chairman and engineered the subsequent appointment of Alhaji Jakiray Taylor as Chairman, one of his loyalists within the country's Islamic Community. Alhaji Jakaity Taylor's position has been vacant since his death in late April. The National Muslim Council of Liberia remains divided between Taylor's supporters and Sheik Kafumba Konneh's supporters. In his capacity as Chairman of the National Muslim Council, Sheik Kafumba Konneh joined the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRC), a well-known organization led by Archbishop Francis that has tried to coordinate peace efforts between the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and rebels and the government, as Vice President. He has retained that position on the Inter-Religious Council (IRC) despite losing the Chair of the National Muslim Council.

In March 2003, President Taylor sponsored another Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, benefiting just under 100 pilgrims.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Although the law prohibits religious discrimination, Islamic leaders complained of government discrimination against Muslims. Although there are some Muslims in senior government positions, many Muslims believe that they are bypassed for desirable jobs. Many Muslim business proprietors believe that the Government's decision to enforce an old statute prohibiting business on Sunday discriminates against them. Most Mandingos, and hence most Muslims, were allied with factions that opposed Taylor during the 1989–1996 civil war and still belong to opposition parties.

In January 2003, the Justice Ministry held the Manager of Radio Veritas, Ledgerhood Rennie, for several hours because his station held a live interview with opposition leader Charles Brumskine from the United States. The Justice Minister warned Veritas station manager never to grant interviews with exiled politicians without consulting his office. He threatened to close the station if it violated this regulation. House Majority Leader Sando Johnson also criticized Veritas on several occasions and accused the station of being a "dissident station" that favored the rebel LURD movement. Information Minister Reginald Goodridge also publicly threatened Veritas because of its critical reports.

From March 31 to April 7, the Ministry of Justice imposed a ban that prohibited all forms of street corner evangelism and preaching. The Government said that it imposed the ban for "national security interest and public safety."

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Government forces were accused of serious human rights abuses against suspected rebels and sympathizers during fighting in Lofa County during the period covered by this report. The Government contends that the insurgents largely are Mandingo Muslims of the ULIMO-K faction that fought against President Taylor's forces during the civil war. The Government has not taken actions openly against Muslims in Lofa County; however, its inaction over reports of abuses in Lofa County contributed to ethnic tension between Muslim and non-Muslim ethnic groups in that area of the country.

The Government also has harassed the IRC. On December 28, 2002, security forces arrested David Kaizolu and Christopher Toe, the IRC Secretary General and Assistant Secretary-General respectively. Laizolu and Toe faced treason charges as LURD collaborators for possessing e-mails written by LURD leaders. After 2 weeks in prison, both were released.

By the end of the period covered by this report, the Government had not released a report following its November 1999 investigation of the reported killing of as many as 30 Mandingos in Lofa County in August 1999. Although the authorities subsequently arrested 19 persons, they did not charge anyone with a crime. Mandingo residents of Lofa County continued to be afraid to return to their homes.

During the period covered by this report, members of the Catholic Church's Peace and Justice Commission in Liberia continued to experience threats and burglaries.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Some tensions exist between the major religious communities. The law prohibits religious discrimination; however, Islamic leaders complained of societal discrimination against Muslims. The private sector in urban areas, particularly in the capital, gives preference to Christianity in civic ceremonies and observances, and discrimination against followers of other organized religions reaches into areas of individual opportunity and employment. There was an interfaith council that brought together leaders of the Christian and Islamic faiths.

Ethnic tensions continued in Lofa County between the predominantly Muslim Mandingo ethnic group and the Lorma ethnic group. By the end of the period covered by this report, the Government had not yet released a report on the burning of five mosques in Lofa County in 2000.

Little reliable information is readily available about traditional associated with ritual killings. Ritual killings, in which body parts used in traditional indigenous rituals are removed from the victim, continued to occur. The number of such killings was difficult to ascertain, since police often described deaths as accidents even when

body parts were removed. Deaths that appear to be natural or accidental sometimes are rumored to be the work of ritual killers. It is believed that practitioners of traditional indigenous religions among the Grebo and Krahn ethnic groups concentrated in the southeastern counties most commonly engage in ritual killings. The victims usually are members of the religious group performing the ritual and body parts are removed from a member whom the group believes to be powerful are believed to be the most effective ritually. Body parts most frequently removed include the heart, liver, and genitals. The rituals have been reported in some cases to entail eating body parts, and the underlying religious beliefs may be related to incidents during the civil war in which faction leaders sometimes ate (and in which one faction leader had himself filmed eating) body parts of former leaders of rival factions. Removal of body parts for use in traditional rituals is believed to be the motive for ritual killings, rather than an abuse incidental to killings committed for other motives. Ritual murders for the purpose of obtaining body parts traditionally were committed by religious group members called "heart men;" however, since the civil war, common criminals also may sell body parts.

In August 2001, the Government sent units of the Anti-Terrorist Unit to Maryland County to stem a wave of ritualistic killings, and the reported incidence of ritualistic killings had decreased by the end of the period covered by this report.

There is an interfaith council that brings together leaders of the Christian and Islamic faiths. The Council also has tried to facilitate dialog between the Government and the LURD rebels.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights, monitors developments affecting religious freedom, and maintains contact with clergy and other leaders of major religious communities. In July, Roman Catholic Archbishop Francis visited Washington D.C. and met with high-level officials from the Department of State. In addition, the U.S. Government gave \$100,000 to support the Inter-religious Council of Liberia (IRCL), of which Francis is President. Embassy officers met on various occasions with the Roman Catholic Archbishop, the United Methodist Bishop, the AME Bishop, the AME Zion Bishop, the Interfaith Council, the National Repentant Muslims, and other religious leaders during the period covered by this report.

MADAGASCAR

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 226,657 square miles, and its population is approximately 16 million. Although precise official figures are unavailable, approximately half of the population belongs to one of the country's four Christian denominations. The Roman Catholic Church is the largest, followed by the Reformed Protestant Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM). President Ravalomanana is a lay Vice President of FJKM. The Lutheran and Anglican Churches account for most of the remainder of the country's Christians. Most other citizens follow traditional indigenous religions. Muslims constitute slightly less than 10 percent of the population, with strong concentrations in the north and northwestern portions of the island. Native Malagasy and ethnic Indians who have immigrated over the past century make up the majority of the Muslims in the country. There are a small number of Hindus among the ethnic Indians.

Foreign missionary groups are active in the country, including Catholics, Protestants of various denominations, the Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

A 1962 Ordinance strongly recommends, but does not require, religious organizations to register with the Ministry of Interior. Registration provides a religious organization with the legal status necessary for receipt of direct bequests and other gifts. There are no penalties for failure to register.

The Malagasy Council of Christian Churches (FFKM) is the umbrella organization for Madagascar's four major Christian denominations. Comprised of the Roman Catholic, FJKM, Lutheran, and Anglican churches, the FFKM is a key player on a broad range of issues in Madagascar. The FFKM is a traditional leader in education, and recently their role has expanded to include activities such as coordinating a national campaign against HIV/AIDS and election monitoring. In the political arena, the FFKM has been a mediator, bringing together antagonistic factions, but has occasionally taken an overtly political position. During the 2001 presidential campaign and political crisis that followed, the FFKM took an activist stance, overtly supporting and encouraging parishioners to support then-Mayor of Antananarivo and FJKM Vice President Marc Ravalomanana in his ultimately successful bid for president. The FFKM remains an active force on social and political issues.

Foreign missionary groups operate freely in the country. Several faith-based organizations, some with international affiliations, operate freely in health and social services, development projects, schools, and higher education.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In the period since the political crisis ended in mid-2002, there have been no reports of government restrictions on religious freedom. Unlike in the period covered by the previous report, there were no reports that the Government threatened and mistreated church pastors or imposed restrictions on religious gatherings.

Numerous religious organizations operate freely in all regions of the country, often disseminating their message through public and private media. Religious organizations are granted free access to state-run media on the grounds that such access constitutes a public service. In January 2001, reports surfaced that a denomination called Kibanguists, a small (approximately 5,000 members) non-registered group with origins in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and professing a mix of Christian and traditional African beliefs, had been denied access to state-run media on grounds that the Kibanguists' leadership supported the political opposition. The Ministry of the Interior reports that the group is welcome to register, but the Kibanguists have not done so.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Ethnic Malagasy occasionally express resentment toward members of the predominantly Muslim Indo-Pakistani ("Karana") community. This attitude is rooted in the Karana's relative prosperity rather than religious affiliation. An October 2002 meeting between President Ravalomanana and Karana leaders has led to follow-on meetings, including in April, when a Malagasy Muslim Association delegation called on the President to express their support for his economic development plans and their willingness to work toward its realization.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

MALAWI

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, there were tensions between Christians and Muslims during the period covered by this report.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 45,745 square miles, and its population is approximately 10.4 million. More than 70 percent of the population is Christian. Among the Christian denominations, the largest are the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian (Church of Central Africa Presbyterian or CCAP) Churches, with smaller numbers of Anglicans, Baptists, evangelicals, and Seventh-day Adventists. There is a substantial Muslim minority totaling approximately 20 percent of the population. The vast majority of Muslims are Sunni Muslim, ascribing to either the Qadriya or Sukkutu groups. There also are Hindus, Baha'is, and followers of traditional indigenous religions. There are few atheists.

Foreign missionary groups are present in the country, including Protestants, Catholics, Pentecostals, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

There are no separate requirements for the recognition of religions, but religious groups must register with the Government. Religious groups must submit documentation that details the structure and mission of their organization, with a nominal fee, for review by the Ministry of Justice. Once approved, a religious group is then formally registered with the Registrar General's Office in Blantyre. There were no reports that the Government refused to register any religious groups.

Foreign missionaries experienced occasional delays in renewing employment permits, despite the Government's revision of its policy and procedures on temporary employment permits in 1997; however, this appeared to be the result of bureaucratic inefficiency rather than a deliberate government policy against foreign missionaries. Missionaries and charitable workers pay lower fees for employment permits than do other professionals.

In May 2001, the Government released a formal response to a series of pastoral letters from the CCAP and affirmed the Church's right to comment on issues of public concern. The Government invited religious leaders to Lilongwe, the capital, to discuss national issues (see Section III). The Government has continued to respect the rights of the CCAP, and there has been no further action since the Government's response. While the pastoral letters created some political tension, there continued to be acceptance of the historical role played by religious organizations in social and political life. In March 2002, six bishops from the Catholic Church released a pastoral letter against a constitutional amendment to eliminate presidential term limits. The Government took no action against the Catholic Church after the release of the letter.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In June 2002, a Catholic priest was arrested in Kasungu for possession of allegedly seditious material. The priest had documents opposing the constitutional amendment to eliminate presidential term limits that he was translating into the local language. On June 17, he was released on bail, and no court proceedings or further actions were initiated during the period covered by this report.

In January 2002, the Office of the Ombudsman directed the Ministry of Agriculture to pay benefits and salary arrears to a self-exiled member of the Jehovah's Witnesses who fled the country in 1977 to escape religious persecution under the former regime of President Hastings Banda. The Ombudsman cited a July 1999 no-

tice issued by the Office of the President and Cabinet that directs the Government to reimburse all persons who were dismissed from office on religious grounds during the Banda era.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, there was some tension between the Muslim Association of Malawi (MAM) and a Christian missionary group during the period covered by this report. There is no societal discrimination against members of religious minorities.

In June Muslims rioted in Blantyre and Mangochi following the Government's arrest and reported deportation of five Al-Qaeda suspects. On June 27, rioters vandalized property at the offices of the MAM Secretariat in Blantyre. They blamed the leaders of the organization for failing to ensure that the suspects received a trial. In Mangochi, rioters damaged vehicles, including one belonging to Father Lazarus Girevulo of the Catholic Church, five Christian churches, and the offices of a U.S. nongovernmental organization (NGO), Save the Children. On June 28, police arrested many of the key instigators of the riots, but tensions remained high in the major cities.

Some Christian opposition politicians and clerics introduced Islam as a political issue. Citing the President's adherence to Islam, his contact with Islamic countries such as Libya and Sudan, and the building of new mosques, some opposition politicians and clerics have accused the ruling party of attempting to "Islamicize" the country. An attempt by the Government in early 2000 to replace "Bible Knowledge" in the school curriculum with the more universal "Moral and Religious Education" course met with widespread criticism from Christian leaders. In February 2000, when the President suspended the introduction of the new curriculum and returned "Bible Knowledge" to the curriculum, Muslim leaders rebuked him. Consultations between government and religious leaders resulted in a compromise, and both courses were offered as optional subjects during the period covered by this report.

In February 2002, the Muslim Association of Malawi (MAM) filed a complaint letter with the Religious Affairs Coordinator for the Office of the President and Cabinet regarding the activities of a Christian missionary group in Mangochi District. MAM accused the missionary group of entering the mosques to convert Muslims to Christianity and of disseminating inflammatory publications about Islam. The Religious Affairs Coordinator attempted to convene a forum in February 2002, with MAM, the Malawi Council of Churches, and the leaders of the missionary group to discuss a peaceful resolution to the problem; however, the meeting was cancelled due to a lack of funding. In April 2002, the same missionary group contacted the Religious Affairs Coordinator, the Deputy Inspector General of Police, and the local Mangochi District Police to report that they had heard rumors that the Muslim community in Mangochi District planned to harm them; however, there were no reports that any violence occurred.

In September 2002, the Catholic Church of Malawi filed a complaint against Radio Islam with the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) for broadcasting insulting statements about Christians. The comments had been aired in August during the public call-in program "Contemporary Issues." The callers had complained about an alleged Catholic Church directive that said only teachers of the Catholic faith should be permitted to teach at Catholic schools in the country. Radio Islam denied the allegations, stating that the views expressed were those of the callers, not the radio station or its management. MACRA reviewed the case and no fault was attributed to Radio Islam.

On December 18, 2002, four members of the Seventh-day Apostolic Church were arrested by the Blantyre police and subsequently convicted on charges of breaching the peace for their role in inciting a violent clash with Muslims. The dispute arose when the church members, in a market square, compared Christianity and Jesus with Islam and Mohammed. A group of Muslims armed with machetes and guns threatened the church members, and violence ensued when other Christians intervened. Three persons were injured and 19 windows were broken in the local mosque.

In March 2002, six Catholic bishops released a pastoral letter protesting a constitutional amendment that would eliminate presidential term limits. The letter was

read in Catholic churches nationwide on Easter Sunday. Although the letter ignited a heated political debate in the press, there was no reaction from the Government.

In March and April 2001, the CCAP churches released pastoral letters addressing social and political topics of current national interest. The letters were direct and critical of the Government. While some progovernment newspapers attacked individual members of the clergy, the President publicly affirmed the churches' right to comment on issues of public concern (see Section II). In July 2001, at an Independence Day celebration, newspapers reported that members of the Young Democrats, the youth wing of the ruling United Democratic Front party, beat a CCAP minister in response to a pastoral letter written by the Anglican bishop to Malawi. The group had intended to target the Anglican bishop; however, because of a case of mistaken identity, the CCAP minister was beaten. No action was taken against those responsible for the beating during the period covered by this report.

There have been active efforts to foster cooperation between religious groups. For example, the Public Affairs Committee, which is involved prominently in promoting civic education and human rights, includes representatives of various churches and mosques. On June 9, 2002, the Malawi Council of Churches and other religious and civil society groups sponsored a National Day of Prayer in Blantyre to pray for solutions to problems that face the country, such as the constitutional amendment to eliminate term limits, HIV/AIDS, and poverty. The Government granted a permit to the organizers to hold the 2-hour long prayer session despite an existing ban on all demonstrations either for or against the constitutional amendment to eliminate term limits.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Representatives of the Embassy have frequent contact with leaders and members of all religious communities in the country.

Following alleged threats against a Christian missionary group (see Section III), Embassy officials worked to ensure the safety of American citizen members of the group.

The U.S. Government provided a grant to the Muslim Welfare Organization to address religious tolerance issues in the country. In June Embassy officials launched the first workshop under the grant. Muslim and Christian leaders were brought together to review educational materials on the topic of religious tolerance and develop implementation strategies.

MALI

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 471,045 square miles, and its population is approximately 11,000,000. Muslims make up approximately 90 percent of the population, and the vast majority of Muslims are Sunni. Approximately 5 percent of the population is Christian, and the Christian community is split almost evenly between Catholic and Protestant denominations. Most of the remainder of the population practices traditional indigenous religions or no religion. Atheism and agnosticism are rare. Most immigrants are from neighboring countries and either practice the majority Muslim faith or belong to a Christian group. The vast majority of citizens practice their religion daily.

There are no geographic concentrations or segregation of religious groups. Christian communities, which tend to be located in and around urban areas, are found throughout the country, but more often in the southern regions. Groups that prac-

tice traditional indigenous religions are located throughout the country but are most active in rural areas.

Foreign Islamic preachers operate in the north, and mosques associated with DAWA (an Islamic fundamentalist group) are located in Kidal, Mopti, and Bamako. DAWA has gained adherents among the Arabs who were once the slaves of the Tuareg nobles. The Arabs' interest in DAWA, including former rebel leaders, is based on a desire to dissociate themselves from their former masters. The country's traditional approach to Islam is peaceful and moderate, as reflected in the ancient manuscripts from the former University of Timbuctu.

Foreign missionary groups operate in the country; most known foreign missionary groups are Christian groups that are based in Europe and engaged in development work, primarily the provision of health care and education. A number of U.S.-based Christian missionary groups also operate in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels generally protects this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion; the Constitution defines the country as a secular state and allows for religious practices that do not pose a threat to social stability and peace.

The Government requires that all public associations, including religious associations, register with the Government. However, registration confers no tax preference and no other legal benefits, and failure to register is not penalized in practice. The registration process is routine and is not burdensome. Traditional indigenous religions are not required to register.

Foreign missionary groups operate in the country without government interference. They do not link the benefits of their development activities to conversion. Muslims and non-Muslims may proselytize freely.

Family law, including laws pertaining to divorce, marriage, and inheritance, are based on a mixture of local tradition and Islamic law and practice.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

The Minister of Territorial Administration and Local Collectivities may prohibit religious publications that he concludes defame another religion; however, there were no reports of instances in which publications were prohibited during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the Muslim majority and the Christian and other religious minorities—including practitioners of traditional indigenous religions—generally are amicable. Adherents of a variety of faiths may be found within the same family. Many followers of one religion attend religious ceremonies of other religions, especially weddings, baptisms, and funerals.

Non-Muslim missionary communities live and work in the country without difficulty. Christian missionaries, particularly the rural-based development workers, enjoy good relations within their communities.

Islam as practiced in the country is tolerant and adapted to local conditions. Women participate in economic and political activity, engage in social interaction, and generally do not wear veils.

In January 2002, the High Council of Islam was created to coordinate religious affairs for the entire Muslim community and standardize the quality of preaching in mosques. All Muslim groups recognize its authority.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy offi-

cers meet regularly with religious authorities and government officials in ministries dealing with these issues.

During the period covered by this report, Embassy officials expanded dialog with Muslim groups to promote mutual understanding and to encourage continued secularity of the state.

The U.S. Embassy maintains contacts with the foreign missionary community, and monitors the situation for indications that religious freedom may be threatened by the Government or societal pressures. Embassy officers have raised the issue of religious freedom through public diplomacy programs.

MAURITANIA

The Constitution establishes the country as an Islamic republic and decrees that Islam is the religion of its citizens and the State; the Government limits freedom of religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. While the Constitution decrees that Islam is the religion of the State, non-Muslim resident expatriates and a few non-Muslim citizens practice their religion openly and freely.

However, proselytizing and distribution of religious materials are prohibited.

Relations between the Muslim community and the small non-Muslim community generally are amicable.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 397,840 square miles, and its population is approximately 2.5 million. Virtually 100 percent of the population are practicing Sunni Muslims. There is a small number of non-Muslims, and Roman Catholic or denominational Christian churches have been established in Nouakchott, Atar, Zouerate, Nouadhibou, and Rosso.

There are several foreign faith-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) active in humanitarian and developmental work in the country. Although there are no synagogues, a very limited number of expatriates practice Judaism.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution establishes the country as an Islamic republic and decrees that Islam is the religion of its citizens and the State; accordingly, the Government limits freedom of religion. However, non-Muslim resident expatriates and the few non-Muslim citizens practice their religion openly and freely.

Both the Government and society generally consider Islam to be the essential cohesive element unifying the country's various ethnic groups and castes. There is a cabinet-level Ministry of Culture and Islamic Orientation and a High Council of Islam, consisting of six imams, which, at the Government's request, advises on the conformance of legislation to Islamic precepts.

Although the Government provides a small stipend to the imam of the Central Mosque in the capital city of Nouakchott, mosques and Koranic schools normally are supported by their members and other donors.

The Government does not register religious groups; however, secular NGOs must register with the Ministry of the Interior; this includes humanitarian and development NGOs affiliated with religious groups. Nonprofit organizations, including both religious groups and secular NGOs, generally are not subject to taxation.

The judiciary consists of a single system of courts with a modernized legal system that conforms with the principles of Shari'a (Islamic law).

The Government observes Muslim holidays as national holidays, but this practice does not impact negatively on other religious groups. A magistrate of Shari'a, who heads a separate government commission, decides the dates for observing religious holidays and addresses the nation on these holidays.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Shari'a, proclaimed the law of the land under a previous government in 1983, includes the Koranic prohibition against apostasy or conversion to a religion other than Islam; however, it never has been codified in civil law or enforced. The small

number of known converts from Islam have suffered no social ostracism, and there have been no reports of societal or governmental attempts to punish them.

Although there is no specific legal prohibition against proselytizing by non-Muslims, in practice the Government prohibits proselytizing by non-Muslims through the use of Article 11 of the Press Act, which bans the publication of any material that is against Islam or contradicts or otherwise threatens Islam. There were no reports that the Government punished persons for violating Article 11 during the period covered by this report. The Government views any attempts by practitioners of other religions to convert Muslims as undermining society. Foreign faith-based NGOs limit their activities to humanitarian and development assistance.

In June the Government passed a law prohibiting the use of mosques for any form of political activity, including the distribution of propaganda and incitement of violence.

