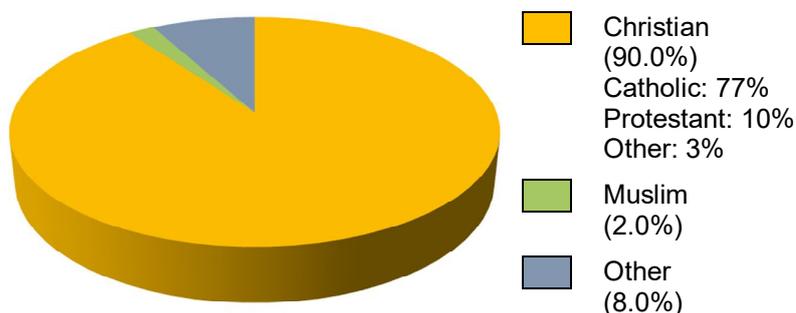
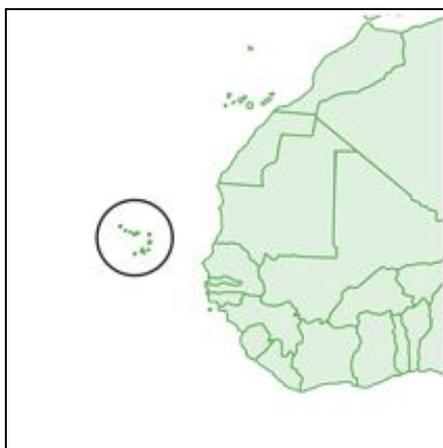


CAPE VERDE



Area: 4,033 km ²	Population¹: 545,993	Political system: Democracy	Major Language(s): Portuguese, Creole
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Legal Framework on Freedom of Religion and application

The Cape Verde islands, a former Portuguese territory, has one of the highest percentages of Catholics of any country in Africa.² Evangelical Protestant and Pentecostal groups in particular are gaining followers. Extensive emigration in the second half of the twentieth century means that the number of expatriates from Cape Verde is now almost double those still living on the islands.³

The constitution and laws of Cape Verde guarantee religious freedom and the right to religious self-expression.⁴ On 16th May 2014 a new religion law was passed, codifying the constitutional rights to religious freedom, including the right to worship and to organise religious education for children. It also enshrines the separation of Church and state. Under the law, every citizen is free to choose or change their religion. There is no state religion, but instead a strict separation in law between state and religion.⁵

With regard to the spread of a fundamentalist, jihadist interpretation of Islam in West Africa, it remains to be seen if the violent tendencies of Islamist networks in nearby countries will extend to Cape Verde.

All organisations, whether religious or secular, are required to register with the justice ministry and may not espouse violence, illegality, racism or dictatorship. There are no restrictions on those who fail to register, but advantages for those who do. In principle, no religion enjoys special rights. However, the Catholic Church, as by far the strongest faith community in the country, does play a special role.⁶ In 2013 a concordat was signed between Cape Verde and the Holy See which clarifies and recognises the legal status of the Catholic Church including the right to exercise freely her apostolic mission.⁷ It also recognises Catholic marriages in civil law, and the Catholic Church in turn recognises civil marriages contracted in conformity with her own canon law.

Incidents

There were no noteworthy changes with regard to religious freedom during the period of this report. The relationship between the various religions is essentially free of tensions. There was great rejoicing among many Catholics in early 2015 when Bishop Arlindo Gomes Furtado of Santiago de Cabo Verde was made a cardinal. He was appointed Bishop of Mindelo in 2004 before in 2009 being made Bishop of Santiago, the main island of Cabo Verde, which includes, Praia, the capital city.

Prospects for Freedom of Religion

Christianity is firmly anchored in the culture of Cape Verde. There is no reason to assume that this situation will fundamentally change. Nevertheless, the whole region of West Africa is undergoing profound changes and it is impossible to rule out the influx of Islamic Jihadism.

¹ CIA 2016: The World Factbook, estimate, July 2015

² http://de.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/01/04/kna_die_20_neuen_kardin%C3%A4le_im_kurzportrait/1116943

³ Munzinger Archiv 2016

⁴ U.S. State Department 2016: International Religious Freedom Report for 2014

⁵ U.S. State Department 2016: International Religious Freedom Report for 2014

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *ibid.*