

TOGO

Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom. The government did not demonstrate a trend toward either improvement or deterioration in respect for and protection of the right to religious freedom.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The country faces significant challenges regarding economic and democratic reforms. As a result, the majority of the U.S. embassy's programming reflects these key goals.

Section I. Religious Demography

In 2004, the Demographic Research Unit of the University of Lome estimated the population is 33 percent traditional animist, 28 percent Roman Catholic, 14 percent Sunni Muslim, 10 percent Protestant, and 10 percent other Christian denominations. The remaining 5 percent includes persons not affiliated with any religious group. Many converts to Christianity or Islam continue to perform rituals that originated with indigenous religious groups.

Most Muslims live in the central and northern regions. Catholics, Protestants, and other Christians live mainly in the southern part of the country.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom.

The government recognizes Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam as state religions. The government requires other religious groups to register as associations. Official recognition as an association affords these groups the same

rights as the state religions. Officially recognized religious groups receive import duty exemptions for humanitarian and development projects.

Organizations must submit applications for registration to the Directorate of Religious Affairs, located within the Ministry of Territorial Administration. A religious organization must submit its statutes, statement of doctrine, bylaws, names and addresses of executive board members, the group leader's religious credentials, a site use agreement, site map, and description of its financial situation. Criteria for recognition include the authenticity of the religious leader's diploma and, most importantly, the ethical behavior of the group, which must not cause a breach of public order. The Directorate of Religious Affairs issues a receipt that serves as temporary recognition to applicant religious groups and associations and allows them to practice their religion, pending investigation and issuance of formal written authorization, which usually takes several years. The government did not reject any applications during the reporting period.

Religious organizations must request permission to conduct large nighttime celebrations, particularly those involving loud ceremonies in residential areas or that block city streets. Officials routinely grant these requests. The Ministry of Territorial Administration handles complaints associated with religious organizations, particularly noise complaints related to celebrations at night. The ministry sends security force personnel to address complaints.

The High Authority for Audiovisual and Communication, the government commission that monitors the media, prohibits political discussions on religious radio and television stations.

The public school curriculum does not include religion classes; however, there are many Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic schools, and the government provides them with teachers and other staff and pays their salaries.

The constitution explicitly prohibits the establishment of political parties based on religion, ethnic group, or region.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Easter Monday, Ascension, Pentecost Monday, Assumption, Eid al-Fitr, All Saints' Day, Tabaski, and Christmas.

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom. Members of different religious groups regularly invited one another to their respective ceremonies. Intermarriage between persons of different religious groups was common.

The Christian Council addressed issues common to various Protestant denominations. Catholics and Protestants frequently collaborated through the Biblical Alliance.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

Because the country faces significant challenges regarding economic and democratic reforms, the majority of the U.S. embassy's programming addressed those issues. The major religions in the country were represented at all levels of society and, as a result, all U.S. government programs in the country involved participants from a wide variety of religious faiths. These programs included secondary and university students, members of the military and political parties, civil society representatives, scholars and media representatives.