Under Article 11 of the Press Law, the Government may restrict the importation, printing, or public distribution of Bibles or other non-Islamic religious literature, and in practice Bibles are neither printed nor publicly sold in the country. However, the possession of Bibles and other non-Islamic religious materials in private homes is not illegal, and Bibles and other religious publications are available among the small non-Islamic community.

There is no religious oath required of government employees or members of the ruling political party, except for the President and the members of the 5-person Constitutional Council and the 10-person High Council of Magistrates presided over by the President. The Constitutional Council and the High Council of Magistrates advise the President in matters of law and the Constitution. The oath of office includes a promise to God to uphold the law of the land in conformity with Islamic precepts.

Both privately run Koranic schools, which nearly all children attend, and public schools include classes on religion. These classes teach the history and principles of Islam and the classical Arabic of the Koran. Although attendance of these religion classes ostensibly is required, many students, the great majority of whom are Muslims, decline to attend them for diverse ethno-linguistic and religious reasons. Nevertheless these students are able to advance in school and graduate with diplomas, provided they compensate for their failure to attend the required religion classes by their performance in other classes.

In the aftermath of the June 8th coup attempt, President Taya has closed down a number of Saudi-funded Islamic schools. Students are free to study elsewhere, but they will not receive the benefits given by the Saudis.

Shari'a Islamic law provides the legal principles upon which the law and legal procedure are based, and because of the manner in which Shari'a is implemented in the country, courts do not in all cases treat women as the equals of men. For example, the testimony of two women is necessary to equal that of one man. In addition, in awarding an indemnity to the family of a woman who has been killed, the courts grant only half the amount that they would award for a man's death. For commercial and other modern issues not addressed specifically by Shari'a, the law and courts treat women and men equally.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the Muslim community and the small non-Muslim community generally are amicable.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government monitors developments affecting religious freedom, maintains contact with clergy and other leaders of major religious groups, and discusses religious freedom issues with the Government, including the Minister of Culture and Islamic Orientation, in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

On May 27 and June 20, the Ambassador discussed religious diversity and freedom of religious practices with the Minister of Culture and Islamic Orientation. Using a grant from the U.S. Government, in October 2002 a local NGO held a regional conference to engage imams in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission have discussed issues of religious freedom with representatives of American faith-based NGOs working in country.

MAURITIUS

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

Tensions between the Hindu majority and Christian, Creole, and Muslim minorities persist; however, members of each group worshipped without hindrance.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 718 square miles, and its population is approximately 1.2 million. In the 2000 census, approximately 50 percent of the population claimed to be Hindu, 32 percent Christian, and 16 percent Muslim. Less than 1 percent claimed to be Buddhist, another faith, atheist, or agnostic. There are no figures for those who actually practice their faith, but there are estimates that the figure is around 60 percent for all religious groups.

Approximately 85 percent of Christians are Roman Catholic. The remaining 15 percent are members of the following churches: Adventist, Assembly of God, Christian Tamil, Church of England, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Evangelical, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). Sunni Muslims account for more than 90 percent of Muslims; however, there are some Shi'a Muslims. Many Buddhists also are practicing Catholics, since many citizens of Chinese ancestry have sent, and continue to send, their children to the Loreto Convent primary schools, which are managed by the Catholic diocese, in the major towns.

The north tends to be more Hindu and the south is more Catholic. There also are large populations of Hindus and Catholics in the main cities from the capital of Port Louis to the central cities of Quatre Bornes and Curepipe, and most Muslims and Christian churches are concentrated in these areas. The offshore island of Rodrigues, with a population of 36,306, is predominantly Catholic.

The country is a small island nation, and ethnic groups, known as "communal groups," are tightly knit. Intermarriage is relatively rare, although the most recent census indicates that intermarriage is increasing. An individual's name easily identifies his or her ethnic and religious background. There is a strong correlation between religious affiliation and ethnicity. Citizens of Indian ethnicity usually are Hindus or Muslims. Citizens of Chinese ancestry usually practice both Buddhism and Catholicism. Creoles and citizens of European descent usually are Catholic. Although there is concern among Hindu organizations that evangelical Christian churches are converting Hindus to Christianity, the 1990 and 2000 censuses show that the proportions of membership in the various faiths have remained the same during the last 10 years.

There are foreign missionary groups active in the country, including the Baptist Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. There is no state religion.

Religious organizations and faiths that were present in the country prior to independence, such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England, the Presbyterian Church, the Seventh-day Adventists, Hindus, and Muslims, are recognized in a parliamentary decree. These groups also receive a lump-sum payment every year from the Ministry of Finance. Newer religious organizations (which must have a minimum of 7 members) are registered by the Registrar of Associations and are recognized as legal entities with tax-free privileges. No groups are known to have been refused registration.

Foreign missionary groups are allowed to operate on a case-by-case basis. There are no government regulations detailing the conditions of their presence or limiting their proselytizing activities. Groups must obtain both a visa and a work permit for each missionary. The Prime Minister's office is the final authority on all matters pertaining to the issuance of visas and work permits to missionaries. While there are no limits on the ability of missionaries to operate when they are in the country, there are limits on the number of missionaries permitted to obtain the requisite visas and work permits to live and work in the country. These limits are determined on a case-by-case basis.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

While the Government is secular in both name and practice, for political reasons in the past it has favored the Hindu majority of the population with greater access to government patronage; however, there were no reports that this continued in practice.

Due to the predominance of citizens with a Hindu background in the upper echelons of the civil service, some minorities, usually Creoles and Muslims, allege that a glass ceiling exists that prevents them from reaching the highest levels in the civil service. Despite this sentiment, before the end of the year, a member of the Franco-Mauritian minority, Paul Raymond Berenger, will become Prime Minister of Mauritius through a pre-arranged agreement between the parties of the governing coalition. Mr. Berenger will be the first Christian Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius; he is currently the Deputy Prime Minister.

While some Creole political groups allege that Christian Creoles receive unjust treatment from the police, there was no evidence that this was based on religious differences in particular. Observers believe that such incidents likely are a result largely of the Creoles' position as the country's underclass, as well as ethnic differences, since the police force predominantly is Indo-Mauritian. Tensions between Creoles and police were ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report.

Foreign missionaries sometimes are prohibited from residing in the country beyond 5 years (which would permit them to seek Mauritian citizenship). Religious organizations are permitted to send new missionaries to replace them; however, missionary groups sometimes encounter bureaucratic obstacles in obtaining work permits and residence visas for replacements. This occasionally prevents such organizations from replacing departing missionaries in a timely fashion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Tensions between the Hindu majority and Christian, Creole, and Muslim minorities persist; however, no violent confrontations occurred during the period covered by this report.

The hearing of Cehl Meeah, the leader of the local chapter of Hezbollah, and three others for the 1996 killing of three rival Muslim political activists remained ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report. The Preliminary Inquiry was terminated early in the year; the magistrate referred the case to the Assizes. The Director of Public Prosecutions will determine whether or not to charge Cehl Meeah in the Supreme Court. As of the end of the reporting period, no final decision had been taken.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Support for some conflict resolution activities was provided under the U.S. Democracy and Human Rights Fund.

MOZAMBIQUE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion; however, the Constitution bans religious denomination-based political parties as threats to national unity.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 308,642 square miles, and its population is approximately 17 million. According to the National Institute of Statistics, half of the population does not profess to practice a religion or creed; however, scholars at local universities assert that virtually all persons recognize or practice some form of traditional indigenous religion. Of the approximately 8 million persons who profess a recognized religion, 24 percent are Roman Catholic, 22 percent are Protestant, and 20 percent are Muslim. Many Muslim clerics disagree with this statistic, claiming that Islam is the country's majority religion.

Religious communities are dispersed throughout the country. The northern provinces and the coastal strip are most strongly Muslim, Catholics predominate in the central provinces, and Protestants are most numerous in the southern region. Government sources note that evangelical Christians represent the fastest growing religious group, with the number of young adherents under the age of 35 increasing rapidly.

There are over 500 distinct denominations of religions and 107 religious organizations registered with the Department of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice (see Section II). Among Muslims only a generic "Islamic" community (Sunni) and the Ismaili community (of non-Indian origin) are registered. Among Christians the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Greek Orthodox Churches are registered along with Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Congregational, Seventh-day Adventist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Nazarene, and Jehovah's Witnesses groups, as well as many other evangelical, apostolic, and Pentecostal churches. The Zion Christian Church, the largest of the African Independent Churches in the country, also has a large number of adherents. Jewish, Hindu, and Baha'i communities are registered and constitute small minorities. Religious communities tend to draw members from across ethnic, political, economic, and racial lines.

Traditional indigenous practices and rituals are present in most Christian churches, including Catholic churches, and in most Muslim worship. For example, members of these faiths commonly travel to the graves of ancestors to say special prayers for rain. Similarly Christians and Muslims continue to practice a ritual of preparation or inauguration at the time of important events (for example, before a first job, a school examination, or a swearing-in) by offering prayers and spilling beverages on the ground to please ancestors. Some Christians and Muslims consult "curandeiros," traditional healers or spiritualists—some of whom themselves are nominal Christians or Muslims—in search of good luck, healing, and solutions to problems.

Dozens of foreign missionary and evangelical groups operate freely in the country, representing numerous Protestant denominations, as well as the Summer Institute of Languages Bible Translators and the Tabligh Islamic Call Mission. Muslim missionaries from South Africa have established Islamic schools (madrassas) in many cities and towns of the northern provinces and provide scholarships for students from the south to study in South Africa.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides that all citizens have the freedom to practice or not to practice a religion and gives religious denominations the right to pursue their religion aims freely, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Government does not favor a particular religion, nor is there a state or dominant religion.

The law requires religious institutions and missionary organizations to register with the Ministry of Justice, reveal their principal source of funds, and provide the names of at least 500 followers in good standing. No particular benefits or privileges are associated with the registration process, and there were no reports that the Government refused to register any religious group during the period covered by this

report. The Christian Council reports that not all religious groups register, but unregistered groups worship unhindered by the Government.

There are no national holidays that are religious in nature, but the Government has a liberal leave policy to permit religious observance.

The Government routinely grants visas and residence permits to foreign missionaries. Like all foreigners residing in the country, missionaries face a somewhat burdensome process in gaining legal residency; however, they conduct activities without government interference throughout the country.

The Constitution gives religious groups the right to own and acquire assets, and these institutions are allowed by law to own and operate schools. There are increasing numbers of religious schools in operation. The Islamic community constructed a primary and secondary school for 1,000 students in Maputo and has established a small college in Nampula; the primary school began operating in 2003 and the secondary school in 2002. A Sudanese organization registered with the Ministry of Education provides funding for two secondary schools in Nampula and Gaza. The Kuwaiti-based Africa Muslim Agency is constructing a new facility in Maputo for administration and for the accommodation of students receiving scholarships to study abroad. The Catholic University has educational facilities in Beira, Nampula, and Cuamba, and has opened a new facility in Pemba. Religious instruction in public schools is prohibited strictly.

A conference of bishops, including Catholic and Anglican members, meets regularly and consults with the President of the Republic.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion; however, the law governing political parties specifically forbids religious parties from organizing and any party from sponsoring religious propaganda. In 1998 the Independent Party of Mozambique (PIMO), a predominantly Muslim group without representation in Parliament, began arguing for the right of political parties to base their activities on religious principles. The Government has tolerated such activities, and PIMO remains a minor political party.

Most places of worship nationalized by the Government have been returned to the respective religious organizations; however, the Catholic Church and certain Muslim communities claimed that some other properties such as schools, health centers, and residences unjustly remain in state hands and continued to request their return. The Directorate for Religious Affairs is mandated to address the issue of the return of church properties. Government sources stated that the majority of properties were returned, with a few cases still being examined on an individual basis, including two cases in Maputo that remained unresolved by the end of the period covered by this report. Return of the properties often is delayed due to the need to construct new facilities, particularly schools and health clinics. Provincial governments have the final responsibility for establishing a process for property restoration. The Papal Nunciatura indicates that properties are generally returned in poor condition, due to the lack of government resources.

The Islamic community has completed construction of a Grand Mosque in downtown Maputo. The Government previously had refused to grant permission for new mosques to be built in the center of major cities. Services are being held at the mosque; however, formal inauguration of the mosque remained pending at the end of the period covered by this report. The Hindu temple in Maputo, which was inaugurated in May 2002, is the first official Hindu temple in the country in 80 years.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations among communities of different faiths generally are amicable, especially at the grassroots level. The black and Indian Islamic communities tend to remain separate; however, there were no reports of conflict. The mostly Indian Muslim communities have assisted financially the poorer black Islamic mosques.

The 5-year-old Inter-Religious Forum, an organization for social and disaster relief composed of members of the Christian Council of Mozambique, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Muslim, Baha'i, and Jewish communities, is an example of interfaith cooperation. The goal of the forum is to offer collective assistance to the needy, without regard to creed. During the floods of 2000 and 2001, numerous religious communities jointly contributed to flood relief efforts. They officially estab-

lished themselves as an organization in March, after at least a year of relative inactivity. During the period covered by this report, the forum conducted limited campaigns to promote HIV/AIDS prevention.

The Catholic Church played a leading role in brokering the 1992 Rome Peace Accords between the Frelimo Government and Renamo opposition party coalition. Since that time, it has continued to encourage the evolution of the political system.

The National Assembly debated legislative proposals for a revision of the family law during the period covered by this report. Consensus was reached to set the legal age for marriage at 16 years of age, or 14 with parental consent. A parliamentary committee is preparing further revisions for debate on introducing recognition of religious marriage ceremonies by the Government.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. Government actions in support of religious freedom have involved a variety of demarches on human rights matters to the Government. The Ambassador and Embassy officials also held several meetings with representatives of faith-based NGOs, Catholic bishops, the Papal Nunciatura, and numerous American missionaries. The Ambassador also participated in a round-table discussion in Pemba with Muslim religious and civil society leaders. Relations were strengthened with the Islamic University in Nampula and its Vice Rector.

NAMIBIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 318,252 square miles, and its population is approximately 1.8 million. A vast majority of citizens—more than 90 percent—identify themselves as Christian. The two largest denominations are the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches, although there also are smaller numbers of Baptists, Methodists, and Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). The Himba, an ethnic group that constitutes less than 1 percent of the population, practice a traditional indigenous religion oriented toward their natural environment in the desert northwest. The San people, who constitute less than 3 percent of the population, also practice a traditional indigenous religion. Other non-Christian denominations include the Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Baha'i faiths. Practitioners of these religions predominantly are immigrants, descendants of immigrants, or converted after recent proselytizing. They reside primarily in urban areas. There are few atheists in the country.

Foreign missionary groups, including Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Baptists, Mormons, and Baha'is, operate in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion, nor does the Government subsidize any particular denomination.

The Government does not recognize any religion formally. However, early in the year government officials urged caution about "new churches" in a few statements without legal weight, and emphasized the role of three denominations—Anglican, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic—in the country's independence struggle.

There are no registration requirements for religious organizations.

The Government recognizes Good Friday, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, and Christmas Day as national holidays.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Embassy continued to engage the Government in regard to maintaining a consistent policy on granting residence and work permits for foreign nationals, including both religious and lay workers. Embassy staff members have frequent contact with citizens and foreign visitors from a wide variety of religious faiths.

NIGER

The Constitution provides for “the right of the free development of each individual in their spiritual, cultural, and religious dimensions,” and the Government generally respects the freedom to practice one’s religious beliefs, as long as persons respect public order, social peace, and national unity.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

There are generally amicable relations between the various religious communities; however, there were instances when members of the Islamic majority were not tolerant of the rights of members of minority religions to practice their faith. For example, in the November 2000 riots led by Islamic fundamentalists, rioters targeted two Christian missionary sites.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 489,076 square miles, and its population is approximately 11.2 million. Islam is the dominant religion and is practiced by more than 90 percent of the population. There also are small practicing communities of Christians (including Jehovah’s Witnesses) and Baha’i. Christians, both Catholics and Protestants, account for less than 5 percent of the population but are active particularly in the region of Maradi, Dogondoutchi, Niamey, and other urban centers with expatriate populations. As Christianity was the religion of French colonial institutions, its followers include many local believers from the educated, the elite, and colonial families, as well as Africans from neighboring coastal countries, particularly Benin, Togo, and Ghana. Numbering only a few thousand, the Baha’i are located primarily in Niamey and in communities on the west side of the Niger River, bordering Burkina Faso. A small percentage of the population practice traditional indigenous religions. There is no information available regarding the number of atheists in the country.

Active Christian missionary organizations include Southern Baptist, Evangelical Baptist, Catholic, Assemblies of God, Seventh-day Adventist, Serving in Mission (SIM), and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for “the right of the free development of each individual in their spiritual, cultural, and religious dimensions,” and the Government generally respects the freedom to practice one’s religious beliefs, as long as persons respect public order, social peace, and national unity. The Government strives at all levels to protect this right.

No religious group is subsidized, although the Islamic Association has biweekly broadcasts on the government television station. Christian programming generally is broadcast only on special occasions, such as Christmas and Easter.

Religious organizations must register with the Interior Ministry. This registration is a formality, and there is no evidence that the Government favors any religion over another or that it ever has refused to register a religious organization. Approval is based on submission of required legal documents and the vetting of organization leaders. The Government must also authorize construction of any place of worship; however, there were no reports that the Government refused such construction during the period covered by this report.

Foreign missionaries work freely, but their organizations must be registered officially as associations. In addition to proselytizing, most missionary groups generally offer development or humanitarian assistance. The Christian community in Galmi, Tahoua Department, houses a hospital and health center run by SIM missionaries. The hospital and health center have been in operation for more than 40 years.

Christmas, Easter, and Muslim holy days are recognized as national holidays.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In reaction to rioting by Islamic fundamentalist groups in November 2000 (see Section III), the Government banned six fundamentalist-oriented organizations. The Government justified the ban on the grounds that these organizations were responsible for “disturbing the peace.” In the fall of 2001, the Government banned two additional Islamic organizations because they sent threatening letters to a foreign embassy. Despite the ban, in April 2002, the same organizations issued a tract calling for a jihad in which they denounced the secular state and advocated Shari’a law. The Government reaffirmed the ban and warned those who signed the tract to stop such actions. In June 2002, the Government subsequently arrested the leaders of both organizations and charged them with incitement to revolt. They were released in 2003, but their organizations remained banned at the end of the period covered by this report. No mainstream Islamist organizations or human rights organizations have challenged the legality of the bans.

Starting in 1998, Southern Baptist missionaries in Say (30 miles south of Niamey) faced harassment by members of the majority Islamic community. Upon notifying authorities, the missionaries were told that, while it was within their rights to be there, the local police could not ensure their safety. The problem continued through September 1999, when the missionaries decided to move away. In May 2000, the same Islamic activists in Say threatened to burn down the meeting place of the local Christians who remained. They also threatened to beat or have police arrest a local Christian man in the village of Ouro Sidi who continued to work with the Southern Baptists. There were no reports that such threats ever were carried out during the period covered by this report, and there were no reports of further threats.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There are generally amicable relations among the various religious communities; however, there have been instances when members of the Islamic majority were not tolerant of the rights of members of minority religions to practice their faith. The local Islamic communities consider the cities of Say, Kiota, Agadez, and Madarounfa holy, and the practice of other religions in those cities is not tolerated as well as in other areas.

In November 2000, several Islamist groups demonstrated in Niamey and Maradi, 400 miles east of the capital, to protest a fashion show being held near Niamey. The demonstrations turned violent, and protesters targeted bars, purported prostitutes, and legal betting kiosks. Also in November 2000, as Maradi police were preparing to meet with Islamic fundamentalists, traditional leaders, and local officials to

defuse the situation, mobs led by Islamic fundamentalists attacked the Abundant Life Church and the nearby compound of SIM. The police responded haphazardly, and both facilities suffered extensive damage in the attacks. The police arrested 100 persons in connection with the violence in Maradi and banned six Islamic groups (see Section II). In May 2001, all but 20 persons were released. During 2001 the missionary groups offered to request that the Government drop the charges against the remaining prisoners in return for an admission of responsibility for the attacks; however, the marabout who organized the attacks refused to do so. He and his associates remained in prison for more than 1 year and were granted provisional release on bail in January 2002. During the period covered by this report, the case was closed with no further action taken due to the Government's severe resource constraints.

In March Islamic organizations in Niamey held a rally to protest the war in Iraq and express solidarity with Iraqi citizens. No violence was reported.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Embassy regularly emphasizes the importance of tolerance in its public statements and in meetings with government officials and members of civil society.

During the period covered by this report, Embassy officials met with leaders of a wide range of Islamic organizations to hear their perspectives on issues facing the country, such as AIDS, underage marriages, and female genital mutilation, and to foster broader understanding. Embassy officials also met with key Muslim leaders regarding the U.S. military operations in Iraq, in an effort to lessen any potential anti-Christian or anti-Western reactions.

The U.S. Embassy maintains good relationships with minority religious groups, most of which are long-term resident missionaries and well-known members of the American community. Embassy officials also have contact with the Catholic mission, the Baha'i community, and Islamic organizations.

In response to the incidents of November 2000 (see Section III), U.S. Embassy officials immediately met with the missionary victims and senior government, police, and regional military officials in Maradi. The U.S. Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission traveled to Maradi during the period covered by this report to demonstrate the U.S. Embassy's ongoing attention to religious freedom and tolerance.

NIGERIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, including freedom to change one's religion or belief, and freedom to manifest and propagate one's religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, and observance, and while the Federal Government generally respects religious freedom, there were some instances in which limits were placed on religious activity in order to address security and public safety concerns. Some state governments restricted these rights in practice in certain respects. The Federal Government has instituted a committee charged with drafting uniform Shari'a criminal and procedural laws that could be adopted by all states.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Interreligious tension between Christians and Muslims remained high in some areas of the country, and there were several violent ethno-religious conflicts during the period covered by this report. There was some societal discrimination against religious minorities.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 356,700 square miles, and its population is estimated at 120 million; however, there has not been an accurate census for more than 30 years, and many observers believe that the country's population exceeds this figure. Approximately half of the country's population practice Islam, over 40 percent practice Christianity, and the remainder practice traditional indigenous religions or no religion. Many persons combine elements of Christianity or Islam and elements of a traditional indigenous religion. The predominant form of Islam in the country is Sunni. The Christian population includes Roman Catholics, Anglicans,

Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and a growing number of Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians. Catholics constitute the largest Christian denomination.

