

MALAWI

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There were no documented cases of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice; however, there were isolated reports from religious minorities regarding limited employment and educational opportunities.

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 45,747 square miles and a population of 15.4 million.

Eighty percent of the population is Christian. Among the Christian groups, the largest are the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, with smaller numbers of Anglicans, Baptists, Evangelicals, and Seventh-day Adventists. Muslims constitute approximately 13 percent of the population, and the vast majority of Muslims are Sunni. There are also Hindus and Bahais, as well as small numbers of Rastafarians and Jews.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

Please refer to Appendix C in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for the status of the government's acceptance of international legal standards <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/appendices/index.htm>.

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Religious groups must register with the government by submitting documentation to the Ministry of Justice detailing the structure and mission of their organization along with a nominal fee. Once approved, a religious group registers formally with the Registrar General's Office. During the reporting period, there were no reports that the government refused to register any religious groups.

Foreign missionaries are required to have employment permits. Missionaries and charitable workers pay lower fees for employment permits compared with other professionals.

Public schools offer religious education. Christian-oriented "Bible Knowledge" courses and "Moral and Religious Education" courses (that include Muslim, Hindu, Bahai, and Christian material) are available for schools. The Ministry of Education requires all schools to grant students or their parents the right to choose their religious instruction; however, individual parent-teacher associations or school committees decide which religion courses to offer. Although the courses are voluntary, some Muslims continued to request that the Ministry of Education discontinue use of the "Bible Knowledge" course and use only the broader-based "Moral and Religious Education" course in primary schools. Muslim courses are not available in public schools. The Muslim community operated its own schools where Islamic instruction is available to students.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday, Easter Monday, Eid al-Fitr, and Christmas.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

Rastafarian leaders continued to complain of an unofficial ban on long hair in some public schools. Although there is no law relating to hair length, some schools prohibit long hair under their dress code.

Some Zionist (African Independent) Church members complained that government policies forcing them to seek medical care for their children are an infringement of their right to practice their religion freely. This included the government's compulsory immunization in the latter part of the year for minors in some parts of the country following an outbreak of measles.

There were no reports of abuses, including religious prisoners or detainees, in the country.

Section III. Status of Societal Actions Affecting Enjoyment of Religious Freedom

There were no documented cases of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice; however, there were isolated reports from religious minorities regarding limited employment and educational opportunities. Christians, Muslims, and Hindus often participated in business or civil society organizations together.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.