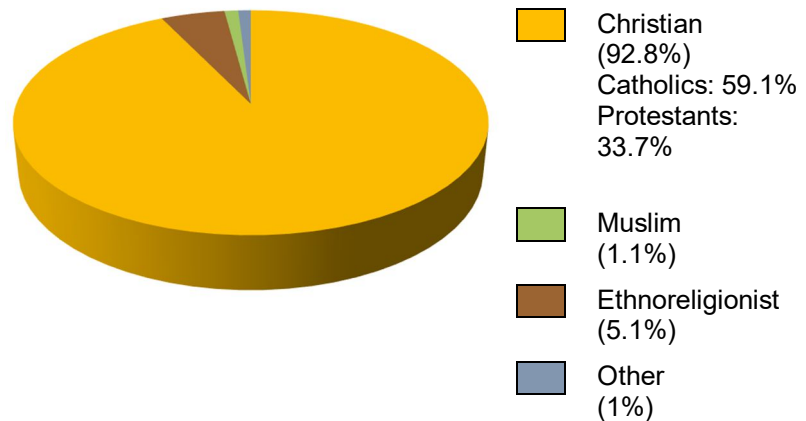


# ANGOLA



<b>Area:</b> 1,246,700 km <sup>2</sup>	<b>Population:</b> 24,300,000	<b>Political system:</b> Autocracy <sup>1</sup>	<b>Major Language(s):</b> Portuguese
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## Legal framework of freedom of religion and actual application

The constitution of 2010 and other laws and policies protect religious freedom in Angola, which is defined as a secular state. The constitution respects the principle of separation between religion and state and acknowledges that religious denominations shall be respected. Article 10 affirms that: “The state shall recognize and respect the different religious faiths, which shall be free to organize and exercise their activities provided that they abide by the constitution and laws”. The state also guarantees protection to “churches and faiths and their places of worship, provided that they shall not threaten the constitution and public order”. Article 41 also provides for freedom of conscience, religion, and worship, and provides the right to be a conscientious objector. Finally, it states that “no authority shall question anyone with regard to their convictions or religious practices, except to gather statistical data that cannot be individually identified”.

All religious groups must apply for legal status with the justice and culture ministries. One of the requirements is a minimum membership of 100,000 people and a presence in at least 12 of the 18 provinces of the country. This policy has resulted in a *de facto* denial of official recognition to some religious minority groups, including Muslims and some small evangelical churches.<sup>2</sup>

Only officially registered groups are entitled to found schools and buildings for worship.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday, All Souls Day, and Christmas.

The churches have full freedom to evangelize, give catechesis and run institutions like radios and written publications. During the last few years, some religious minority groups have complained that the Catholic Church enjoys special treatment by MPLA government officials.

## Incidents

Muslims, who number several tens of thousands, have often complained of government discrimination and negative propaganda. On 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2013, Angola hit the world headlines when its Minister of Culture, Rosa Cruz e Silva, announced that the government was banning Islam, adding that “since the process of legalization of Islam has not been approved by the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, their mosques would be closed until further notice”. An international outcry and protests by Muslim groups in several countries prompted the government to issue a

denial on 29<sup>th</sup> November that year. Nevertheless, during 2015 Muslims in Angola – who are mostly immigrants from West African countries and families from Lebanese descent – continued to complain about discrimination. At different times, security agents have reportedly rounded up Muslims as they were coming out of mosques after the Friday prayers and detained those who didn't have any proper residence permits.

During 2015 and 2016, there was the high-profile case of the sect 'Setimo Dia a Luz do Mundo'. In April 2015, the government banned this religious group. It was created in the year 2000 when it split from the Seventh Day Adventists, which among other things opposed child immunization. President Eduardo Dos Santos referred to the group as "a threat to peace and national security".<sup>3</sup> On 15<sup>th</sup> April 2015 the security forces launched a massive operation to arrest its leader, Julino Kalupeteka, a very popular Gospel singer. He surrounded himself with thousands of his followers at the mount Sumi, in Huambo province, and the attempt to seize him ended in a bloodbath, with 13 of his supporters killed, among them several women and children. Other sources put the figure of casualties much higher.<sup>4</sup> On 18<sup>th</sup> January 2016, the trial of Kalupeteka and 10 of his followers opened in Huambo. They were charged with the murder of nine policemen who tried to arrest him.

### **Prospects for freedom of religion**

Angola is scheduled to hold its next general election in 2017. The government has imposed stricter immigration policies as a means to demonstrate to the electorate that it is firmly in control and that it is working to address perceived security threats. This comes against a backdrop of concerns about Islamic extremism in many countries in the region, increasing political tensions in the country and a poor social environment caused by falling oil prices. Immigrants are rounded up each year and deported, many of them Muslims from West African countries. This often takes place in conditions which contravene international human rights standards and conventions. There is a tendency to link the practice of the Muslim religion with threats to national security and State media has branded Islam as "foreign to Angolan culture".

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<sup>1</sup> Jose Eduardo dos Santos, of the ruling MPLA, has been in power since 1979, many credit him for leading the country to recovery after the end of its 27-year civil war in 2002, and for economical growth, some, however, accuse him of authoritarianism. A new constitution (2010) substituted direct election of the president with a system under which the top candidate of the largest party in parliament becomes president. It also strengthened the presidency's powers, prompting the Unita opposition to accuse the government of "destroying democracy"; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13036732>; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy\\_Index](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_Index)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/#wrapper>

<sup>3</sup><http://observers.france24.com/fr/20150507-angola-huambo-massacre-police-secte-jose-kalupeteka-fideles-morts>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20150516-angola-etrange-affaire-repression-secte-kalupeteka>