There is a strong correlation between religious differences and ethnic and regional diversity. The north, dominated by the large Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups, is predominantly Muslim; however, there are significant numbers of Christians in urban centers of the north. Both Muslims and Christians are found in large numbers in the Middle Belt. In the southwest, where the large Yoruba ethnic group is the majority, there is no dominant religion. Most Yorubas practice either Islam or Christianity, while others continue to practice the traditional Yoruba religion, which includes a belief in a supreme deity and the worship of lesser deities that serve as agents of the supreme deity in aspects of daily life. In the east, where the large Igbo ethnic group is dominant, Catholics and Methodists are the majority, although many Igbos continue to observe traditional rites and ceremonies.

Christian missionaries operate in the country and include Jesuits, Dominicans, and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), the Church of Christ, and the Society for International Missions. Rough estimates put the number of foreign Christian missionaries at more than 1,000, with many residing in the area around Jos, in the Middle Belt's Plateau State. Many have resided in the country for a decade or longer. There reportedly are fewer foreign Muslim missionaries, and they stay in the country for shorter periods of time than their Christian counterparts. Foreign Muslim organizations often focus on training citizens in traditional centers.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, including freedom to change one's religion or belief, and freedom to manifest and propagate one's religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, and observance, and while the Federal Government generally respects religious freedom, there were some instances in which limits were placed on religious activity in order to address security and public safety concerns. Some state governments restricted these rights in practice in certain respects.

The Constitution prohibits state and local governments from adopting an official religion; however, some Christians have alleged that Islam has been adopted as the de facto state religion of several northern states, citing the reintroduction of the criminal law aspects of Shari'a and the continued use of state resources to fund the construction of mosques, the teaching of Kadis (Muslim judges), and pilgrimages to Mecca (Hajj). The Governor of Zamfara disbursed public funds to refurbish mosques. Some states also use government revenues to fund Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem. In general states dominated by Christians or Muslims overtly favor the majority faith. There are 36 states in the country; governors have substantial autonomy in decision-making but derive the vast majority of their resources from the Federal Government. Both the federal and state governments are involved in religious matters, including the regulation of mandatory religious instruction in public schools.

The Constitution provides that states may elect to use Islamic (Shari'a) customary law and courts. Until the introduction of Shari'a for criminal law by Zamfara State in 2000, the jurisdiction of Shari'a courts, which are part of the regular court system, had been limited to family or personal law cases involving Muslims, or to civil disputes between Muslims who consented to the courts' jurisdiction. However, the Constitution also states that a Shari'a court of appeal may exercise "such other jurisdiction as may be conferred upon it by the law of the State." Some states have interpreted this language as granting them the right to expand the jurisdiction of existing Shari'a courts to include criminal matters. Zamfara's law adopted traditional Shari'a in its entirety, with the exception that apostasy was not criminalized. There are 12 northern states that have adopted parts of Shari'a law—Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger, Kano, Katsina, Kaduna, Jigawa, Yobe, Bauchi, Borno, and Gombe. Adherence to the Shari'a provisions is compulsory for Muslims in some states and optional in others. The criminal and procedural codes in Kaduna came into effect July 2002, and national human rights groups reported that the courts in Kaduna issued several sentences for minor offenses in September 2002. These sentences did not include corporal punishment. According to media reports, elements of the significant Muslim minority of Oyo State have called for the implementation of elements of civil Shari'a; however, the Government has not responded.

The Constitution also provides that the Federal Government is to establish a Federal Shari'a Court of Appeal and Final Court of Appeal; however, the Government

has not yet established such courts. There were no cases involving Shari'a law that reached the federal appellate level during the period covered by this report.

The Federal Government tacitly has acknowledged the ability of states to implement criminal Shari'a and has not intervened to amend any provisions that may be unconstitutional. However, the Federal Government has instituted a committee charged with the responsibility to draft uniform Shari'a criminal and procedural laws that could be adopted by all states; no progress has been made by the end of the period covered by this report. In March 2002, Justice Minister Kanu Agabi made public a letter to northern governors in which he stated that sentences given under Shari'a law should not be harsher than those imposed by general secular law; however, no action resulted from this letter. Defendants have the right to challenge the constitutionality of Shari'a criminal statutes through the courts; however, no challenges with adequate legal standing had made their way through the appellate system by the end of the period covered by this report.

Although many non-Muslims had feared that the implementation of Shari'a would change their way of life, there has been little or no change in the daily lives of most non-Muslims. While some state and local governments have interpreted the new Shari'a laws stringently, the majority of the states and local governments have interpreted and implemented their laws less stringently. There also is a trend developing among some sections of the Muslim community to shift focus from the criminal law aspects of Shari'a law to its tenets of social justice and charity for the poor. Islamic scholars and many Muslim lawyers have begun educating the poor and the less well informed about their procedural rights under Shari'a. Several lawyers offer free services to the indigent in cases with potentially severe punishments.

Christian and Islamic groups planning to build new churches or mosques are required to register with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). The law requires that such groups name a board of trustees, place a notice of the group's intent to organize in three nationwide newspapers, and send trustee information to the CAC. If no objections are received, the group can proceed with its meetings. This law was put into effect to stem the proliferation of new buildings in the absence of zoning laws, to resolve legal questions arising from disputes over church ownership and control, to provide a single registry for government reference in the event that compensation is demanded following civil disturbances, and to allow for legal solemnization of marriages. The CAC did not deny registration to any religious group during the period covered by this report; however, some religious groups experienced delays in obtaining permission from local zoning boards to build houses of worship. Many nascent churches and Islamic congregations ignored the registration requirement, and a small number have had their places of worship shut down because of enforcement of zoning laws. Some persons claimed that enforcement of these laws was selective.

The Government remained a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) during the period covered by this report and continued to send representatives to the annual meeting in Cairo despite concerns of Christian citizens that this action undermined the concept of a secular state.

Each year the Government declares the following Islamic and Christian festival days as national holidays: Eid-el-Asha, Eid-el-Fitr, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Eid-el-Maulud, Christmas Day, and Boxing Day.

Some state governors actively have encouraged interfaith and interethnic discussions and have taken steps to prevent further violence and tension. The Government encourages the activities of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Kaduna-based Inter-Faith Mediation Center and the Muslim/Christian Dialog Forum.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Throughout the year, the Government required organizers of outdoor public functions to apply for permits, although both government authorities and those assembling often ignored this requirement. The Government retained legal authority to ban gatherings whose political, ethnic, or religious content might lead to violence. In 2000 and 2001 several northern state governments banned open-air preaching, public religious processions, and other processions, rallies, demonstrations, and meetings in public places. During the period covered by this report, state governments granted some permits on a case-by-case basis, and numerous political rallies were held throughout the country prior to general elections in April 2003. In the southern part of the country, large outdoor religious gatherings continued to be common.

Following nationwide religiously related violence in 2000, many northern states banned outdoor mass proselytizing, although proselytization is permitted by the Constitution. Unlike the period covered by the previous report, the Katsina and Pla-

teau state governments did not maintain a ban on public proselytizing for security reasons. Some groups have been allowed to carry out activities despite the formal bans, which were enforced on a case-by-case basis. Some states allowed some outdoor mass proselytizing by both Christians and Muslims. Unlike the period covered by the previous report, there were no reports that missionaries were harassed when they proselytized outside of their designated zones. Both Christian and Muslim organizations alleged that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Immigration Department restricted the entry into the country of certain religious practitioners, particularly persons suspected of intending to proselytize. Proselytizing did not appear to be restricted in the southern part of the country. Many missionary groups also have noted bureaucratic delays, obstruction, and attempts to extort money for the processing of necessary residence permits for foreigners; however, many foreign businesses and other nonreligious organizations also have encountered similar difficulties.

Although the expanded Shari'a laws technically do not apply to non-Muslims, the non-Muslim minority, especially in Zamfara State, has been affected by certain social provisions such as the separation of the sexes in public schools, and health and transportation services. Many of these laws also have traditional roots and were in practice before the states changed their laws. Consumption of alcohol by non-Muslims has not been criminalized; however, its sale and public consumption have been restricted throughout most of the north, except on Federal Government installations such as military and police barracks. In Zamfara State, Christian associations have arranged for private transportation services for Christians so that they are not forced to wait for gender-segregated transportation provided by the Zamfara State government. Sokoto State's transportation system is run completely by private operators, and Sokoto State governor Dalhatu Bafarawa said that the state cannot compel private operators to carry female passengers if doing so violates their religious convictions. There is a long tradition of separating schoolchildren by gender in the north; this practice was codified in Kebbi and Sokoto states in 2000. Although some form of segregation by gender occurred in many secondary schools in the North, it was enforced locally, rather than on a statewide basis.

In February, young men from the Moslem Students of Nigeria organization invaded several primary and secondary schools in Ibadan in Oyo State, protesting that female students were not wearing the proper head coverings in the schools. Several people were harassed in two separate incidents that led to the arrests of more than 30 students for public disorderliness.

Laws proposed by Zamfara State including a dress code for women, mandatory closing of shops on Friday, and a ban on video rental clubs still were not enacted during the period covered by this report and no new laws were imposed.

All Muslims in states that expanded Shari'a to criminal matters are subject to the Shari'a criminal codes. In Zamfara State, all cases involving Muslims must be heard by a Shari'a court. Other states with Shari'a law still permit Muslims to choose common law courts for criminal cases; however, societal pressure forces most Muslims to use the Shari'a court system. There also were complaints that some Kadi judges did not implement Shari'a jurisprudence in adultery and fornication cases against women the same way as they did in cases against men.

There are no legal provisions barring women or other groups from testifying in civil court or giving their testimony less weight; however, the testimony of women and non-Muslims usually is accorded less weight in Shari'a courts. For example, if one woman testifies, a second woman also must provide testimony to equal the weight of the testimony of one man.

The law prohibits religious discrimination; however, government officials sometimes discriminated against persons practicing a religion different than their own, notably in hiring practices and in the awarding of state contracts. There were no reports of such discrimination by the end of the period covered by this report.

Christians in the predominantly Muslim northern states alleged that local government officials used zoning regulations to stop or slow the establishment of new Christian churches. Officials have responded that many of these new churches are being formed in traditionally residential neighborhoods that were not zoned for religious purposes. The Catholic Church in Zamfara State was unable to retake possessions of property confiscation in the 1970s during the period covered by this report. State officials said the certification boards were dealing with a large backlog of cases for all persons, regardless of religious faith. Muslims have complained that they were denied permission to build mosques in predominantly Christian southern states.

Religious belief or adherence is not required for membership in registered political parties, and unlike the period covered by the previous report, there were no reports that State Assembly members were suspended for religious reasons.

Although distribution of religious publications remained generally unrestricted, the Government continued to enforce sporadically a ban on published religious advertisements. There were reports by Christians in Zamfara State that the state government restricted the distribution of religious (Christian) literature. There have been reports that state-owned radio stations have accepted commercials and paid advertisements containing religious content from the majority religion in that state while not accepting content from minority religions.

The Federal Government continued to enforce a ban on religious organizations on campuses of primary schools, although individual students retain the right to practice their religions in recognized places of worship. According to the Constitution, students are not required to receive instruction relating to a religion other than their own; however, public school students throughout the country were required to undergo either Islamic or Christian religious instruction. Islamic studies are mandatory in public schools in Zamfara and other northern states, often to the exclusion of Christianity. State authorities claim that students are permitted to decline to attend these classes or to request a teacher of their own religion to provide alternative instruction. However, there are no teachers of "Christian Religious Knowledge" in many northern schools. In the South, many Muslims believe that religious instruction in the schools is discriminantly pro-Christian. There are reports that in Enugu and Edo states, Muslim students cannot access "Islamic Religious Knowledge" in the public schools. Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) leaders volunteered to place teachers of Christianity in Zamfara and Sokoto state schools, where students alleged that they were being forced to take courses in Islamic religious knowledge in order to graduate. Governors of both states accepted the offer of assistance and stated that they had not been aware of the problem; however, CAN did not provide any teachers in either state during the period covered by this report, stating that they lacked funding. Islamic courses still were unavailable for students from the University of Ibadan and Ibadan public schools in Oyo State at the end of the period covered by this report.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The extension of Shari'a law in many northern states generated a public debate on whether Shari'a punishments such as amputation for theft, stoning for adultery, and caning for fornication and public drunkenness constituted "torture or . . . inhuman or degrading treatment" as stipulated in the Constitution. Although several Shari'a courts, as well as other Nigerian courts, have sentenced persons to death, no sentences were implemented during the period covered by this report. The Constitution permits capital punishment; the first execution since the country's return to democracy in 1999 occurred in January 2002.

In March 2002, in Katsina State, Amina Lawal was sentenced to death by stoning after confessing to having a child while divorced. The court allowed Lawal to return to her own village at least until January 2004. The appeals court hearing was rescheduled for August.

According to media reports, in June 2002, a Shari'a court in Bauchi State convicted Yunusa Rafin Chiyawa of adultery and sentenced her to death by stoning. He was the first man to be convicted of adultery under Shari'a law. Aisha Haruna, the woman with whom he allegedly had an affair, was acquitted. The defendant did not appeal, but the State Ministry of Justice has formally requested the case be moved to a secular court. There was no resolution during the period covered by this report.

There are numerous cases pending appeal or implementation of sentence. Many of these cases have been delayed continuously for various reasons. Some states have administered amputations and canings pursuant to expanded Shari'a law, but none during the period covered by this report. For example, in 2000 a Sokoto Shari'a court handed down a sentence of amputation for a thief; the sentence had not been carried out by the end of the period covered by this report. There is a pending cross-amputation (right hand, left leg) and stoning in Jigawa State, there are 12 pending cases for amputation or stoning in Bauchi State, 2 pending stoning cases in Niger State, 7 pending amputations in Kano State, and 7 pending wrist amputations in Zamfara State.

Other convicted Muslim criminals in Shari'a law states were subjected to public caning for various minor offenses, such as petty theft, public consumption of alcohol, and engaging in prostitution. Indigent persons without legal representation were more likely to have their sentences carried out immediately upon being sentenced. Bariya Magazu's appeal for a caning conviction in 2001 for fornication and having a child out of wedlock was pending at year's end.

There was one report of the arrest and detention of a religious leader during the period covered by this report. In May an imam from the Kaduna central mosque

was detained prior to President Obasanjo's inauguration. Despite a writ of habeas corpus issued by a court in Kaduna, the Government has not responded, nor produced the assumed detainee. The imam is assumed to still be in custody.

In March 2002, in Enugu State, police raided the site of a weekly crusade led by charismatic Catholic priest Father Ejike Mbaka and allegedly released a gas, causing a stampede; at least 14 persons were killed and several others were seriously injured. The police later detained Enugu Vicar General Reverend Obiora Ike, allegedly for criticizing the incident. The state government reportedly had warned Father Mbaka to stop publicly criticizing it.

On November 16, 2002, in Sagamu, Ogun State, police arrested six Pakistani nationals for alleged incitement of a religious crisis. The same six Pakistanis had been detained on September 23, 2002, on suspicion of immigration violations, and on November 18, 2002, the Immigration Services deported them.

In February, a Christian religious instructor in the Federal Capital Territory converted to Islam. There were no reports of any actions taken against him, and the school allowed him to teach a different subject.

There was no further action during the period covered by this report in the case of two men accused in April 2002 of converting from Islam to Christianity.

A number of state sanctioned private vigilante Shari'a enforcement groups (known as Hisbah) have formed in states with expanded Shari'a law; in some cases these groups have been vested with powers of arrest. Governor Saminu Turaki of Jigawa State also mobilized a statewide Shari'a enforcement committee to arrest, detain, and prosecute Muslim offenders. These groups were not very active during the period of this report; however, in Kano State, local police arrested the leader of a Hisbah group after reports of disturbances at a wedding. A protest by other members of the Hisbah group at the police station led to the arrests of more than 30 members on charges of public disorderliness.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Religious differences often correspond to regional and ethnic differences. For example, persons in the North, including part of the Middle Belt, overwhelmingly are Muslim, and the large Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups tend to dominate these areas. Many southern ethnic groups predominantly are Christian. In many areas of the Middle Belt, Muslim Fulani tend to be pastoralists, while the Muslim Hausa and most Christian ethnic groups tend more toward farming or urban living. Consequently it often is difficult to distinguish religious discrimination and tension from ethnic, regional, economic, and land use competition. Religious tensions underscored what predominantly were ethnic confrontations during the period covered by this report. It is not unusual for two different ethnic groups with a long history of conflict to adopt different religions, which adds a religious aspect to tensions that originally were ethnic.

There were significant ethno-religious clashes in Delta, Abia, Bauchi, Plateau, and Adamawa states during the period covered by this report. Numerous persons were killed, injured, or displaced as a result of ethno-religious violence.

The most significant incident occurred on November 20, 2002, when protesters destroyed the Kaduna office of This Day newspaper after the paper published an editorial about the Miss World Pageant, claiming that the Prophet Mohammed would have endorsed the pageant. Many Muslims found the editorial offensive. Fueled by looters and persons with political motives, the demonstration spread throughout sections of the city. More than 200 were killed and thousands fled their homes seeking protection at government facilities, mainly military installations. Two Christian clerics died and several churches reportedly were burned. More than 100 persons were arrested. Sympathy riots occurred in Abuja and several persons were reported killed, along with numerous arrests. Despite widespread calls from elements of society, the responsible journalists were not jailed nor was the newspaper shut down. In December the Zamfara State Deputy Governor pronounced a "fatwah" death sentence against Isioma Daniels, the journalist responsible for the November This Day article. Most Muslim leaders and the Government strongly criticized Deputy Governor Shinkafi's statement saying that the fatwah was wrong and the Shinkafi did not have the legal or religious authority to order it.

In early June, a dispute in Numan, Adamawa State over the price of water between a Muslim man and a Christian woman led to eight deaths (including the woman) and the burning of a mosque and four churches.

In November 2001, police reportedly arrested and charged more than 200 persons in connection with a riot resulting in more than 100 deaths and the burning of several churches and 3 mosques occurring after a demonstration against a foreign government; according to the head of the police in Kano State, 150 persons were taken to court. There were no convictions; however, although some persons have been released, many are still in detention. No investigation of the police was conducted. On December 26, 2002, two churches were burned in Bauchi. In Aba, Abia State Seventeen Christians were arrested after attacks on the central mosque and several Muslim businesses on January 18 and 19.

In addition there were reports that in June 2002, extremist Islamic militants killed, injured, and displaced Christians in Jos, Berakin Ladi, Vom, and Miango. There also were reports that several churches were burned, shops and homes looted, and Christian property destroyed in Yelwa Shendam. One of the disputes appeared to have begun after a Muslim man proposed marriage to a Christian woman. The woman's brother beat her, and when her fiance intervened, a fight broke out. What began as a family dispute quickly spread to other parts of the community and took on ethno-religious overtones because of existing tensions between Christians and Muslims in the area. In February, the Kaduna State government began court procedures to prosecute a prominent traditional ruler, the Sakin Numana, in Sanga Local Government Area (LGA), over the November 2001, religious riots in Sanga. Six other persons also were to be prosecuted for criminal conspiracy, unlawful assembly, rioting, and unlawful possession of dangerous weapons. During the riots, 11 persons were killed while several others were injured, and houses and crops were burnt.

In January, over 100 Muslims were detained in connection with alleged unlawful assembly and criminal conspiracy following communal disturbances at a village north of Jos in Plateau State.

In 2000 Gombe State governor Abubakar Hashidu set up a judicial commission of inquiry to investigate the causes of the religious violence that took place in Bambam in 2000. The 17-member committee includes both Christians and Muslims. The commission had not published its results by the end of the period covered by this report. There were fewer incidents during the period covered by this report than in the previous year.

No action was taken in incidents of interreligious violence from periods covered by previous reports.

The law prohibits religious discrimination in employment and other practices; however, private businesses frequently are guilty of informal religious and ethnic discrimination in their hiring practices and purchasing patterns. In nearly all states, ethnic rivalries between majority groups and minority "immigrants" lead to some societal discrimination against minority ethnic and religious groups.

Purdah, the practice of keeping girls and women in seclusion from men outside the family, continued among some families in some parts of the North.

In many parts of the country, girls are discriminated against in their access to education for social and economic reasons; religious beliefs sometimes are a factor. Girls living in the more traditional rural areas, both in the predominantly Muslim north and the predominantly Christian south, are disadvantaged even more than their urban counterparts. In the north, Muslim communities favor boys over girls in deciding which children to enroll in secondary and elementary schools.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

U.S. Embassy officials regularly discussed religious freedom issues with various federal, state, and local officials, and also prominent citizens. Embassy officials raised religious freedom issues with government officials in the context of the U.S. Government's overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Government, through the U.S. Embassy and in statements from officials in Washington, sought to encourage a peaceful resolution of the question regarding Shari'a criminal penalties in a way that would be compatible with recognized international human rights norms and urged that human rights and religious freedom be respected in all instances.

The Office of Transition Initiatives created programs for conflict resolution training that the U.S. Agency for International Development continues to implement. The following programs target Muslim communities: the International Visitor Program, the American Speaker Program, the Fulbright Senior Scholar Program, the Humphrey Fellowship Program, and programs organized by the Office of Citizen Exchanges. The American Speaker Program particularly has been effective in pro-

moting dialog and informing local audiences about religious freedom in the U.S. The Embassy also continued publishing its informational magazine in Hausa, the language of the predominantly Muslim north.

In December 2002, the Ambassador hosted a very successful Iftar dinner, which generated goodwill with leading Muslims.

In January, as part of the Embassy's efforts to engage Islamic opinion leaders, a forum initiated by the Emir of Kano brought together U.S. Embassy officials and five U.S. speakers with Muslim leaders (including four traditional rulers) to explore mutual perceptions of Islam, poverty alleviation, and other foreign policy issues.

