

UGANDA

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, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom.

The U.S. government discussed religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights and maintained strong relationships with various religious leaders in the country.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to government figures, approximately 85 percent of the population is Christian, 12 percent Muslim, and the remaining 3 percent follow indigenous beliefs, Hinduism, the Baha'i Faith, or Judaism. Among Christians, 42 percent are Roman Catholic, 36 percent Anglican, and 7 percent evangelical; the remaining 15 percent are Pentecostal or Orthodox Christian. The Muslim population is primarily Sunni. Indigenous religious groups practice in rural areas. Indian nationals are the most significant non-African ethnic population and are primarily Shia Muslim or Hindu. There is a small indigenous Jewish community near the eastern town of Mbale.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom.

The law prohibits the creation of political parties based on religion.

The government allows religious groups to obtain legal entity status under the Trustees Incorporation Act. The Catholic Church, Orthodox Church, Anglican

Church, and the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council registered under this provision. Evangelical and Pentecostal churches opted to register with the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Nongovernmental Organizations (NGO) Board. The NGO Board requires re-registration 12 months after the first issuance, 36 months after the second issuance, and 60 months after for subsequent renewals. Most religious organizations are granted legal status. Registration with the NGO Board provides certification that allows churches to access donor funding. In order to monitor alleged "cult" activity, the government insists that local religious organizations seek registration with the NGO Board.

In public schools, religious instruction is optional, and the curriculum surveys world religious beliefs rather than one particular faith. Private schools offer religious instruction and are common in the country.

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

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom. The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice; however, it restricted religious groups it perceived as "cults."

For example, the government continued to monitor the activities of 20 registered NGOs that it perceived to be "cults," including the Serulanda Spiritual Foundation in Rakai District, the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God in Kanungu District, the Abengeri in Hoima District, the New Heaven Church in Gulu, the Rwengwara Healing Church of All Nations in Kabarole, and the Enjiri groups in Mbale and Luwero districts.

The government also refused to register the New Malta Jerusalem Church, citing national security concerns. On December 1, local media reported that Agogo district officials prevented the head of the church, Severino Lukoya, from conducting healing prayers in the district. Lukoya is the father of Alice Lakwena, the former leader of the now defunct Holy Spirit Movement, which led an armed rebellion against the government in the 1980s and was a precursor to the Lord's Resistance Army led by Joseph Kony.

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 and discourage discrimination.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discussed religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights and worked closely with local religious leaders to promote religious tolerance and freedom.