RWANDA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, while the Government generally respects this right in practice, it fails to prevent local authorities from abusing or restricting religious freedoms.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedoms during the period covered by this report. There were multiple reports that local authorities have harassed and detained members of Pentecostal and Seventh-day Adventist churches. The majority of those detained by local officials were released within weeks of their arrest. Jehovah's Witnesses continued to have trouble in some provinces with children being expelled from school. A number of religious leaders reported intimidation and harassment related to the referendum for the new constitution held in May. Relations between the Government and the Catholic Church continued to improve.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 10,169 square miles, and its population is approximately 8.1 million. A 2001 study conducted by a foreign university reported that 49.6 percent of the population were Catholic, 43.9 percent Protestant, 4.6 percent Muslim, 1.7 claimed no religious beliefs, and 0.1 percent practiced traditional indigenous beliefs. This study indicated a 19.9 percent increase in the number of Protestants, a 7.6 percent drop in the number of Catholics, and a 3.5 percent increase in the number of Muslims from the U.N. Population Fund survey in 1996. The figures for Protestants include the growing number of members of Jehovah's Witnesses and evangelical Protestant groups. There also is a small population of Baha'is and Jews. There has been a proliferation of small, usually Christian-linked schismatic religious groups since the 1994 genocide.

Foreign missionaries and church-linked nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) of various faiths operate in the country, including Trocaire, Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran World Federation, World Vision, World Relief, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Norwegian Church Aid, Salvation Army, African Muslim Agency, American Jewish Distribution Committee, Jesuit Relief Society, Christian Aid, Christian Direct Outreach, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, African Evangelical Enterprise, and Jesus Alive Ministries. Foreign missionaries openly promote their religious beliefs, and the Government has welcomed their development assistance.

There is no indication that religious belief is linked directly to membership in any political party. In fact, Article 54 of the new Constitution states: "Political organizations are prohibited from basing themselves on race, ethnic group, tribe, clan, region, sex, religion or any other division which may give rise to discrimination." Of the eight parties, the only one with a religious component to its name—the Democratic Islamic Party (PDI)—changed its name to the Ideal Democratic Party, in order to comply with the Constitution. However, the party has always claimed to have non-Muslim members.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution, adopted in a May 26 referendum, guarantees freedom of religion. Article 33 states: "Freedom of thought, opinion, conscience, religion, worship and the public manifestation thereof is guaranteed by the State in accordance with

conditions determined by law.” However, while the Government generally respects this right in practice, it fails to prevent local authorities from abusing or restricting religious freedoms. There is no state religion.

The law provides for small fines and imprisonment for up to 6 months for anyone who interferes with a religious ceremony or with a minister in the exercise of his profession. The law regulates public meetings, and calls for fines or imprisonment for those who violate these regulations.

Since the Government promulgated a new law in April 2001, giving it more influence over NGOs and religious institutions and organizations, the Ministry of Justice has registered 82 new religious groups. During the period covered by this report, no application was denied, although the Ministry reported that it suspended the status of two organizations that had split from already-registered religious organizations, for activities deemed political. Generally, however, no group’s religious activities were curtailed as a result of difficulties or delays in the registration process.

There were reports that numerous religious organizations operate without legal recognition, because the process is arduous.

The Government permits religious instruction in public schools. In some cases, students are given a choice between instruction in “religion” or “morals.” In the past, missionaries established schools that were operated by the Government. In those schools, religious instruction tends to reflect the denomination of the founders, either Catholic or Protestant. Christian and Muslim private schools operate as well.

The Government observes four religious holidays as official holidays: Christmas, Eid-al-Fitr, All Saints’ Day, and Assumption.

The Government has not actively supported or participated in religious fora aimed at increasing interfaith understanding and support. In May, however, it did declare 3 days to be days of National Prayer. Relations between the Government and the Catholic Church continued to improve because of collaboration and dialog in the areas of education and reconciliation.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In the past, the Government forbade religious meetings at night on the grounds that insurgents formerly used the guise of nighttime “religious meetings” to assemble their supporters before attacking nearby targets; however, during the period covered by this report, the Government allowed such meetings if religious groups provided advance notification. Religious leaders reportedly cooperated with the Government in limiting nighttime religious meetings and did not view the restriction as an infringement on their religious freedom. The Government continued to require religious groups to hold services at their established places of worship and to ban the use of private homes for this purpose. Some small religious groups that met in private homes were forced to move to new locations.

In February 2002, government authorities forbade Pasteur Bizimungu, a former president of the country who organized a political party that was banned by the Government in 2001, from attending public church services; authorities charged that Bizimungu’s presence would be “divisive.” The Government’s action reportedly was politically motivated. On April 23, Pasteur Bizimungu was arrested on charges of illegal political activity. He has since been charged with threatening state security and financial improprieties. The Supreme Court rejected his latest appeal on July 30 and no trial date has been set.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Unlike the period covered by the previous report, there were no reports of Jehovah’s Witnesses being detained or arrested for refusing to participate in nightly security patrols. However, according to church officials, in 3 of Rwanda’s 12 provinces, children of Jehovah’s Witnesses were expelled from secondary schools for failing to attend school on Saturday. Church officials have raised the issue with national authorities, but for the moment, the children remain expelled, and are being educated at home. Local authorities in Kibungo, Gisenyi, and Butare Provinces all supported such expulsions.

There were reports of intimidation of church leaders prior to and during the May 26 constitutional referendum. Radio Rwanda, the government-run radio station, publicly denounced churches whose members abstained from voting. According to religious officials, Protestant church leaders were detained and interrogated by government forces when it was believed their congregations were not voting in favor of the new constitution. Members of a number of religious organizations reported that government agents escorted them to the polls, and watched while they cast their votes. Reports such as these came from persons in Butare, Ruhengeri, Gisenyi, Kibungo, and Buyumba Provinces.

On March 13, members of a Pentecostal church were arrested during a prayer service on Mt. Kigali. The group had gone into a cave to pray when local security forces arrested them. At the end of the period covered by this report, the leaders of the group were still in detention.

According to several human rights groups, in November 2002, individuals who had split from a Pentecostal church and formed a new congregation were attacked outside their new place of worship in the Gikondo district of Kigali. On November 1, 2002, seven members were arrested and detained in the Gikondo district prison. They spent 15 days in prison before being provisionally released by the Kigali prosecutor. On November 15, 2002, members of the National Police and the Local Defense Forces harassed members outside the church. On November 22, 2002, approximately 40 Local Defense Force members and at least 2 police officers attacked church members around 8:30 in the morning. The Counselor of the sector accompanied the forces. Civilians reportedly participated in the attack as well, and no one has been held accountable yet for the attack. Intimidation continued through February, culminating in the arrests of the leaders of the church. They remained in detention at the end of the period covered by this report.

During the last week of February, 10 members of a Seventh-day Adventist group were detained in Byumba for “disturbing public order.” They were released on March 19.

In March 2002, the Government arrested Laurent Kalibushi, a dissident Catholic priest, and several members of his prayer group who were holding meetings late into the night in a private home in Kigali. Authorities charged that the prayer group, the Mouvement Sacerdotal Marial, was an “unhealthy and anti-social cult” with ties to the 2000 “doomsday cult” deaths in Uganda; a large cache of food and fuel found on the premises supported reports that the adults had stopped working and the children had stopped going to school. Some observers believed that the arrests were a result of the group’s ties to the banned political party of former president Bizimungu. Approximately three members of the group, including Laurent Kalibushi, remained in detention at the end of the period covered by this report.

In January 2002, police in Butare arrested three members of the Modest and Innocent Association (AMI), a local NGO, for publishing a newsletter calling for national reconciliation; authorities charged that the newsletter was an incitement to hatred. One of the persons arrested was released within hours of the arrest; the other two were detained for 1 month, after which they were released when a court determined that the charges were unsubstantiated. At the end of the period covered by this report, all three persons remained under government surveillance, and the NGO was not allowed to operate.

Unlike during the previous period, there were no reports that the Rwandan Defense Force (RDF) troops and rebels from the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) were targeting Catholic clergy for abuses. No religious groups reported any abuses targeted specifically at them, although several reported that armed soldiers pillaged and destroyed their property, forcibly dispersed religious services, and harassed religious leaders.

In April 2002, in Bakavu, Democratic Republic of Congo, RDF and RCD-Goma soldiers surrounded the congregations of several Catholic churches and forcibly dispersed and beat parishioners. There were no reports of similar incidents during the period covered by this report.

Some religious leaders were perpetrators of violence and discrimination, and several members of the clergy of various faiths have faced charges of genocide in Rwandan courts, in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in Arusha, Tanzania, and in foreign courts, notably in Belgium. In February the ICTR concluded the trials of Elizaphan Ntakirutimana, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, and his son, Gerald Ntakirutimana. Both were found guilty of genocide, and both cases are under appeal. Of the 31 detainees awaiting trial at the ICTR, 3 were religious leaders during the 1994 Genocide—Hormisdas Nsengimana, Rector of Christ-Roi College; Emmanuel Rukundo, a military chaplain; and Athanase Seromba, a Catholic priest.

There were no reports of religious prisoners; however, some members of Pentecostal and Seventh-day Adventist churches were detained for “suspicious activities.”

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Disputes between religious groups are rare; there are numerous associations and interfaith groups that contribute to understanding between the various religions.

Following the genocide in 1994, a number of citizens reportedly converted to Islam, either for protection or in search of meaningful reconciliation. Conversions tapered off in 1997, and according to the mufti of Rwanda, the Islamic community has not seen any increases in conversions over the past year.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Embassy officials maintain regular contact with leaders and members of the religious communities in the country.

The U.S. Government has funded a number of programs that promote religious freedom and interfaith understanding. Working with the Mufti of the country, the Embassy oversaw the completion in May of the renovations of an Islamic secondary school in Kigali, a project funded by the U.S. Through the Democracy and Human Rights Fund, the Embassy sponsored a workshop on reconciliation through a religious organization. The U.S. Agency for International Development works with several faith-based organizations on health and agricultural initiatives.

Embassy officers held numerous meetings with members of the Catholic and Anglican Churches, Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, leaders of the Muslim community, and small, evangelical Protestant groups, among others, to promote interfaith dialog and discuss religious freedom. In addition Embassy officers regularly met with local and international NGOs involved in peace, justice, and reconciliation efforts that focus on religious tolerance and freedom.

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 622 square miles, and its population is approximately 176,000. The population is predominantly Roman Catholic. No official statistics are available; however, it is estimated that approximately 80 percent of the population is Catholic, 15 percent is Protestant, 3 percent is Muslim, and 2 percent is atheist. Protestantism has grown considerably in recent years due to the success of Protestant missionaries in the country. Traditional indigenous religions do not exist; some witchcraft is practiced but is not considered to be a religion. Practitioners of witchcraft most often are members of one of the other major religions.

There are Catholic and Protestant missionaries in the country, and missionaries of other religions also operate in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

Religious organizations are required to register with the Government; however, there were no reports that any groups were denied registration or that the activities of unregistered groups were restricted.

There are no restrictions on the activities of foreign clergy, and missionaries in the country operate unhindered.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy, based in Libreville, Gabon, discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. In addition Embassy officials regularly meet with the country's Catholic bishop during visits to the country.

SENEGAL

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government maintains relations with all major religious groups in the country and discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 74,132 square miles, and its population is 9,987,494. According to current government demographic data, Islam is the predominant religion, practiced by approximately 94 percent of the country's population. There also is an active Christian community (4 percent), including Roman Catholics and diverse Protestant denominations. An estimated 2 percent, the remainder of the population, practice exclusively traditional indigenous religions or no religion.

The country is ethnically and religiously diverse. Although there is significant integration of all groups, there are identifiable geographic concentrations of some religious groups. The Christian minority is concentrated in the western and southern regions of the country, while groups that practice traditional religions are concentrated in the eastern and southern regions.

A wide variety of foreign missionary groups operate in the country, including Catholics, Protestants, independent missionaries, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion; the Constitution specifically defines the country as a secular state and provides for the free practice of religious beliefs, provided that public order is maintained.

Religious organizations can receive direct financial and material assistance from the Government. While there is no official system of government grants, the importance of religion in society often results in the Government providing grants to reli-

gious groups to maintain their places of worship or undertake special events. The Government also provides funds through the Ministry of Education to schools operated by religious institutions that meet national education standards. In practice Christian schools, which have a long and successful experience in education, receive the largest share of this government funding.

Religious organizations are independent of the Government and, in practice, administer their affairs without government interference. While individuals and groups may practice their beliefs without government sanction, any group religious or otherwise that wants to form an association with legal status must register with the Minister of the Interior in accordance with the civil and commercial code. Registration, which generally is granted, enables an association to conduct business, including owning property, establishing a bank account, and receiving financial contributions from any private source. Registered religious groups, including all registered nonprofit organizations, also are exempt from many forms of taxation. The Minister of Interior must have a legal basis for refusing registration. There were no reports that any applications for such registration were delayed or denied during the period covered by this report.

In October 2002, in an effort to increase school enrollment, particularly in rural areas, the Government introduced 2 hours of religious education (Islamic or Christian, according to student demand) into the state elementary school curriculum. Privately owned schools, whether or not they receive government grants, may provide religious education. The majority of students attending Christian schools are Muslims.

Missionaries, like other long-term visitors, must obtain a residence visa issued by the Interior Ministry. Religious groups, including Islamic groups, often establish a presence in the country as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs previously registered in a foreign country obtain permission to operate in the country from the Minister of the Family, Social Action, and National Solidarity. There were no reports that the Government refused visas or permission to operate to any group. Both religious and nonreligious NGOs are very active in providing social services and administering economic development assistance programs.

The Government encourages and assists Muslim participation in the Hajj every year. It also provides similar assistance for an annual Catholic pilgrimage to the Vatican.

While there is no specific government-sponsored institution to promote interfaith dialog, the Government generally seeks to promote religious harmony by maintaining relations with all important religious groups. Senior government officials regularly consult with religious leaders, and the Government generally is represented at all major religious festivals or events.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government monitors foreign missionary groups and religious and nonreligious NGOs to ensure that their activities coincide with their stated objectives. In the past, the Government expelled groups from the country when their activities were judged to be political in nature and a threat to public order; however, there were no reports that any foreign religious groups were asked to leave the country during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

Religion plays an important role in the lives of most citizens, and society generally is very open to and tolerant of different religious faiths. The country has a long tradition of amicable and tolerant coexistence between the Muslim majority and the Christian, traditional indigenous, and other religious minorities. Interfaith marriage is relatively common. Within certain families, other religious faiths, such as Christianity or a traditional indigenous religion, are practiced alongside Islam.

Islamic communities generally are organized around one of several brotherhoods, headed by a Khalif, who is a direct descendant of the group's founder. The two largest and most prominent of these brotherhoods are the Tidjanes, based in the city of Tivouane, and the Mourides, based in the city of Touba. At times there have been disputes within the different brotherhoods over questions of succession or general

authority. However, relations between these Islamic subgroups generally have been peaceful and cooperative. In recent years, a National Committee to Coordinate Sightings of the Moon and hence the designation of Muslim holy days has been formed at the suggestion of the Government, effectively increasing cooperation among the Islamic subgroups.

While the brotherhoods are not involved directly in politics or government affairs, these groups exert considerable influence in society and therefore maintain a dialog with political leaders. Close association with a brotherhood, as with any influential community leader, religious or secular, may afford certain political and economic protections and advantages that are not conferred by law.

Leaders of the larger religious groups, both Islamic and Christian, long have maintained a public dialog with one another. The former Archbishop who led the country's Catholic community and the Khalifs of the larger Islamic brotherhoods have contributed for decades to a positive interfaith dialog. The Catholic-sponsored Brottier Center has promoted debate and dialog between Muslims and Christians on political and social issues that confront the country.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy maintains relations with all major religious groups in the country. The Ambassador meets with the leaders or their representatives at various times throughout the year to discuss social and political issues. The Embassy maintains contacts with several religious-based NGOs, foreign missionary groups operating in the country, and human rights organizations and activists to monitor issues of religious freedom. The Ambassador or his representative regularly attends all major annual religious festivals or gatherings to promote an open dialog with various religious groups.

SEYCHELLES

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 171 square miles, and its population is approximately 80,098. According to a July 2003 estimate, 86.6 percent of the population are Roman Catholic and 6.8 percent are Anglican. There are other Christian churches, including Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, the Assembly of God, the Pentecostal Church, the Pentecostal Assembly, the Assemblies of God, the Nazarites, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Hinduism, Islam, and the Baha'i Faith also are practiced. Almost 50 percent of the population is estimated to practice their faith regularly. It is unknown if there are atheists in the country.

A few foreign missionary groups practice in the country, including the Missionaries of Charity, a Roman Catholic organization.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

The Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Seventh-day Adventist churches and the Islamic mosques each have their own acts of incorporation. The Baha'i local spiritual assembly was incorporated in 1999. Other churches that are not a corporate body are registered as associations with the Registrar General and are entitled to tax-free privileges, similar to a charity. All religious organizations must register to be

entitled to tax-free privileges. If an organization does not want tax-free privileges, it does not have to register.

The Government tends to remain outside of religious matters, but provides program time to different religious organizations on the national radio broadcasting service. On Sundays a radio broadcast of a Catholic Mass alternates each week with a broadcast of an Anglican service. The Islam and Hindu faiths are allowed 15-minute broadcasts every Friday, and the Baha'i and Seventh-day Adventists faiths are allowed 15-minute broadcasts every Saturday.

In March 2000, the Government announced that government employees of the Baha'i faith could take paid leave on Baha'i holy days. This leave had not been available previously to members of the Baha'i or other faiths. At the time of the announcement, the Government also stated that other religions could submit applications for the recognition of similar unpaid leave days. In May 2000, the Government announced that government employees of all faiths could request paid leave on any of their holy days, and such leave generally is granted. President France Albert Rene's wife is a member of the Baha'i Faith, while the majority of government ministers are Catholic.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In the past, the Government did not demonstrate favoritism toward one religion over another; however, in early 2000, the Seychelles National Party (SNP), which is the opposition political party and is led by an Anglican minister, claimed that the Government gave a grant of \$164,000 (900,000 Seychelles Rupees) to the Baha'i Faith in 1999, following its incorporation. According to the SNP, this grant has not been offered to other faiths that have been established recently in the country. According to the Government, a portion of the national budget has been allocated in some years to provide assistance to faiths that request it. The grant to the Baha'i Faith in 1999, and again 2000, was for the purpose of building a temple. The Anglican, Hindu, and Roman Catholic faiths have also benefited from government grants. The Roman Catholic Church received a grant of \$200,000 (1 million Seychelles Rupees) in 2000 and in 2001. In 2002 no amount was budgeted for contribution to a religious organization. In 2003, the Government gave a grant of \$400,000 (2 million Seychelles Rupees) to the Anglican Church for the purpose of constructing a new cathedral, and \$400,000 (2 million Seychelles Rupees) to the Roman Catholic Church.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SIERRA LEONE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 27,653 square miles, and its population is approximately 4.5 million. Reliable data on the exact numbers of those who practice major religions are not available; however, most sources estimate that the population is 60 percent Muslim, 30 percent Christian, and 10 percent practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. There is no information concerning the number of atheists in the country.

Many syncretistic practices reportedly exist, with up to 20 percent of the population practicing a mixture of Islam and traditional indigenous religions or Christianity and traditional indigenous religions.

Historically most Muslims have been concentrated in the northern areas of the country, and Christians were located in the south; however, the 11-year civil war, which officially was declared over in January 2002, resulted in movement by major segments of the population.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

The Government has no requirements for recognizing, registering, or regulating religious groups.

The Government permits religious instruction in public schools. Students are allowed to choose whether to attend Muslim- or Christian-oriented classes.

The Government has not taken any specific steps to promote interfaith understanding.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom, and interfaith marriage is common. The Inter-Religious Council (IRC), composed of Christian and Muslim leaders, plays a vital role in civil society and actively participates in efforts to further the peace process in the country and the sub-region. The IRC criticized the use of force and atrocities committed by the rebels, endorsed reconciliation and peace talks, and facilitated rehabilitation of the victims affected by the war, including former child soldiers.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Embassy is in frequent contact with the IRC and its individual members.

SOMALIA

There is no constitution and no legal provision for the protection of religious freedom; there were some limits on religious freedom.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Non-Sunni Muslims often are viewed with suspicion by members of the Sunni majority.

The U.S. Government does not maintain an official presence in the country. The lack of diplomatic representation has limited the U.S. Government's ability to take action to promote religious freedom.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 246,200 square miles, and its population is approximately 7 million; however, population figures are difficult to estimate given the instability of the country. Citizens overwhelmingly are Sunni Muslim. There are a small number of non-Sunni Muslims. There also is a small, extremely low-profile Christian community, in addition to small numbers of adherents of other religions. The number of adherents to strains of conservative Islam is growing. The number of Islamic schools funded by religiously conservative sources continued to grow (see Section III).

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

There is no constitution and no legal provision for the protection of religious freedom; there were some limits on religious freedom.

There is no central government. A Transitional National Government (TNG) has been headquartered in Mogadishu since October 2000, but it exercises little effective control over the country. The Transitional Charter, adopted in 2000 but not implemented by the end of the period covered by this report, establishes Islam as the national religion. A draft transitional charter under consideration at the Somali Peace and Reconciliation Conference cites Islam as the official religion. Some local administrations, including the “Republic of Somaliland” and “Puntland,” have made Islam the official religion in their regions. In 2002 Abdallahi Yusuf decreed that only Shafi’iyah, a moderate Islamic doctrine followed by most Somalis, would be allowed in Puntland. Several days later, Puntland security forces entered several mosques in Bosasso to compel compliance.

The judiciary in most regions relies on some combination of traditional and customary law (Xeer), Shari’a law, the penal code of the pre-1991 Siad Barre government, or some combination of the three. During 2002 Islamic courts and militias were absorbed by the TNG and ceased functioning. However, two new courts were established in Beledweyne, in the Hiran region, during the period covered by this report—one designated for the Hawadle clan and the other for the Galjecel clan.

In 1999 the Minister of Religion in Somaliland issued a list of instructions and definitions on religious practices. Under the new rules, religious schools and places of worship are required to obtain the Ministry of Religion’s permission to operate. The Ministry must approve entry visas for religious groups, and certain unspecified doctrines are prohibited. In Puntland religious schools and places of worship must receive permission from the Ministry of Justice and Religious Affairs to operate.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Local tradition and past law make proselytizing a crime for any religion except Islam. Proselytizing for any religion except Islam is prohibited by law in Puntland and Somaliland and effectively blocked by informal social consensus elsewhere in the country. Christian-based international relief organizations generally operate without interference, provided that they refrain from proselytizing.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Article 8 of the Transitional National Charter and Article 6.3 of the Puntland Charter prohibit torture “unless sentenced by Islamic Shari’a Courts in accordance with Islamic Shari’a law.” Unlike in recent years, there were no reports that militias administered summary punishment. Islamic courts ceased to operate in 2002 and did not operate during the period covered by this report, with the exception of the two new courts in Beledweyne.

In early March, three Christian Ethiopian nationals were arrested in Hargeisa for allegedly proselytizing. A search of their home uncovered Bibles and tapes on Christianity, and they were deported to Ethiopia.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Non-Sunni Muslims often are viewed with suspicion by members of the Sunni majority. There is strong societal pressure to respect Islamic traditions, especially in enclaves still influenced but not controlled by radical Islamists, such as El Wak in the Gedo region and Doble, Ras Chaimboni, and Kulbiyow in the Lower Juba region.

Organized Islamic groups whose goal is the establishment of an Islamic state include Al-Islah, which openly operates primarily in Mogadishu, and Al-Ittihaad. During the mid-1990s, Al-Ittihaad was organized and operated training camps; however, while it continued to have adherents throughout the country, it did not have a central structure during the year. During the period covered by this report, the influence of radical Islamic groups continued to dissipate.

The number of externally funded Koranic schools continued to increase throughout the country during the period covered by this report. These schools are inexpensive and provide basic education; however, there were reports that these schools required the veiling of small girls, as well as requiring other conservative Islamic practices not normally found in the local culture. Mogadishu University, the University of East Africa in Bosaso, Puntland, and many secondary schools in Mogadishu are externally funded and administered through organizations affiliated with the conservative Islamic organization Al-Islah. The number of madrassas, which are private schools providing both religious and secular education, continued to increase during the period covered by this report.

There is a small, low-profile Christian community. Christians, as well as other non-Muslims who proclaim their religion, sometimes face societal harassment.

There are no ecumenical movements or activities to promote greater religious tolerance.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government does not maintain an official presence in the country. This lack of diplomatic representation has limited the U.S. Government's ability to take action to promote religious freedom.

SOUTH AFRICA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion. The Department of Education drafted a policy document entitled "Religion in Education," which reviews the instruction and observance of religions in public schools.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Concerns about Islamic extremism, fueled by past incidents of violence by People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD), subsided. There also has been a marked downturn, since 2000, in urban terror activity following a crackdown on urban terrorism and trials of numerous suspects.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 470,693 square miles, and its population is approximately 44.8 million. According to the latest available figures on religious demography from the 1996 census, approximately 84 percent of the population belong to the Christian faith. Approximately 3 percent of the population indicated that they belong to other religions, which include Hinduism (1.5 percent), Islam (1.5 percent), Judaism (0.2 percent), Buddhism, Confucianism, and Rastafarianism. Approximately 13 percent indicated that they belong to no particular religion or refused to indicate their affiliation.

The African Independent Churches make up the largest grouping of Christian churches. There are 4,000 or more African Independent Churches, with a total membership of more than 10 million. Although these churches originally were founded as breakaways from various mission churches (the so-called Ethiopian churches), the African Independent Churches consist mostly of Zionist or Apostolic churches and also include some Pentecostal offshoots. The Zion Christian Church is the largest African Independent Church with 10.7 percent of the population, and the Apostolic is the third largest with 9.8 percent of the population. The African Independent Churches attract persons from rural and urban areas.

Other Christian churches include the Dutch Reformed family of churches, including the Nederduits Gereformeerde, Nederduits Hervormde, and Gereformeerde Churches, which consist of approximately 9.8 percent of the population; the Roman

Catholic Church, which has grown steadily in numbers and influence in recent years and consists of approximately 9.5 percent of the population. Protestant denominations include the Methodist Church (7.8 percent), the Church of the Province of South Africa (Anglican, 4.4 percent), various Lutheran (2.9 percent) and Presbyterian churches (2.0 percent), the Congregational Church (1.2 percent), and Baptist churches (1 percent). The largest traditional Pentecostal churches are the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Assemblies of God, and the Full Gospel Church. A number of charismatic churches have been established in recent years. The subsidiary churches of the charismatic churches, together with those of the Hatfield Christian Church in Pretoria, are grouped in the International Fellowship of Christian Churches. The Greek Orthodox and Seventh-day Adventist Churches also are active.

Approximately 13 percent of the total population claim no affiliation with any formal religious organization. The majority of these persons adhere to traditional indigenous religions. A common feature of the traditional indigenous religions is the importance of ancestors. Ancestors are regarded as part of the community and as indispensable links with the spirit world and the powers that control everyday affairs. Ancestors are not gods, but because they play a key part in bringing about either good or ill fortune, maintaining good relations with them is vital. Followers of traditional indigenous religions also believe that certain practitioners may manipulate the power of the spirits by applying elaborate procedures that are passed down through word-of-mouth. Some practitioners use herbs, others use therapeutic techniques or supernatural powers; some are considered masters of "black magic" and engender fear. Many persons combine Christian and traditional indigenous religious practices.

An estimated 86 percent of Whites are Christian and almost 1.5 percent are Jewish. Nearly half of Indians are Hindus, and the remainder are either Muslim (23 percent) or Christian (20 percent). The majority of Muslims are Indian or belong to the multi-ethnic community in the Western Cape. More than 90 percent of Blacks are Christians. Almost 84 percent of Coloreds are Christian, while 7 percent are Muslim.

A number of Christian organizations, including the Salvation Army, Promise Keepers, Operation Mobilization, Campus Crusade, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), operate in the country doing missionary work, giving aid, and providing training. The Muslim World League also is active in the country, as is the Zionist International Federation.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Bill of Rights prohibits the Government from unfairly discriminating directly or indirectly against anyone on the ground of religion, and it states that persons belonging to a religious community may not be denied the right to practice their religion and to form, join, and maintain religious associations with other members of that community. Cases of discrimination against a person on the grounds of religious freedom may be taken to the Constitutional Court.

Christianity is the dominant religion in the country, but no religion is declared the official state religion by law. Leading government officials and ruling party members adhere to a variety of faiths, including various Christian denominations, Islam, and Judaism.

Religious groups are not required to be licensed or registered.

The Constitution states that religious instruction at public schools is permitted so long as it is voluntary and religions are treated equally. The Department of Education has drafted a policy document entitled "Religion in Education," which reviews the instruction and observance of religions in public schools. The policy document differentiates between religion education and religious instruction. The new policy calls for religion education in schools, including lessons on the religions of the world with particular attention to the religions of South Africa, a focus on worldviews, and an emphasis on values and moral education. Previously, the Department of Education used a syllabus that required public schools to administer one period of religious instruction per week. There are some private religious schools in which religious instruction is required. However, many public schools had dropped religious instruction in practice. The Department of Education considers religious instruction the responsibility of the family and religious institutions. The Minister of Education also advocates removing religious school assemblies and chapel services in public

schools because these generally favor one particular religion. The new policy created significant public debate.

Only Christian religious holidays, such as Christmas and Good Friday, are recognized as public holidays; however, members of other religious groups are allowed to commemorate their particular religious holidays without government interference. The National Association of School Governing Bodies has requested the Government to review all public holidays of a religious nature to ensure fairness and equity in religion.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

Unlike in the period covered by the previous report, there were no reports that students were suspended for wearing dreadlocks. In February 2001, nine pupils were suspended from their high school for wearing dreadlocks. The students claimed that they subscribed to Rastafarianism as a religion, which they claimed requires that adherents grow their hair. The Department of Education allowed the children back into the school and stated that the Department would allow pupils wearing dreadlocks to attend school, if they were members of the Rastafarian religion.

PAGAD is an Islamic-oriented organization that began as a community-based group opposed to crime, gangsterism, and drugs; however, it is known for its violent vigilantism (see Section III). Although members of the group complained that they were the targets of police brutality, in part due to their religious beliefs, there was no indication that police targeted PAGAD members for investigation because of their religious affiliation.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Relations between the various religious communities generally are amicable. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Concerns about Islamic extremism, fueled by past incidents of violence by the radical organization PAGAD, subsided. There also has been a marked downturn, since 2000, in urban terror activity following a crackdown on urban terrorism and trials of numerous suspects.

There are many official and unofficial bilateral and multilateral ecumenical contacts between the various churches. The largest of these is the South African Council of Churches (SACC), which represents the Methodist Church, the Church of the Province of South Africa (Anglican), various Lutheran and Presbyterian churches, and the Congregational Church, among others. The major traditional indigenous religions, most of the Afrikaans-language churches, and the Pentecostal and charismatic churches are not members of the SACC and usually have their own coordinating and liaison bodies. The Roman Catholic Church's relationship with other churches is becoming more open, and it works closely with other churches on the socio-political front.

The Muslim community has protested the infrequent availability of bail for Muslim detainees and staged periodic small-scale protests, criticizing the treatment as unfair compared with the judicial treatment of non-Muslims.

Urban terrorism had decreased significantly in the Western Cape by the end of 2001, and remained low during the period covered by this report. The activities of PAGAD have been curtailed severely by a successful law enforcement and prosecutorial effort against leading members of the organization for crimes linked to urban bombings and murder (See Section II). There were several ongoing trials of PAGAD members for charges related to urban terrorism. Isolated incidents of urban terror took place in the country in the period covered by this report. On November 16, 2002, an explosion shook the Bishop Lavis offices of the Serious Violent Crimes Unit in the Western Cape. No one was injured in the blast. Police suspected that the bombing may either have been linked to PAGAD, whose members had court cases in progress at that time, or to members of an extremist right-wing Afrikaner group, the Boeremag. No arrests have been made in the case. In late October and early November 2002, a spate of bombings took place in Gauteng in which one woman was killed, and one incident in KwaZulu-Natal, in which no one was injured. Members of the Boeremag have been charged and the trials are currently underway. The perpetrators of these acts reportedly hold personal religious views, Christian in ori-

entation, but not any associated with any formal religion, that purport whites are racially superior to other races.

In March 2001, three persons were sentenced to between 10 and 13 years in prison for committing a series of bombings, including of a mosque in Rustenburg, in January 1997. They have not appealed nor have they received permission from the Magistrate to appeal their sentences.

There were unconfirmed reports of killings linked to the continued targeting of alleged practitioners of witchcraft during this reporting period. In the Limpopo Province, where traditional beliefs regarding witchcraft remain strong, officials have reported dozens of killings of persons suspected of witchcraft over the past 5 years. The Government has instituted educational programs to prevent such actions. In September 2001, four women and one man were sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of a 74-year-old man whom they accused of witchcraft. Various witchcraft-related attacks and murders took place in KwaZulu-Natal during the period covered by the report. In one incident a family of four was killed near Paulpietersburg, KwaZulu-Natal in October 2002. According to police, the Ngwenya family had been accused of witchcraft, which may have been the motive for the attack.

There also were reports of killings linked to the practice of Satanism. The Government does not keep records on cases of reported witchcraft and Satanism killings. These cases are investigated and prosecuted as homicide by law enforcement officials.

Various religious, educational, and political groups and the Department of Education are divided on the right of learners to exercise religious observance in state schools. The Department is of the view that religious instruction should not be part of the general curriculum, which is currently under review. The Department wants religion education to be part of the curriculum. Others advocate for the promotion of the role of religion in communities and schools to underpin moral regeneration in society.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. Representatives of the U.S. Embassy and Consulates have frequent contact with leaders and members of all religious communities in the country.

The U.S. Government actively engaged with the religious community in the period covered by this report. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates have intensified engagement with the Muslim community, interacting with a broad range of figures from formal religious entities, such as the Islamic Propagation Center, to academics, journalists, and other members of civil society. The Embassy and Consulates held several video conferences that included American Islamic leaders in order to open a dialog between Americans and South Africans on Islam in both countries. In May the U.S.-based Institute for Faith and Politics facilitated the visit of a U.S. congressional delegation to interact with their South African parliamentary counterparts, governmental officials, and South African civil society on comparative experiences in reconciliation.

SUDAN

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government severely restricted this right in practice. The Government treats Islam as the state religion and has declared that it must inspire the country's laws, institutions, and policies.

There was no significant change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. The Government continued to enforce numerous restrictions.

There were strained and distant relations between the various religious communities; however, there was a governmental attempt to promote religious dialog between Christians and Muslims through its support of the Sudan Inter-religious Council, a non-governmental organization (NGO) formed in December 2002.

The U.S. Government's efforts to promote religious freedom and human rights in the country were limited by the permanent resident status of only a few of its diplomats. American diplomats were non-resident from 1996 until 2000, when visits to Khartoum were resumed. Some permanent staff were assigned in 2002, and this trend continued into the period covered by this report. The U.S. Government has

made it clear to the Government that the problem of religious freedom is one of the key impediments to an improvement in the relationship between the two countries. High-level U.S. officials and U.S. Missions to international forums have raised consistently the issue of religious freedom with both the Government and the public. Since 1999, the Secretary of State has designated Sudan a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 967,499 square miles, and its population is an estimated 35 million. The country is religiously mixed, although Muslims have dominated national government institutions since independence in 1956. There are no accurate figures on the sizes of the country's religious populations because of poor census data, as a result of 2 decades of war. According to most estimates, between 65 and 75 percent of the population is Muslim, and adherents include numerous Arabic and non-Arabic groups. Muslims predominate in the north, but there are sizable Christian communities in northern cities, principally in areas where there are large numbers of internally displaced persons. It is estimated that more than 4 million southerners have fled to the north to escape the war. Most citizens in the south adhere to either Christianity or traditional indigenous religions; however, there are some Muslim adherents as well, particularly along the historical dividing line between Arabs and Nilotic ethnic groups. There are reports that Christianity is growing rapidly in the south, particularly in areas outside of government control. There also is evidence that many new converts to Christianity continue to adhere to elements of traditional indigenous practices. There are small but long established populations of Greek Orthodox and Coptic Rite Christians centered around Khartoum and northern cities. However, the once 25,000-strong Greek community has been reduced to approximately 500, and the Coptic community, previously numbering more than 300,000, has decreased to less than 100,000, most forced to leave due to government policies adversely affecting their economic livelihood. There is only one known resident Jewish family in the country.

The Muslim population is almost entirely Sunni but is divided into many different groups. The most significant divisions occur along the lines of the Sufi brotherhood. Two popular brotherhoods, the Ansar and the Khatmia, are associated closely with the Umma Party and the Democratic Unionist Party, respectively.

The country's religious conflict is aggravated by the perception among southerners that they are second-class citizens, because northern Muslims, most of whom are native Arabic speakers, have dominated political and economic structures since independence in 1956. Southerners began an armed struggle to protest religious, political, and economic discrimination before independence. The southern ethnic groups fighting the civil war seek independence, autonomy, or some other form of regional self-determination from the north. As the peace process progresses and negotiations between the two sides continue, many of the religious issues are being addressed and attempts are being made to reconcile the contentious issues that concern the two groups.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, in certain areas the Government severely restricted this right in practice. The Government treats Islam as the state religion and has declared that it must inspire the country's laws, institutions, and policies. The Constitution states that "Shari'a and custom are the sources of legislation."

Religious organizations and churches are subject to the same restrictions placed on nonreligious corporations. Religious groups, like all other organizations, must be registered in order to be recognized or to assemble legally. Registration reportedly is very difficult to obtain in practice, and the Government does not treat all groups equally in the approval of such registrations and licenses, particularly evangelical Christian groups. Registered religious groups are exempt from most taxes. Nonregistered religious groups find it impossible to construct a place of worship or to assemble legally without the fear of interference. Applications to build mosques generally are granted in practice; however, the process for applications to build churches is more difficult. The Government did not authorize the construction of any churches in the Khartoum area or in the district capitals; the Government often claimed that local Islamic community objections restricted the issuance of permits.

The Catholic Church has not registered under the 1994 act requiring religious organizations to register. It maintains that previous registrations in 1905 and 1963 remain valid, and questions whether or not these acts have been abrogated by the 1994 act. One result is that its marriage licenses are not recognized in the country. The Church has the Vatican authorize the licenses after issuing them locally.

The Government has attempted to acknowledge religious dialog through support for the creation of the Sudan Inter-religious Council and in other public gestures, such as having both a Muslim and Christian invocation at the beginning of public meetings. In May the Government permitted the airing on the state-controlled national television station of a film on the life of Jesus Christ, provided under the auspices of the religious NGO Safe Harbor.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Authorities continued to restrict the activities of Christians, followers of traditional indigenous beliefs, and other non-Muslims. The Government restricts at least one Islamic group, Taqfir al-Hijra, which conducts terrorist acts against other Muslims. While non-Muslims may convert to Islam, the law makes apostasy (conversion from Islam to another religion) punishable by death.

Although the Government considers itself an Islamic government, it monitors some religious and quasi-religious Islamic groups, particularly religious groups that oppose the Government through political platforms or violence against government-affiliated mosques.

Muslims may proselytize freely in government-controlled areas, but non-Muslims are hindered in their efforts to proselytize. The Government generally is less restrictive of Christian groups that historically have had a presence in the country, such as Coptic Christians and Greek Orthodox, and is more restrictive of newer arrivals.

Missionaries continued to operate, running food relief operations, medical clinics, and churches in the south. Some also operate in government-controlled areas. However, authorities sometimes harassed missionaries and other religiously oriented organizations, and the assets of various Catholic relief projects were confiscated when the projects closed temporarily or moved locations. Christian religious workers, including priests, have difficulties obtaining residence permits and exit and re-entry visas, as well as first-time entry visas. Almost all applicants are referred to security services for determination and many are disapproved.

Religious minority rights are not protected, and Islam as the "state" religion confers second-class citizenship status on non-Muslim adherents. Government jobs and contracts are reserved almost exclusively for Muslims. In government-controlled areas of the south, there continued to be credible evidence of favoritism towards Muslims and an unwritten policy of Islamization of public institutions, despite an official policy of local autonomy and federalism. Some non-Muslims lost their jobs in the civil service, the judiciary, and other professions; however, such occurrences were less frequent than in previous periods covered by this report. Few non-Muslim university graduates found government jobs. Some non-Muslim businessmen complained of petty harassment and discrimination in the awarding of government contracts and trade licenses. There also were reports that Muslims received preferential treatment for the limited services provided by the Government, including access to medical care.

The Government requires instruction in Islam in public schools in the north. In public schools in areas where Muslims are not a majority, students have a choice of studying Islam or Christianity. However, Christian courses are not offered in the majority of public schools, ostensibly due to a lack of teachers or Christian students; in practice this means that many Christian students attend Islamic courses.

Sunday is not recognized as the Sabbath for Christians. Employers sometimes prevent Christians in the north from leaving work to worship. Christian students also have been forced to take school exams on Sundays.

While the Government permits non-Muslims to participate in services in existing, authorized places of worship, the Government continued to deny permission for the construction of any Roman Catholic churches, although some other Christian groups have received permission. However, the Government permitted some makeshift structures to be used for Roman Catholic services.

The status of negotiations to resolve a 1999 property dispute between the Episcopal Church and the Government has been temporarily resolved. The Government had occupied some of the grounds belonging to the Episcopal Church in Khartoum in 1999. The Government currently holds the health clinic on the grounds and about half the property. The Church is now leasing the remainder of the property. There is no assurance of how long the lease will continue.

Church leaders also complained that the Government does not permit Christians to be buried in Muslim cemeteries. Cemeteries must be separate. Thus, when the

old Christian cemetery was full, Christians needed land for new burials. After they purchased land and began using it as a cemetery, owners of small workshops, such as tire and welding shops, constructed buildings alongside the new grounds. The construction has stopped, but there is no guarantee it will not resume, and currently the structures still stand. According to the Catholic Archbishop of Khartoum, the Government delayed the resolution of the problem by claiming there was permission to build structures abutting the cemetery wall.

In the past, the Khartoum State government razed some religious buildings and thousands of squatter dwellings around Khartoum, which largely were populated by displaced southerners, including large numbers of practitioners of traditional indigenous religions and Christians. Earlier improvements in procedures to grant squatters legal title to land in other areas and to move squatters in advance of demolitions continued.

Islamic family law applies to Muslims and not to those of other faiths, for whom religious or tribal laws apply. Certain Islamic law provisions as interpreted and applied by the Government, and many traditional practices as well, discriminate against women. In accordance with Islamic law, a Muslim woman has the right to hold and dispose of her own property without interference, and women are ensured inheritance from their parents. However, a widow inherits one-eighth of her husband's estate; of the remaining seven-eighths, two-thirds goes to the sons and one-third to the daughters. It is much easier for men to initiate legal divorce proceedings than for women. Although a Muslim man may marry a non-Muslim, a Muslim woman cannot marry a non-Muslim unless he converts to Islam; however, this prohibition is not observed or enforced in areas of the south not controlled by the Government, or among Nubans.

Various government bodies have decreed on different occasions that women must dress modestly according to Islamic standards, including wearing a head covering. There was minimal enforcement of the dress code during the period covered by this report. Women often were seen in public wearing trousers or with their heads uncovered. This technically is a violation of regulations against indecency. Public Order Police generally only issued warnings for improper dress. In 2000 the governor of Khartoum State issued a decree forbidding women from working in businesses that serve the public, such as hotels, restaurants, and gas stations. He defended the ban as necessary under Shari'a (Islamic law) to protect the dignity of women. The issue was not brought before the courts, nor was the decree reversed. It no longer was a subject of public discussion, and the authorities did not enforce it; however, some employers removed women from their positions on this basis. In spite of the decree forbidding women from working in businesses that serve the public, Khartoum sometimes witnesses policewomen directing traffic at busy intersections. Women cannot work in businesses open after 10 p.m. (for example, in restaurants), though this rule is not always observed.

Children who have been abandoned or whose parentage is unknown, regardless of presumed religious origin, are considered by the State to be both citizens and Muslims and can be adopted only by Muslims. Non-Muslims may adopt only non-Muslim children. No equivalent restriction is placed on the adoption by Muslims of orphans or other children. In accordance with Islamic law, children adopted by Muslims do not take the name of their adopted parents and are not automatic heirs to their property.

In rebel-controlled areas, Christians, Muslims, and followers of traditional indigenous beliefs generally worship freely; however, in recent years, southern soldiers have damaged a few mosques after taking over government garrison towns. The rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) would prefer a secular government but is willing to allow Shari'a to exist in northern states. Christians dominate the movement, and local SPLM authorities often have a very close relationship with local Christian religious authorities. There is no evidence that this close relationship has resulted in a failure to respect the rights of practitioners of other religions.

The Government can control the publication of religious material through its control of licenses for printing presses. For example, in 2002 the small Armenian community in the country imported a computerized printing press to publish religious material in Armenian. Thus far, the Government has refused to license the press, in spite of the fact that the community is not larger than about ten families, numbering less than one hundred people.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Since the civil war resumed in 1983, an estimated 2 million persons have been killed in the violence or have died from the effects of the drought; approximately 4 million have been displaced internally as a result of fighting between the Government and insurgents in the south.

There is a religious aspect to the civil war: the Government is dominated by northern Muslims, while the southern ethnic groups fighting the civil war largely follow traditional indigenous religions or Christianity. The Government has declared a "jihad" (Muslim holy war) against the southern rebels. With the peace negotiations that began in June 2002, this rhetoric has diminished somewhat. The Government continued to insist that Shari'a form the basis of a unified state while southerners insist on a secular state.

There were a few reports that security forces regularly harassed and at times used threats and violence against persons because of their religious beliefs and activities; however, such reports continued to decrease during the period covered by this report.

In May the English-language daily Khartoum Monitor was suspended by the Government with the charge that writers covering a variety of religious issues had committed blasphemy. The stories they reported included "Is Islam Afraid of Christianity?" and another story asserting that it was not un-Islamic to drink home-brewed toddy. There also appeared a column on the destruction of a makeshift church and the jailing of its leader. It was believed that the stories on these subjects as well as others deemed inflammatory were used as an excuse to shut down the paper. The paper's shutdown in Khartoum had a strong effect on the English-reading community in the north.

The Government officially exempts the 10 southern states, in which the population is mostly non-Muslim, from Hudood law—that part of Shari'a which permits physical punishments, including lashings, amputations, and stonings. In the last few years, there have been many lashings but no amputations for acts deemed crimes under Shari'a. A recent Amnesty International report notes that the punishment of being lashed for drinking is regularly carried out. For instance, it reports that a southern Christian from Hajj Yusuf suburb of Khartoum North, where many refugees from the war in the southern part of the country live, told the organization that he was at home in his house when police forced an entry and accused him of having drunk alcohol. He spent 2 days in detention and then was taken to court where he denied the charge. He had no lawyer. One policeman testified against him, he was found guilty and sentenced to 40 lashes, which were applied immediately. There was a report documented by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights of a 14-year-old pregnant girl in Darfur accused of adultery and sentenced to 100 lashes. There were no reports of court-ordered Islamic law punishments, other than lashings, in government-controlled areas of the south. The law legally can be applied in the south if the state assemblies approve it. Fear of the imposition of Shari'a is one of the factors that has fueled support for the civil war among opposition forces in the south.

During the period covered by this report there were reports that Catholic priests continued to be harassed by authorities, though the harassment is not as overt as in the past. The Catholic Archbishop of Khartoum did not participate in government-sponsored dialogs because he believes that the Government does not wish genuine dialog to occur. He also cited bureaucratic tangles ensuing when the Catholic Church closed or reopened clinics or humanitarian projects. The Government on more than one occasion has claimed that the assets of a closed clinic belong to the Government and has confiscated vehicles with no reimbursement.

Security forces detained persons because of their religious beliefs and activities; however, such detentions on religious grounds occurred less frequently than in previous periods covered by this report. Generally, detentions based nominally on religion were of limited duration; because the practice of religion is not technically illegal, detainees could not be held formally on religious grounds indefinitely.

There were no reports during the period covered by this report of the forced abduction of women and children and the taking of slaves, particularly in war zones, and their transport to central and northern parts of the country. In the past, the victims in the villages largely were Christians or practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. Between February and May 2002, an International Eminent Persons Group was convened to investigate slavery, abductions, and forced servitude in the country; the group was composed of representatives from the United States, United Kingdom, Norway, France, Canada, and Italy. After the conclusion of the investigation, the Government's Committee for the Eradication of the Abduction of Women and Children was revitalized and given an explicit mandate by the President. For the first time the problem of abductions was discussed in the media. Based on their investigation, the International Eminent Persons Group reported that both forced and voluntary conversion to Islam of those abducted had occurred.

Forced Religious Conversion

Popular Defense Forces trainees, including non-Muslims, were indoctrinated in the Islamic faith. There were unconfirmed reports that in prisons and juvenile detention facilities, government officials and government-supported Islamic NGOs pressured and offered inducements to non-Muslim inmates to convert. Some persons in the government-controlled camps for internally displaced persons reported that they were at times pressured to convert to Islam. Children, including non-Muslim children, in camps for vagrant minors were required to study the Koran, and there was pressure on non-Muslims to convert to Islam. Priests are specifically barred from camps for vagrant minors. Unlike the previous period covered by this report, there were no credible reports that some boys in vagrant camps and juvenile homes had undergone forced circumcision.

In October 2002 there was a case involving the alleged abduction and forced conversion to Islam of a Coptic Christian woman in Omdurman. The lack of transparency in the case and the ongoing allegations by the woman's parents that their daughter was forced into marriage and conversion against her will brought into question the fairness of the judicial system and its ability to ensure due process for all its citizens, particularly non-Muslims. Nevertheless, the allegations of forced conversion were not confirmed.

Christians and Muslims alike are subject to compulsory national service. Although subject to Islamic indoctrination, there were no reported attempts at forced conversions of Christians. Christian leaders claim that prisoners have their sentences reduced if they convert to Islam. Anyone can join the military, regardless of religion.

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

There were strained and distant relations between the various religious communities.

Leaders of religious communities occasionally meet informally to discuss community relations; however, there continued to be limited interaction between Muslim and Christian clerics. An inter-faith NGO was formed with government support in December 2002. The Khartoum-based Sudan Inter-religious Council has equal numbers of Muslims and Christians and is dedicated to promoting dialog. The Council has yet to produce clear evidence that its approach to inter-religious dialog will gain enthusiastic Muslim participation and effective action from the government. Nevertheless, currently there are more public acknowledgments of a shared religious tradition by opening meetings with invocations from both traditions.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government and the U.S. Embassy continued to encourage respect for religious freedom. The U.S. Government has made it clear to the Government that the problem of religious freedom is one of the key impediments to developing a more positive relationship between the country and the United States. The Embassy consistently raised the issue at all levels of the Government, including with the President and the Foreign Minister.

The U.S. Embassy and the Department of State forcefully raised religious freedom issues publicly in press statements and at international forums, including the U.N. Human Rights Commission. The Special Envoy for Peace in Sudan, John Danforth, an Episcopal priest and former United States Senator, met with religious leaders during his visits to the country and pressed for religious freedom. In October 2002, a representative from the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom met with Sudanese religious leaders in Khartoum and Nairobi to discuss the status of religious freedom in the country.

U.S. diplomatic efforts to bring about peace in the country have continued to focus on promoting religious dialog. The U.S. Embassy has enlisted the help of organizations such as the Sudan Council of Churches and the Sudan Inter-religious Council to this end, and also has maintained and developed relationships with religious leaders from both Muslim and Christian traditions.

Since 1999, the Secretary of State has designated Sudan a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

SWAZILAND

There are no formal constitutional provisions for freedom of religion; however, the Government generally respects freedom of religion in practice, although authorities on occasion disrupted or cancelled prayer meetings that were considered to have political implications.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of approximately 6,700 square miles, and its population is approximately 1.1 million. Christianity is the dominant religion. Zionism, a blend of Christianity and indigenous ancestral worship, is the predominant religion in rural areas. A large Roman Catholic presence, including churches, schools, and other infrastructure, continues to flourish. It is estimated that the population is 40 percent Zionist, 20 percent Roman Catholic, and 1 percent Islamic. The remainder of the population is divided between the Anglican Church, Methodist Church, Bahai Faith, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Jewish faith, and other religious groups. Followers of Islam and the Baha'i Faith generally are located in urban areas. There are few atheists in the country.

Missionaries inspired much of the country's early development and still play a role in rural development. Missionaries mostly are western Christians, including Baptists, Mormons, evangelicals, and other Christians. The Baha'i Faith is one of the most active non-Christian groups in the country.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

There are no formal constitutional provisions for freedom of religion; however, the Government generally respects freedom of religion in practice, although authorities on occasion disrupted or cancelled prayer meetings that were considered to have political implications.

New religious groups or churches are expected to register with the Government upon organizing in the country. In order to be considered organized, a religious group must demonstrate either possession of substantial cash reserves or financial support from outside religious groups with established ties to western or eastern religions. For indigenous religious groups, authorities consider demonstration of a proper building, a pastor or religious leader, and a congregation as sufficient to grant organized status. However, there is no law describing the organizational requirements of a religious group. While organized religious groups are exempt from paying taxes, they are not considered tax-deductible charities. All religions are recognized unofficially.

Portions of the capital city are zoned specifically for places of worship of all denominations. Government permission is required for the construction of new religious buildings in urban areas, and permission is required from chiefs in rural areas. Those religious groups that wish to construct new buildings may purchase a plot of land and apply for the required building permits. The Government has not restricted any religion with financial means from building a place of worship; however, non-Christian groups sometimes experience minor delays in obtaining permits from the Government to build residences for clergy.

While the Government primarily observes Christian holidays, the monarchy (and by extension the Government) supports many religious activities in addition to Easter and Christmas. For example, the royal family occasionally attends evangelical programs.

The Government neither restricts nor formally promotes interfaith dialog, and it does not provide formal mechanisms for religions to reconcile differences. Religious groups have access to the courts as private entities.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Followers of all religious faiths generally are free to worship without government interference or restriction. However, the government-owned television and radio stations do not permit non-Christian religions to broadcast messages.

On February 12, Lucas Maseko of Nyakeni was fined five cattle by the traditional chief's court for failure to instruct his children to heed the king's call for all females to put on the wooden tassel ("umcwasho"). Maseko had refused to comply because of his religious beliefs. The case was still pending at the High Court at the end of the period covered by this report.

Police disrupted planned prayer services organized by residents of Macetjeni and KaMkhaweli on October 12, 2002. The services were planned in connection with the eviction of local residents by the royal family. In addition, the police cancelled another church service in Manzini on November 12, 2002, because members of banned political parties allegedly planned to attend the service.

During the period covered by this report, a dispute was resolved regarding the High Court reinstatement of six children who had been expelled from a primary school in 2002 for not obeying school rules and regulations because of their beliefs as members of Jehovah's Witnesses. The case was withdrawn from the High Court and transferred to the traditional court system, which concluded that the children should be allowed to return to school.

Non-Christian groups sometimes experienced minor delays in obtaining residence and building permits from the Government.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Five different denominations maintain adjoining properties peacefully. There was no public conflict among faiths during the period covered by this report.

Christian churches are well organized and are divided into three groups: The Council of Churches, the League of Churches, and the Conference of Churches. Each group is open to members of all denominations; however, in practice Zionists and all African traditional churches belong to the League of Churches, most evangelical churches associate with the Conference of Churches, and Anglican, Roman Catholic, United Christian, Mennonite, Episcopal, and Methodist churches generally belong to the Council of Churches. These groups primarily engage in producing common statements on political issues and sharing radio production facilities, or engage in common rural development and missionary strategies. Each organization has strong public opinions, which sometimes differ from one another; however, on several occasions, they have come together to address common issues, such as a constitutional amendment allowing for freedom of religion.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Embassy maintains contact and good relations with the various religious organizations.

TANZANIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice, subject to measures that it claims are necessary to ensure public order and safety; however, there were some limits on freedom of religion.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report. Some urban Muslim groups are sensitive to perceived discrimination in government hiring and law enforcement practices. Muslims continued to perceive government discrimination in favor of Christians in schools, the workplace, and places of worship.

There are generally amicable relations among religions in society; however, there was an increase in tension between Muslims and Christians and between secular and fundamentalist Muslims.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 364,900 square miles, and its population is approximately 35 million, of which approximately 34 million live on the mainland and 1 million in the Zanzibar archipelago. Current statistics on religious demography are unavailable, as religious surveys were eliminated from all government census reports after 1967. However, religious leaders and sociologists generally believe that the country's population is 30 to 40 percent Christian, 30 to 40 percent Muslim, and the remainder consists of practitioners of other faiths, traditional indigenous religions, and atheists. Zanzibar, which accounts for 2.5 percent of the country's population, is estimated to be 98 percent Muslim. The Zanzibar archipelago is semi-autonomous; Zanzibar elects its own president and a parliament that can approve legislation pertaining to local affairs. Generally, the Muslim population is highest in the Zanzibar archipelago and in coastal areas of the mainland. There are also large Muslim minorities in inland urban areas. The Christian population is comprised of Roman Catholics, Protestants, Pentecostals, Seventh-day Adventists, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and members of Jehovah's Witnesses. Between 80 and 90 percent of the Muslim population is Sunni; the remainder consists of several Shi'a groups.

Foreign missionaries operate in the country, including Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Mormon, Anglican, and Muslim.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice, subject to measures that it claims are necessary to ensure public order and safety; however, there were some limits on freedom of religion. The Constitution does not establish any official state religion.

In 2001, the Government of semi-autonomous Zanzibar passed a bill to establish an Islamic leader, or mufti, who is a public employee of the Zanzibar Government. Zanzibar Government officials claimed that they needed an Office of the Mufti to coordinate Islamic activities and improve religious understanding. On the mainland, mosques belonging to BAKWATA, the National Muslim Council of Tanzania, also elect a mufti. BAKWATA ceased being an official part of the Government in 1994, and thus the mainland mufti is not a public employee. Several Muslim organizations have criticized both Zanzibar's mufti law and the mainland's practice of selecting a mufti through the National Islamic Council, perceiving them as efforts by the union Government to institutionalize government oversight of Islamic organizations.

Tanzania's court upheld the controversial October 2002 elections of the mainland's mufti. An injunction on the elections was sought by Muslim clerics who asserted that the election was against the Constitution. The court overturned the injunction, largely on technical grounds. Some Islamic groups were highly critical of the court's decision and urged followers to boycott the Mufti election.

Muslim groups have also been vocal in their opposition to the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which was signed into law in December 2002. While this legislation does not mention any religious or ideological group, Muslim clerics and some local media have been highly critical of the power it gives to police to determine who is a terrorist, fearing the Muslim community will be the primary target.

The Government requires that religious organizations register with the Registrar of Societies at the Home Affairs Ministry. In order to register, religious organizations must have at least 10 followers and must provide a constitution, the resumes of their leaders, and a letter of recommendation from their district commissioner. Groups no longer are required to provide three letters of recommendation from the leaders of registered Christian churches or from registered mosques; however, some Muslim groups claim that they still are required to submit a letter of recommendation from BAKWATA. There were no reports that the Government refused the registration of any group. A new law concerning nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), approved in December 2002, requires all NGOs, including those that are religiously affiliated, to register with the Ministry of Home Affairs. The NGO law does not impose any new obligations on the parent organizations of religiously affiliated NGOs.

Prior to 2000, religious groups were exempt from paying taxes because they were presumed to be nonprofit organizations. The Government discovered in 1998 that some religious groups were importing goods duty-free and then selling them for a profit; consequently, the Government began requiring these groups to pay taxes. After successfully identifying these organizations, the Government allowed legiti-

mate religious groups to import goods internationally without paying duty, provided that they receive an exemption certificate from the Tanzania Revenue Authority.

Customary and statutory law in both civil and criminal matters governs Christians on the mainland and the Zanzibar archipelago. Muslims in Zanzibar and on the mainland may apply statutory, customary or Islamic law in family matters such as marriage, divorce, child-custody and inheritance. Islamic law is applied only to adjudicate cases involving Muslims. BAKWATA occasionally appeals to the secular civil authorities for assistance in resolving quasi-religious disputes such as the ownership of mosques. Zanzibar's court system generally parallels the mainland's legal system. However, whereas the majority of judges on Zanzibar were Muslim, there were very few Muslim judges, if any, on the mainland; consequently, some Muslim groups complain that it was inappropriate for Christian judges on the mainland to continue administering Islamic law for Muslims in family matters. There was occasional debate about the establishment of Shari'a law in Zanzibar, but the number of advocates remained small.

Missionaries are permitted to enter the country freely, particularly if proselytizing is ancillary to other religious activities. Citizens are permitted to leave the country for pilgrimages and other religious practices.

The Government officially recognizes eight days for religious holidays, equally divided between Christian and Muslim celebrations: two days for Christmas, two days for Easter, two days for the Muslim holiday of Eid-el-Fitr, one day for the Muslim holiday of Eid-el-Haj, and one day for the Muslim holiday of Maulid).

Religion may be taught in public schools in the form of a class on religion, but it is not part of the national curriculum. Such classes are generally taught on an ad hoc basis by parents or other volunteers, but must be approved by the school's administration and/or parent-teacher association.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The law prohibits preaching or distribution of materials that are considered inflammatory and represent a threat to the public order. In 2000 the Government banned the publication and distribution of a book by a Muslim academic on the grounds that it was inflammatory. The book, titled "The Mwembechai Killings," described Muslim grievances against the Government and provided the author's version of events surrounding the killings of three Muslim protesters by police in 1998 in the Mwembechai area of Dar es Salaam. Unlike in the period covered by the previous report, urban Muslims did not distribute videotapes of the Mwembechai riots to document perceived human rights abuses; the Government previously had outlawed these videotapes for being incendiary.

The Government has banned religious organizations from involvement in politics, and politicians are banned from using language intended to incite one religious group against another or to encourage religious groups to vote for certain political parties. The law imposes fines and jail time on political parties that campaign in houses of worship or educational facilities.

The Government does not designate religion on passports or records of vital statistics; however, it requires an individual's religion to be stated on police reports, school registration forms, and applications for medical care.

Government policy forbids discrimination against individuals on the basis of religious beliefs or practices; however, individual government and business officials are alleged to favor persons who share the same religion in the conduct of business. The Muslim community claims to be disadvantaged in terms of its representation in the civil service, government, and parastatal institutions, in part because both colonial and early post-independence administrations refused to recognize the credentials of traditional Muslim schools. As a result, there is broad Muslim resentment of certain advantages that Christians are perceived to enjoy in employment and educational opportunities. Muslim leaders have complained that the number of Muslim students invited to enroll in government-run schools still was not equal to the number of Christians. In turn, Christians criticize what they perceive as lingering effects of undue favoritism accorded to Muslims in appointments, jobs, and scholarships by former President Ali Hassan Mwinyi, a Muslim. Christian leaders agree that the Muslim student population in institutions of higher learning is disproportionately low; however, they blame this condition on historical circumstances and low school attendance rates by Muslims rather than discrimination.

The Government did little to respond to growing tensions between the Muslim and Christian communities (see Section III). The Government recognized that a problem exists, but it responded in an ad hoc manner. In 2001 the Government cancelled several meetings with Muslim and Christian leaders aimed at improving relations between the two communities. While the president, a Christian, regularly participates in Muslim celebrations such as Iftar dinners during Ramadan, the Govern-

ment held no formal interdenominational meetings during the period of this report, although many interdenominational initiatives exist at national and community levels without formal Government participation. Even senior Muslim officials in the Government appear unwilling to address the problem, apart from general criticism of those who would foment religious conflict.

The overall situation for women is less favorable in Zanzibar, which has a majority Muslim population, than on the mainland. Although women generally are not discouraged from seeking employment outside the home, women on Zanzibar and many parts of the mainland face discriminatory restrictions on inheritance and ownership of property because of concessions by the Government and courts to customary and Islamic law. While provisions of the Marriage Act provide for certain inheritance and property rights for women residing on the mainland, the Marriage Act is not applicable in Zanzibar. Furthermore, the applicability of customary, Islamic, and statutory law on the mainland and Zanzibar depends on whether the deceased was part of a community where the customary law is widely accepted and applied, and on the stated intentions of the male head of household. However, determining the intentions of the male head of household is often difficult because the majority of the country's male population does not draw last wills and testaments, perceiving wills as invitations for bad fortune. Courts on the mainland and Zanzibar have upheld discriminatory inheritance claims, primarily in rural areas.

Under a Zanzibari law popularly known as the "spinster act," unmarried Muslim women under the age of 21 who become pregnant are subject to two years' imprisonment, and a man found guilty of making a woman who is not his wife pregnant can be imprisoned for five years. In the past, Zanzibari women have successfully had these convictions dropped or overturned in the Zanzibari courts. No men have been tried under this law.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

In 2001 a local magistrate in Morogoro sentenced Kahmis Rajab Dibagula to an 18-month jail term for blasphemy against Christianity for publicly stating "Yesu si Mungu" (Jesus is not God). In 2001, on the grounds of public safety, police banned Muslim protests scheduled to take place in Dar es Salaam. Despite the Inspector General's refusal to grant a permit for the rally, in 2001, Muslim youths marched to the Attorney General's office while High Court Justice Chipeta heard the Dibagula case. While Chipeta agreed to overturn the sentence and ordered the release of Dibagula, the High Court widely was criticized in the Muslim community for only overturning the conviction rather than stating that the blasphemy charge was unconstitutional and discriminatory towards Muslims. More than 170 Muslims were arrested for demonstrating without a permit, and cases remained pending against 41 Muslims, with no trial date set by the end of the period covered by this report. No action was taken against the police who used excessive force to disperse the Muslim demonstrations. In March three appellate justices issued an opinion that Dibagula's speech was about his religious beliefs and therefore was protected by the Constitution.

In 2001 police on Zanzibar arrested more than 20 leaders of the Muslim Answar Sunna group for conducting Eid-el-Fitr prayers on a day other than the one designated by the Government of Zanzibar. Again on February 11, police used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse Answar Sunni sect members who had gathered to observe Eid-el-Fitr one day before the Zanzibar mufti declared the holiday. No arrests were made, but three people were injured in the disturbance.

In February 2002, violence began after police intervened and fired tear gas at a Muslim prayer meeting to commemorate the 1998 Mwembechai mosque riots; two persons, including a police officer, were killed. The organizers of the banned prayer meeting claimed the protest event had been peaceful until the police intervened; the police claimed that they used tear gas in order to disperse demonstrations and prevent a clash between rival Muslim groups. The Government subsequently convinced Muslim groups to cancel a series of demonstrations planned to protest the events. Following the violence, the police arrested nine Muslim leaders, who remained in prison and were denied bail until charges against them were dropped in August. Other Muslim leaders went into hiding until charges against them were dropped in August 2002.

In 1999 police arrested Sheikh Issa Ponda, a popular Muslim leader, for inciting his followers against other religions. A week later, the police canceled a planned Muslim demonstration to protest his arrest. The Sheikh later was charged with seditious intent and released on bail; however, in February 2002, he was rearrested and charged with murder as one of the nine Muslim leaders held responsible for the Mwembechai mosque riots. Ponda was denied bail and remained in prison until charges against him and eight other suspects were dropped in August.

Prior to the 2000 elections, government officials called on political candidates to avoid using religion as a campaign issue and urged the public to reject religiously oriented campaigns. In 2001 a political demonstration on the island of Pemba, which is 98 percent Muslim, turned violent and led to the deaths of at least 31 protestors and sparked an outburst of religious enmity toward the police, who used excessive force to contain the demonstration. In November 2002, a report by a commission of inquiry acknowledged that security forces were responsible for the 31 deaths and the 294 injured. The report made no recommendation for the prosecution of any police officers for the abuses, and no action was likely to be taken. There were reports that police officers and soldiers made anti-Muslim slurs against persons during house-to-house searches, although police and soldiers on the island are also Muslim. In 2001, in Wete, police turned away persons who were going to mosques to pray; police reportedly beat those who resisted the order. Following the demonstration, there were reports of isolated cases of harassment of individuals who were perceived as supporters of radical Islam, including the alleged forcible shaving of beards of certain Muslims who had been detained.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

While Muslim-Christian relations remained generally stable, tensions rose due to urban Muslim groups' claims of discrimination in government hiring and law enforcement practices (see Section II). Rural Muslim groups do not appear to share urban Muslims' concerns to the same extent. There also were other signs of increased religious tensions between Christians and Muslims.

There were signs of increasing tension between secular and fundamentalist Muslims, as the latter believed that the former had joined with the Government for monetary and other benefits. The fundamentalist Muslims accused the Government of being a Christian institution, and Muslims in power of being interested only in safeguarding their positions. In 2002 there were tensions within the Muslim community between moderates and fundamentalists seeking ideological control of mosques in Dar es Salaam and other cities. Fundamentalist Muslims severely criticized secular Muslims who drank alcohol or married Christians. Muslim fundamentalists attempted, unsuccessfully, to introduce Muslim traditional dress into the national school system. Fundamentalist groups also have exhorted their followers to vote only for Muslim candidates.

During the period covered by this report, Muslim fundamentalist organizations engaged in increasingly confrontational proselytizing in Zanzibar, Morogoro, and Dar es Salaam. Anti-Christian slogans became more prevalent in newspapers and pamphlets, and on clothing. Muslims threatened tourist establishments in Zanzibar, warning proprietors who catered to Western customers that they risked retribution for serving alcohol or engaging in other perceived vices. In Zanzibar there were gasoline bomb attacks against bars and hotels in January 2002 and in 2001. On the mainland, Christian fundamentalist organizations also reportedly engaged in confrontational proselytizing, including the distribution of leaflets branding Muslims as "unbelievers" or "servants of Satan."

In 2000 a University of Dar es Salaam organization conducted a study of the possible role of religion in impeding the country's future development as a multiparty democracy. The organization, Research, Education and Democracy in Tanzania (REDET), which consists of a number of academics—Muslim and Christian—surveyed the public's views of religion as a potential societal faultline. The results of the study, which were not published by the end of the period covered by this report, were discussed publicly at a symposium held by REDET in 2001. The study concluded that Muslims as a group were underrepresented in educational, governmental, and private sector institutions. The study was inconclusive on the cause of such underrepresentation; some scholars blamed outright discrimination by the Government and school administrators, while others blamed postcolonial historical circumstances, such as the legacy of Christian missionary control of private schools.

An interdenominational religious council met periodically until 2001 to discuss issues of mutual concern, such as the violence in Zanzibar in 2001. The council was comprised of Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim representatives. The Muslim representative belongs to the BAKWATA; several urban Muslim leaders and a majority of urban Muslims believe that the BAKWATA is a government-imposed watchdog

organization. Christian and Muslim meetings have been called on an ad hoc basis since 2001, but efforts to establish a formal interdenominational council failed because of lack of agreement on by-laws for the body.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Government encourages continued economic reform as a means to alleviate poverty, which has been identified as a contributing factor in the growth of religious intolerance. All agencies at the Embassy, including the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Peace Corps, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Department of Defense, have assistance projects in largely Muslim areas such as Zanzibar and the coastal regions of the mainland. The U.S. Government and the U.S. Embassy also encouraged democratic reform in the country, particularly in Zanzibar. This effort yielded quantifiable results with the implementation of highly contested yet peaceful and credible by-elections in Pemba in May.

In 2002 the Embassy sponsored a series of lectures and town hall meetings in Zanzibar that encouraged discussion of tolerance and the role of religion in a democratic society. In January the Embassy also sent two Muslim journalists, a Zanzibari and a mainland, on an International Visitor Program on "Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy." The U.S. Government also supported the country's initiative to implement the 2001 reconciliation agreement between the CCM, the country's ruling party, and the CUF, the main opposition party on Zanzibar, to reduce the conflict between the parties that frequently erupted into violence with religious overtones. Outreach to the Muslim community has also been enhanced by Iftar dinners, the traditional meal to break the fast during Ramadan, hosted by the Ambassador in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar.

TOGO

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 21,006 square miles. Its Office of Population Planning estimated the population to be 4,740,000 in 2001. The most recent available statistics regarding religious demography were published by the Demographic Research Unit of University of Lome in 2000, which states that the population is approximately 33 percent animist (traditional religion), 27.8 percent Catholic, 13.7 percent Sunni Muslim, and 9.5 percent Protestant. The remaining 16 percent of the population consists of followers of other faiths, including other various Christian (9.8 percent), other non-Christian groups (1.2 percent), and no affiliated religion (4.9 percent). Many converts to the more widespread faiths continue to perform rituals originating in traditional indigenous religions. The number of atheists in the country is unknown but is thought to be small. Most Muslims live in the central and northern regions.

Missionary groups active in the country represent Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. There is no state religion.

The Government establishes requirements for recognition of religious organizations outside the three main faiths—Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam

which are recognized officially. Applications must be submitted to the Interior Ministry's Division of Civil Security. A religious organization must submit its statutes, a statement of doctrine, bylaws, names and addresses of executive board members, the pastor's diploma, a contract, a site map, and a description of its financial situation. The Interior Ministry issues official recognition. The Civil Security Division also has enforcement responsibilities when there are problems or complaints associated with a religious organization.

The Government recognizes 97 religious groups, of which most are smaller Protestant groups and some new Muslim groups. The Ministry of Interior issues a receipt that serves as temporary recognition to applicant religious groups and associations, allowing them to practice their religion, pending investigations and issuance of written authorization, which usually takes several years. For example, the Baptist Mission Hospital has been practicing in the country for more than 15 years but did not receive its final authorization until 2001. In 2000, 38 religious groups submitted applications to the government requesting official recognition. Since 1991, 317 groups applied for recognition. The Muslim Union of Togo reports that since 1991, a total of 52 Islamic groups have registered with the Ministry of Interior and the Muslim Union of Togo, including Islamic development nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and Islamic radio and television enterprises. The criteria for recognition are based on the authenticity of the pastor's diploma and, most importantly, the ethical behavior of the group, which must not cause a breach of public order. For example, in 2001, a pastor was arrested, sentenced, and jailed for 3 months, based upon complaints of his congregation that he had planted fetish objects inside the church. He was released but forbidden by law to practice for 3 years. There was no information available regarding the number of rejections or details about the groups that had been rejected. If an application provides insufficient information for recognition to be granted, the application often remains open indefinitely.

There are no special requirements for foreign missionary groups, which are subject to the same registration requirements as other groups.

Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic schools are common; however, they do not receive money from the Government.

The Government-owned television station, TV Togo, and the Ministry of Communication sponsored a program during the period covered by this report to foster Islamic-Christian understanding.

In January, President Gnassingbe Eyadema, a Protestant, once again invited Catholic, Muslim, and Protestant religious leaders to an ecumenical prayer service to commemorate the anniversary of his military takeover. Eyadema has invited these religious leaders to this service for at least 10 years. For the fifth year in a row, the Catholic Church declined the invitation to attend the "Day of National Liberation" service, stating that it is inappropriate to hold a worship service in a government building.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Constitution prohibits the establishment of political parties based on religion and states explicitly that "no political party should identify itself with a region, an ethnic group, or a religion." Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims occupy positions of authority in local and the central government.

According to an international NGO, in 2000 the authorities established an inter-ministerial commission to investigate the activities of all religious groups in the country whose mode of worship allegedly harms the welfare of society. The Prime Minister expressed concern about the methods of worship by religious groups that beat cymbals and drums at night; however, the Government took no measures to restrict these groups during the period covered by this report.

The 17-member National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), elected by the National Assembly, includes Catholic, Muslim, and Protestant representatives. The CNDH hears appeals by religious organizations that the Government has disallowed principally for disturbing the peace.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Members of different faiths regularly invite one another to their respective ceremonies. Inter-marriage across religious lines is common.

The Christian Council addresses common issues among Protestant denominations. The Council comprises the Assemblies of God, Protestant Methodist, the Baptist Convention, Pentecostal churches, Seventh-day Adventist, Lutheran, and Evangelical Presbyterian denominations. The Council continued to debate whether to expand its membership to include other Protestant organizations. Catholics and Protestants frequently collaborate through the Biblical Alliance.

Under the leadership of the Archbishop of Lome, the Catholic Church continued to refrain from delivering political sermons praising President Eyadema. The Archbishop's predecessor had used the pulpit to praise the President, but such sermons alienated the congregation, which called for the former Archbishop's dismissal.

In June 2002, a few months before the anticipated legislative elections, the Conference of Bishops in Togo entered the political arena by publishing and disseminating a letter to citizens designed to promote conditions for effective, fair, and transparent elections. In September 2002, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Togo also addressed a "Pastoral Letter" to its members and all citizens that stated that the country must be governed "through effective pluralist democracy" and "through credible, transparent, and fair elections." In September the Methodist Church also published a letter highlighted the serious economic situation of the population and called for action by responsible political leaders.

In March, the Bishops of the Catholic Church of Togo released another public message criticizing the Government for unfair legislative elections, modification of the Constitution, modification of electoral code, and the creation of a nonindependent Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI).

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

UGANDA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government imposed some restrictions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion; however, local authorities banned some churches suspected of being "cults" and also some nighttime religious meetings for security reasons. During the reporting period, no members of religious groups under suspicion of being "cults" were arrested or detained for illegal assembly and public nuisance.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom; however, there were isolated cases of tension between Muslims and Evangelical Christians over the issue of slaughtering animals for public sale. Additionally, the backlash from the killing of more than 1,000 citizens in 2000 at the hands of a religious group continued to result in negative public attitudes toward some Christian groups that are viewed as "cults."

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights and sponsors efforts to promote dialog and harmony among religious groups.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 91,136 square miles, and its population is approximately 24.6 million. Christianity is the majority religion, and its adherents constitute approximately 66 percent of the population. Muslims account for approximately 16 percent of the population. A variety of other religions, including traditional indigenous religions, Hinduism, the Baha'i Faith, and Judaism, are practiced freely and, combined, make up about 18 percent of the population. Among the Christian groups, the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches claim approximately the same number of followers, accounting for perhaps 90 percent of the nation's professed Christians. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), the Orthodox Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Baptist Church, the Unification Church, and the Pentecostal Church, among others, are active. Muslims are mainly Sunni, although there also are Shi'a followers of the Aga Khan among the Asian community. Several branches of Hinduism also are represented among the Asian community. There are few atheists.

In many areas, particularly in rural settings, some religions tend to be syncretistic. Deeply held traditional indigenous beliefs commonly are blended into established religious rites or observed alongside such rites, particularly in areas that are predominantly Christian.

Missionary groups of several denominations are present and active in the country, including the Pentecostal Church, the Baptist Church, the Episcopal Church/Church of Uganda, the Church of Christ, and the Mormons.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, the Government imposed some restrictions.

All indigenous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including religious organizations, must register with the NGO Board, a division of the Interior Ministry, which regulates and oversees NGO services. Failure to register is a criminal offence. A harsher new NGO Registration Amendment Bill was introduced in 2001 and is currently being discussed by Parliament.

To register, each organization must submit the following documents to the NGO Board:

1) A registration form for the organization signed by two promoters providing the organization's name, its objectives, class of persons to whom membership is open, membership, titles of organization officers and their addresses, the organization's source of funding, property owned by the organization, and any privileges, immunities, or exemptions requested by the organization; 2) A recommendation letter endorsed by the three chairmen of the local government structures and the Resident District Commissioner; 3) Two letters of recommendation by guarantors/references of the organization; 4) A budget and work plan of activities to be carried out during the first year of operation; 5) Two copies of the organization's Constitution or By-laws; and 6) An organizational chart of the leadership and a letter specifying the district of operation.

The Government continued to refuse to grant registration to the World Last Message Warning Church, an apocalyptic group under suspicion following the 2000 killings of more than 1,000 citizens; however, in February 2002, criminal charges against the group's leader were dropped for lack of evidence. There were no reports that the Government refused to grant such registration to any other religious organization.

The Political Organizations Act, which was implemented in June 2002, imposes restrictions on the registration and organization of political parties and organizations; it precludes the formation of such entities if membership is based exclusively on sex, race, color, ethnic origin, tribal birth, creed, or religion.

Missionary groups face no restrictions on their activity. Foreign missionary groups, like foreign NGOs, must register with the Government. There were no reports that the Government refused to grant registration to any foreign missionary groups.

In November 2002, a working group of national intelligence agencies recommended that churches and other religious organizations be required to submit their working programs to district security chiefs for monitoring. This recommendation has not been implemented and still is being discussed by the Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee.

Permits also are necessary for the construction of facilities, including religious facilities. There were no reports that the Government refused to grant such permits to any religious organization.

Private Koranic and Christian schools are common. There is no religious instruction in public schools.

Prisoners are given the opportunity to pray on days appropriate to their faith. Muslim prisoners usually are released from work duties during the month of Ramadan.

Religious holidays celebrated as national holidays include, Eid al-Adha, Eid-al-Fitr, Good Friday, Easter Monday, and Christmas.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Some local governments have restricted the hours of operation of religious organizations that are viewed as "cults." On February 6, Kampala law enforcement personnel closed the Liberty Worship Center after nearby business owners complained of noise during lunch hours. The church remained closed as of the end of this reporting period. On December 8, 2002, Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) soldiers and members of the Local Defense Force in Hoima District raided the Revival Chris-

tian Center, in response to neighboring residents' complaints that noisy night prayers were disturbing the peace. Soldiers allegedly assaulted worshippers, but the church was allowed to remain open.

On May 27, police in Sembabule District closed Prophetess Nabaasa Gwajwa's "cult" in Ntuusi village and evicted her followers. Since the group had not registered with the Uganda Herbalists Associations, the Inspector General of Police ordered its closure. Though no one was arrested at the time of eviction, 204 Gwajwa followers were later taken into custody on charges of being disorderly when they camped in protest outside the district police headquarters. In early June, 128 of those arrested were set free. The other 76 persons detained were still in custody at the end of the period covered by this report.

On May 29, Kampala Mayor John Sebaana Kizito announced that poorly constructed churches and mosques, which pose a public safety hazard, as well as those religious buildings without approved building plans, would be demolished. As of the end of the period covered by this report, the Kampala City Council had not yet completed a survey of the condition of mosques and churches around the city.

On June 22, the police raided the offices of the Soroti Catholic Diocese Integrated Development Organization and stopped all broadcasts of the Catholic Church-owned Radio Kyoga Veritas FM. The station was closed for airing reports about fighting in the region between government forces and the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

In October 2002, local authorities in Jinja District banned a religious radio program due to its alleged inflammatory nature. Angry Muslims had complained that Besweri Kaswabuli, leader of the controversial religious group "Isa Masiya," was using the Sunday radio program to desecrate the Muslim faith.

There were no developments in two cases in which local authorities closed religious institutions for forbidding members from seeking medical treatment. The leader and members of the religious group "Jurwo Ni Mungu" (Believers in God), arrested in March 2002 for unlawful assembly, are still in prison awaiting trial. The United Methodist Church of Jinja, which was also shut down in 2000 following allegations that it forbade members from seeking medical treatment, remained closed during the period covered by this report.

There were reports that local officials dispersed meetings of religious groups during the period covered by this report. In December 2002, police in Hoima District banned overnight prayers on the grounds that they posed a threat to security. On December 24, 2002, security operatives in Luwero District barred followers of the self-styled prophet, Wilson Bushara, from holding a party in honor of the leader's release from prison.

Several religious groups, which had been shut down by police as suspected "cults" in previous years, remained closed during this reporting period. These include Pastor Stephen Wandera's Pentecostal Revival Church, which was shut down in 2001, as well as the Revival Pentecostal Church in Kasangati, the Hima Public School church group in Busongora, and the Church of the Servants of the Eucharistic Hearts of Jesus and Mary in Bushenyi, which were closed in 2000.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were no reports that authorities arrested members of religious groups during the period covered by this report; however, district officials harassed some members of the Catholic Church in Rukungiri and Kabale, labeling them "anti-government."

In February, the Archbishop of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Uganda, Dr. John Wani, petitioned the Government to forbid institutions of higher learning from holding exams on days of worship. Many Seventh-day Adventist students had reportedly missed exams held on Saturdays. There was no government response to this request during the period covered by this report, and exams continue to be held on Saturdays.

On March 21, 2002, Father Michael Declan O'Toole, an Irish Catholic priest, and two other persons were shot and killed at a military roadblock in Kotido District. On March 23, two soldiers were charged with the killings, and on March 26, they were tried by a court martial tribunal and executed; neither was afforded the right of appeal. The motivation for the killing of Father O'Toole, who frequently criticized the conduct of security forces in the area, was believed to be criminal, rather than religious.

There were no developments in the case of the 12 followers of the Katula Kebise religious group who had been arrested in March 2002 on charges of being disorderly.

On July 12, 2002, a Kampala Court acquitted 15 Tabliq Muslims, who had been facing treason charges dating from 1995; however, 7 of them were rearrested on the

same day by the Joint Anti-Terrorism Task Force on charges of treason. Some members of the group maintain that they are being held for religious reasons.

On July 24, 2002, a Kampala Court sentenced five members of the "Ndawula" religious group to a fine of \$111 (200,000 Ugandan Shillings) or 6 months in jail for "managing an unlawful society." They had been arrested along with many other group members in December 2001 in Wakiso District. Police released the other 88 followers after clearing them of criminal liability.

There were no reports that security forces harassed Muslims; however, there were allegations of insensitivity toward Muslim students in government schools. In November 2002, the Secretary to the Uganda National Examination Board reportedly advised Muslim seventh grade primary students not to fast while taking exams, despite the fact that exams fell during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Police are still searching for 5 key members of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God, including leader Joseph Kibwetere, in relation to the 2000 killing in Kanungu of over 500 members of the group. During the period covered by this report, the Commission of Inquiry remained unable to complete its work because of a lack of funding. There were no developments in the case of Rev. Francis Mutanzindwa, the former Assistant Resident District Commissioner (RDC) of Rukungiri, who had failed to act upon information about the activities of the group.

During the period covered by this report, there were no developments in the three 2000 court cases involving "cult" related charges against the leader of the Jesus Christ the King of Salvation Church, five members of the Kisaaba Redeemed Church, and five members of the Mulungimu Full Gospel Church.

The LRA was also responsible for abuses, including attacks on religious leaders and multiple incidents involving the destruction and theft of church property. The Government of Uganda is attempting to stop the LRA insurgency through a combination of military action against the LRA, the provision of amnesty for rebels wishing to surrender, and offers of peace talks.

On April 25, LRA rebels abducted Father Gabriel Durigon, an Italian parish priest, when they attacked Gulu Cathedral, the headquarters of the Catholic Church in Northern Uganda.

On May 11, LRA rebels abducted 44 young seminarians from the Sacred Heart Minor Seminary in Lacor, Gulu District. Four of the students were later rescued in a battle in Pader District. Seven others were reportedly killed.

On June 6, LRA rebels abducted Father Alex Ojera, a parish priest of Alito Catholic Mission in Apac District along with 16 children. Fr. Ojera was released shortly thereafter, but no information is available on the abducted children.

On June 12, LRA leader Joseph Kony reportedly ordered all his troops to destroy church missions and kill all priests in Northern Uganda. The Monitor newspaper quoted Kony on June 16 speaking on local radio as saying "Catholic missions must be destroyed, priests and all missionaries killed in cold blood and nuns beaten black and blue."

On September 14, 2002, LRA rebels overran a military detachment in Opit and then the Opit Catholic mission where they abducted two Comboni missionaries, Fathers Ponziano Velluto and Alex Pizzi. The two priests were released after 12 hours. The rebels stole communications equipment from the Mission.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. However, there were limited instances of tension between Muslims and Evangelical Christians in Pallisa, Masaka, Kamuli, Iganga, and Kabale. In one case, a group of Tabliq Muslims assaulted an Evangelical Christian in the Kampala suburb of Bwaise after he reportedly stepped on the Koran during a religious argument. In another series of incidents, police had to increase security after Tabliq Muslims threatened to attack Christian butchers in a dispute over the public slaughter of animals. Traditionally public butchers in Uganda are Muslims who slaughter animals according to Islamic tradition. Recently, Christian groups have demanded the right to butcher and sell meat. An on-going Christian-Muslim dialog helped resolve the dispute peacefully.

During the period covered by this report, several religious alliances including the Inter-Religious Council, Religious Efforts for Teso and Karamoja, and the Inter-Reli-

gious Program continued efforts to ease religious tensions and find lasting solutions to civil unrest and the insurgency in Northern Uganda.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Embassy discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The Ambassador and other U.S. Government and Embassy officials met with leaders of various religions during the period covered by this report. The Embassy has supported with small grants organizations that promote inter-religious harmony through dialog.

ZAMBIA

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 290,586 square miles, and its population is approximately 10.3 million. Approximately 85 percent of the population is Christian; 5 percent is Muslim; 5 percent adhere to other faiths, including Hinduism and the Baha'i Faith; and 5 percent is atheist.

Foreign missionary groups introduced the Christian faith in the 1890s. The majority of indigenous persons, spread throughout the country, either are Roman Catholic or Protestant. In recent years, there has been an upsurge of new Pentecostal churches, commonly known as the "born again" churches, which have attracted many young persons into their ranks.

Muslims are concentrated in certain parts of the country where citizens of Asian origin have settled along the railroad line from Lusaka to Livingstone, in Chipata, and in the eastern province. Most citizens of Asian origin are Muslim, although Hindus constitute a small percentage. A limited number of indigenous persons also are Muslim.

Foreign missionary groups operate in the country and include the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, and the Church of God.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. Statutes provide effective remedies for the violation of religious freedom. These provisions are enforced in a rigorous and non-discriminatory fashion.

Although a 1996 amendment to the Constitution declared the country a Christian nation, the Government generally respects the right of all faiths to worship freely.

The following religious holidays are considered national holidays: Good Friday, Easter, and Christmas. The observance of these holidays does not negatively impact any religious group.

There are governmental controls that require the registration of religious groups. The Government approves all applications for registration from religious groups without discrimination. There were no reports that the Government rejected any religious groups that attempted to register or obtain licenses. In order to be eligible for registration, groups must exist, have a unique name, possess a constitution consistent with the country's laws, and display compatibility with the peace, welfare and good order of the country. Unregistered religious groups are not allowed to operate in the country under penalty of law. Violators can face a fine and imprisonment of up to seven years in jail.

There were no reports that foreign missionary groups faced any special requirements or restrictions.

The Government permits religious instruction in public schools. Such instruction is conducted in the dominant Christian religion; however, it is not mandatory and students may be excused from it. Religious instruction in Islam and other faiths is conducted in private schools owned and controlled by those faiths.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Oasis Forum, composed of the Law Association of Zambia, the NGO Coordinating Committee, the Zambia Episcopal Conference, the Christian Council of Zambia, and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia, continued to be active during the period covered by this report. In the past, the Forum was criticized by individuals, including some members of the Government, for publicly opposing efforts to amend the Constitution to enable the President to seek a third term of office. In the current reporting period, there were reports that members of the Government criticized the Oasis Forum over the latter's stance on the constitutional review process and the mode of adoption of the Constitution. In spite of rebukes from government officials against church leaders for taking a stand on political issues, the churches continued to freely and vocally criticize the Government, organize activities, and mobilize public opinion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

On July 2, Zambian police in Lusaka raided an Islamic school and arrested an Indian man and a Congolese accomplice for unlawful confinement and child abuse. The 2 men arrested were holding 280 boys between the ages of 4 and 10 under harsh conditions. The children, who were recruited from poor areas of the country, were forced to study Arabic and Islam. Police reported that some of the boys had been held for 1 to 3 years. During the following week, police raided two similar Islamic schools in the Lusaka area. The investigations were still ongoing at the close of the period covered by the report.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

Leaders of various ecumenical movements, such as the Zambia Episcopal Conference, the Christian Council of Zambia, and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia, hold regular meetings to promote mutual understanding and interfaith dialog, and to discuss national issues.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

ZIMBABWE

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, a law that criminalizes both purporting to practice witchcraft and accusing persons of practicing witchcraft reportedly was viewed as restrictive by some practitioners of indigenous religions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion. The Government and the religious communities historically have had good relations; however, as in previous years, the Government was critical of and harassed religious leaders who spoke out against the Government's ongoing campaign of violent intimidation against opposition supporters. Church leaders and members who criticized the Government faced arrest and detention.

The generally amicable relations between the various religious communities contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

SECTION I. RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total area of 150,804 square miles, and its population is estimated at 11.6 million. Between 60 and 70 percent of the population belong to the mainstream Christian denominations, with between 17 and 27 percent of the population identifying themselves as Roman Catholic. There are no reliable statistics on the exact number of Christian churches or religious movements in the country. The evangelical denominations, mostly Pentecostal churches, and Apostolic groups are the fastest growing religious groups in the country. They appeal to large numbers of disillusioned members from the established churches who reportedly are attracted by promises of miracles and messages of hope at a time of political, social and economic instability. The country's small Muslim population is estimated at 1 percent. The remainder of the population consists of practitioners of Greek Orthodoxy, Judaism, and traditional indigenous religions and indigenous syncretistic religions that mix Christianity and traditional African culture and beliefs; there also are small numbers of Hindus, Buddhists, Baha'is, and atheists.

The dominance of Christianity dates to the early contact of Portuguese traders and Jesuit priests with Africans in the region in the late 1500s. The Jesuits established churches and educational institutions in the Zambezi Valley at that time. Several centuries later, Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Dutch Reformed, and Salvation Army missionaries began to compete aggressively for territorial and spiritual monopolies throughout the country, resulting in "areas of interest" for each of these churches. As a result, many persons identify with the Christian denomination that has had the longest historical connection to their area. President Robert Mugabe is a Roman Catholic who professes to practice his faith actively, and many of those who make up the elite of society tend to be associated with one of the established Christian churches, especially the Anglican and Methodist churches.

Due to the country's colonial and apartheid-like history, the vast majority of the country's black population was prevented from attending government schools, which were restricted to white students. Christian mission schools taught the few blacks who were able to obtain a formal education. Consequently the vast majority of the country's liberation war leadership, who later became the Government's senior officials, were instructed by Christian educators.

The Muslim community consists primarily of South Asian immigrants (Indian and Pakistani), migrants from other southern and eastern African countries (Mozambique and Malawi), and a very small number of North African and Middle Eastern immigrants. There are mosques located in nearly all of the larger towns, and there are a number of mosques in rural areas. There are 18 mosques in the capital Harare and 8 in Bulawayo. The Muslim community generally has been somewhat insular; however, in the past several years, the Islamic community has expanded its outreach efforts, and is having increasing success proselytizing among the majority black indigenous population.

A variety of indigenous churches and groups have emerged from the mainstream Christian churches over the years. Some, such as the Zimbabwe Assembly of God (ZAOG), continue to adhere strictly to Christian beliefs; in fact, they oppose the espousal of traditional religions. Other indigenous groups, such as the Seven Apostles, combine elements of established Christian beliefs with some beliefs based on traditional African culture and religion. These latter groups tend to be centered on a prophetic figure, with members of the congregation identifying themselves as "apostles." These church members wear long white robes and head coverings. Many of these churches date from the early 1920s, when there was widespread racial and religious segregation. Many of the founders of African indigenous churches broke away from Christian missionary churches, and some of their teachings incorporate what has become known as "black consciousness." To a large extent, these churches grew out of the Christian churches' failure to adapt to traditional African culture and religion. These indigenous churches have proliferated as a result of splits among the followers of the different "prophets."

Many persons continue to believe, in varying degrees, in traditional indigenous religions. These persons may worship in a westernized Christian church on Sundays but consult with traditional healers during the week. Belief in traditional healers spans both the rural and urban areas. Traditional healers are very common and are licensed and regulated by the Zimbabwe National African Traditional Healers' Association (ZINATHA).

Foreign missionaries operate in the country, including members of the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church.

SECTION II. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, a law that criminalizes both purporting to practice witchcraft and accusing persons of practicing witchcraft reportedly was viewed as restrictive by some practitioners of indigenous religions. There is no state religion. The Government generally recognizes all religions.

The Government does not require religious institutions to be registered. Religious organizations that operate schools or medical facilities are required to register those specific institutions with the appropriate ministry regulating those areas. Similarly, religious institutions may apply for tax-exempt status and duty-free privileges with the Customs Department, which generally grants such requests.

The Government permits religious education in private schools. There are Islamic and Hebrew primary and secondary schools in the major urban areas, primarily Harare and Bulawayo. The country has had a long history of Catholic, Anglican, and Methodist primary and secondary schools. Since independence there also has been a proliferation of evangelical basic education schools. The Christian schools constitute one-third of the schools in the country, with the Catholic Church having the majority. In addition there are several institutions of higher education that include religious studies as a core component of the curriculum.

Christian missions provided the first hospitals to care for black citizens. There are 126 hospitals and clinics in the country that fall under the Zimbabwe Association of Church Related Hospitals (ZACH), an association that consists largely of mainstream Christian churches. The individual churches are the predominant source of funding for maintaining these hospitals because of the Government's increasing inability to provide essential services. The Government does provide small subsidies to cover some hospital staff salaries, but these make up only a small percentage of the hospitals' operating budgets.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Witchcraft—widely understood to encompass attempts to harm others not only by magic but also by covert means of established efficacy such as poisons—traditionally has been a common explanation for diseases of which the causes were unknown. Although traditional indigenous religions generally include or accommodate belief in the efficacy of witchcraft, they generally approve of harmful witchcraft only for defensive or retaliatory purposes and purport to offer protection against it. In the past several years, interest in healing through traditional religion and through prayer reportedly has increased as HIV/AIDS has infected an estimated one-third of the adult population, and affordable science-based medicines effective in treating HIV/AIDS have remained unavailable.

The Witchcraft Suppression Act (WSA) criminalizes purporting to practice witchcraft, accusing persons of practicing witchcraft, hunting witches, and soliciting persons to name witches; penalties include imprisonment for up to 7 years. The law defines witchcraft as “the use of charms and any other means or devices adopted in the practice of sorcery,” and provides punishments for intending to cause disease or injury to any person or animal through the use of witchcraft. Since 1997 ZINATHA has proposed amendments to the law that would redefine witchcraft only as the practice of sorcery with the intent to cause harm, including illness, injury, or death; however, mainstream Christian churches reportedly have opposed such legislation. Human rights groups also generally supported the existing WSA; the Act has been used since independence primarily to protect persons, primarily women, who have been accused falsely of causing harm to persons or crops in rural areas where traditional religious practices are strong. In March 2002, the Traditional Medical Practitioners Council, formed from members of ZINATHA to oversee traditional healers, called for amendments to the WSA that would authenticate the existence of witches and wizards and remove penalties for accusing persons of practicing witchcraft.

There is some tension between the Government and some indigenous African churches because of the latter's preference for prayer over science-based medical practices that result in the reduction of avoidable childhood diseases and deaths in those communities. Some members of the indigenous churches and groups believe in healing through prayer only and refuse to have their children vaccinated. The Ministry of Health has had limited success in vaccinating children against communicable childhood diseases in these religious communities. Human rights activists also have criticized these indigenous churches for their sanctioning of marriages of underage girls.

President Mugabe has expressed skepticism about the increasing membership in evangelical and indigenous churches and has indicated that he believes that they could be subversive. According to press reports, he has refused to meet with bishops from indigenous churches since 1997.

The Government maintains a monopoly on television broadcasting through the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), despite a broadcasting law passed in 2001 that permits one independent television broadcaster but imposes stringent licensing requirements. The Government permits limited religious broadcasting on ZBC and advertising in the government-controlled press by the older, established Christian churches, as well as new evangelical churches and institutions, such as The 700 Club and World Vision. Programming produced by the U.S.-based Christian Broadcasting Network is shown on ZBC. The Government generally follows the recommendations of the Religious Advisory Board, an umbrella grouping of Christian denominations, on appropriate religious material to broadcast. Muslims, who are not represented on the board, have approached the advisory board about obtaining access to airtime. The chairman of the Religious Advisory Board believes that Muslims represent too small of a percentage of society to take up minimal religious airtime or to merit membership on the advisory board. Other evangelical church groups are more hostile to Islam and are unlikely to support the inclusion of Islamic programming in the already limited religious broadcasting block. However, during the period covered by this report, Muslims occasionally were allowed to conduct the daily opening prayer on ZBC.

In the last few years, due to inadequate resources, the Government has returned several former church schools that it had taken over at independence to their respective churches. The Government has returned nearly all of the secondary schools and a few of the primary schools that it seized from the churches after independence. Most former church schools remaining under Government control are used as primary schools in the rural areas.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The Government and government supporters targeted some clergymen because they strongly criticized the state-sanctioned, politically motivated crimes and violence during the period prior to the 2000 parliamentary elections and the March 2002 presidential election and urged the Government to restore peace in the country (see Section III). Church leaders and members who criticize the Government continue to face arrest, detention, and possible deportation.

On February 28, police harassed, arrested and detained 21 pastors as they attempted to deliver a petition against the misuse of police power to Police Commissioner Augustine Chihuri.

On February 14, police arrested and detained a blind Roman Catholic nun in Harare along with thirty-nine other women for participating in a Valentine's Day March for Peace sponsored by Women of Zimbabwe Arise! (WOZA). Police also beat and arrested a priest, Fr. Nigel Johnson, for filming a similar march on the same day in Bulawayo.

On February 13, police prevented a public meeting at the Northside Community Church in Harare, which was supposed to address churches' role in the country's political crisis. Police arrested the president of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), Bishop Trevor Manhanga, along with seven other people and detained them for several hours.

In late May 2002, local government minister Ignatius Chombo prompted war veterans in Binga district, Matabeleland North province, to close down the food distribution efforts of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), which was the only source of food for many rural residents in the Binga district. Chombo criticized the CCJP for establishing local structures parallel to the Government's structures. War veterans continued to block the food from leaving CCJP's warehouse at the end of the period covered by this report, preventing food deliveries to hospital patients and school children.

In February 2002, police arrested Father Kevin O'Doherty and eight others participating in a prayer procession to police headquarters in Bulawayo. They were charged with contravening the newly-passed Public Order and Security Act, but the charges later were dropped.

During the 2002 presidential election campaign, the state-controlled daily newspaper in Bulawayo printed false accusations against Archbishop Pius Ncube, including that he distributed sexually explicit material to prisoners, following his remarks criticizing the Government's violent campaign tactics. At a campaign rally in February 2002, President Mugabe claimed Ncube had "political tentacles" and supported the opposition after the Archbishop resisted government attempts to take over the Catholic-run St. Luke's hospital. During the period covered by this report,

Ncube reportedly received anonymous death threats, and intimidating visits by suspected officers from the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO).

In August 2001, Gabriel McGuire, an Irish Catholic priest in Harare, was declared a prohibited person and deported. No official reason was given; however, church members speculated that the Government took exception to his sermons in which he made generic statements about citizens' "right to have a voice." Paul Andrianatos, a Greek Orthodox priest with South African citizenship who was ordered to leave the country in March 2001, remained outside the country at the end of the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

SECTION III. SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

The generally amicable relations between the various religious communities contributed to religious freedom. The Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Baha'i, and Buddhist religious communities are relatively small and generally are not in competition with Christian denominations for converts. Catholic Church officials say that they welcome interfaith dialog with Muslims.

There are at least four umbrella religious organizations primarily focused on interdenominational dialog among Christians and other inter-religious activities. Muslims are not represented in any of these organizations, and there is no vehicle for formal Christian-Muslim dialog; however, informal dialog occurs from time to time. A few Muslims have complained of discrimination by private employers who refuse to allow them sufficient time to worship at their mosques on Fridays.

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) is an umbrella organization of all non-Catholic ecumenical Christian missionary churches except for evangelical organizations. It maintains a secretariat in Harare, conducts development programs, has a Justice and Peace desk, and collaborates with the much older CCJP. The Catholic Church and the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference have observer status within the ZCC, and relations generally are cooperative. Some members of the Christian community are hesitant to support Catholics joining the ZCC because of memories of the inability of religious leaders to work together during the liberation war era, and they fear a repeat of that experience. The ZCC also has worked with other church groups and civil society organizations on social issues. The ZCC traditionally was supportive of President Mugabe, but it has become more critical as a result of the Government's politicization of food distribution and campaign of violent intimidation against opposition supporters.

The Heads of Denominations (HOD) is a pragmatic association of Catholic and other Christian denominations that has no spiritual or theological emphasis. It was created to enable collaboration among Christian groups and the Government in the operation of religious schools and hospitals. The HOD provides a vehicle for Christian churches to speak to the Government with a common voice on policy issues and includes the Catholic Church, which operates a significant number of the rural hospitals and schools in the country. The HOD has a loose structure and no office. The HOD's secretarial support is provided by the general secretariat of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC), and its secretary general holds the same position in the ZCBC. The education secretaries of the various churches work together under the HOD, as does the religious advisory board to the ZBC. This broad grouping of churches under the HOD also collaborates on a wide range of social issues including HIV/AIDS education, and, in conjunction with the ZCC, the Christian churches have addressed the declining economic conditions affecting their members across the country. The HOD continues to deliberate over the role religious institutions should play in combating the HIV/AIDS crisis. Many churches already operate programs designed to help the victims of HIV/AIDS; for example, the Catholic Church and other religious and laypersons operate a center for persons infected with HIV/AIDS called "Mashambanzou" in Harare.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) is an umbrella organization of loosely affiliated evangelical churches that was established in the early 1980s. The fellowship has observer status with the HOD but in general does not work closely with either the ZCC or Catholic Church. However, the evangelical and Catholic churches do collaborate in the broadcasting of religious programs.

During the period covered by this report, the ZCC, ZCBC and EFZ issued public statements strongly critical of the Government for its campaign of violent intima-

tion against opposition supporters, campaign to politicize food distribution, corruption, and failure to guide Zimbabwe out of crisis, also calling for leadership and a spirit of tolerance and reconciliation. Privately the leaders of those organizations lamented that the Government prevented them from using existing regional church structures to import and distribute food aid in the midst of a famine.

Several key church leaders and organizations strongly criticized the state-sanctioned, politically motivated crimes and violence during the period before and after the March 2002 presidential election and urged the Government to restore peace in the country. Since the 2000 parliamentary elections, church groups throughout the country gradually have become more vocal in their criticism of the Government for the continuation of politically motivated violence.

In a July 30, 2001, address to regional Catholic bishops, President Mugabe stated that the Roman Catholic Church should support the Government's land acquisition program and criticized it for "equivocating in the face of racial injustice." In January 2002, Zimbabwe Council of Churches General-Secretary Denison Mafinyane severely criticized the Government for unleashing a "reign of terror" against innocent citizens. In a May 5, 2002, address to the 10th Synod session of the Anglican Diocese of Manicaland, Bishop Sebastian Bakare criticized politicians who say there is peace in the country when citizens continue to suffer from political violence at the hands of ruling party supporters.

In late 2000 and early 2001, Pius Ncube, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bulawayo, stayed in Germany for several months after receiving numerous death threats for writing public letters accusing the Government of fueling political violence and urging citizens to exercise their right to vote. The Vatican reportedly demanded that the Government take steps to ensure the Archbishop's safety. In 2000 Anglican priest Tim Neill of Harare received a death threat letter signed by Ngonidzashe Mutasa, the secretary general of the Revival of African Conscience, a previously unknown organization with no established following or platform. The police later apprehended Mutasa, who was tried and found guilty in September 2000; however, Mutasa was released in October 2000 under a general presidential amnesty for politically motivated crimes. Father Neill left the priesthood in July 2001 after the Government forced him to resign as Vicar General of Harare and bypassed canonical law to install Norbert Kunonga, a staunch Mugabe supporter, as Anglican Bishop of Harare. Other priests reportedly have left the diocese because of Kunonga's sermons supporting Mugabe's reelection and the sometimes violent expulsion of mostly white commercial farmers from their land.

In late February 2002, ZANU-PF supporters beat three Catholic priests, two Catholic nuns, and a Catholic brother in Zaka after they met with U.S. officials. The perpetrators said the fact that the religious figures had met with U.S. diplomats suggested they were opposition supporters. Although local ruling party officials later apologized to the victims, the perpetrators were not charged with any crime.

Several prominent evangelical, Roman Catholic and Protestant bishops, however, did collaborate in an attempt to bring the ruling and opposition parties back to the negotiating table to re-start dialog aimed at resolving the country's political crisis during the period covered by this report.

Another area of ecumenical collaboration has been translation of the Bible into the majority language, Shona. Several priests and ministers have worked on this project since 1987.

Fambidzano, which means "walking together," is a relatively new grouping of indigenous churches. A South African Dutch Reformed Church theologian and social anthropologist, Inus Daneel, who has researched these churches in South Africa and Zimbabwe, founded the organization in the mid-1970's. Fambidzano was created to give the leaders of these churches more theological and biblical education, according to Daneel. There is little dialog between Fambidzano and the Catholic Church; however, the two organizations are discussing the need to work with the indigenous churches, to which many persons are turning because of their emphasis on physical healing and spiritual salvation.

ZINATHA is an organization that represents traditional indigenous religions. The head of that organization is a university professor and vocal Anglican who is working to increase interreligious dialog between ZINATHA and mainstream Christian churches. In 2002 ZINATHA members formed the Traditional Medical Practitioners Council to certify and oversee traditional healers.

There were continuing reports of tensions between mainstream Christian churches and practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. A notable feature of some of the indigenous churches is the acceptance of polygamy among some of its members. Sexual abuse, the spread of HIV/AIDS, and the avoidance of modern medicines also are growing problems within these churches. In addition leaders of the Chris-

tian churches reportedly opposed the repeal or modification of the WSA sought by practitioners of traditional indigenous religions.

There were no reports of ritual murders associated with traditional religious practices during the period covered by this report, and the Government generally enforces the law against murder in the case of ritual murders. Gordon Chavanduka, chairman of ZINATHA, reportedly has stated that the black-market demand for human body parts used in making potions has increased greatly in recent years. During the period covered by this report, there were no reports that persons killed children for body parts for use in healing rituals associated with traditional religions. In 1999 Faber Chidarikire, a Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) official and mayor of the northern town of Chinhoyi, was charged with murdering a 13-year-old girl in 1987, but he was released on bail shortly thereafter following intervention by the Attorney General. Chidarikire was tried for the murder of the girl in June 2001, and on July 22, 2002 the High Court acquitted him.

SECTION IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

The U.S. Government further supports religious and other constitutionally protected freedoms through demarches to the Government; nondenominational financial support for community development projects, which often are associated with religious institutions; and regular dialog with and support for civil society organizations that advocate and monitor respect for human rights, including freedom of religion. The Embassy meets regularly with leaders of religious communities, including minority groups, and with nongovernmental organizations that work on issues of religious freedom.