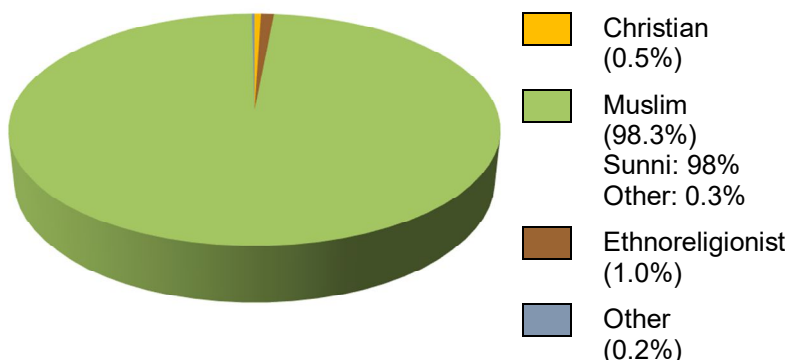
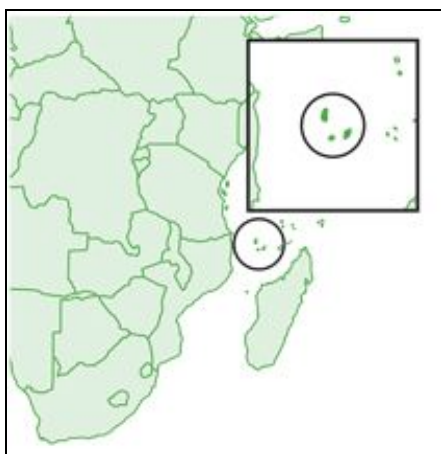


COMOROS



Area: 1,862 km ²	Population: 717,503	Political system: Autocracy ¹	Major Language(s): Comorian, Arabic, French
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Legal framework on Religious Freedom and its application.

According to the 2001 constitution, Islam – and more specifically the Sunni *Shafi'i* doctrine after the presidential decree of 2013¹ – is the state religion. That said, all citizens are theoretically recognised as being entitled to equal rights and obligations, regardless of personal beliefs. However, in reality, this right is enjoyed more by foreigners than nationals, since the latter face social and cultural problems if they convert from Islam to another religion.² The government prohibits proselytism and conversion from Islam citing the need to prevent social unrest and promote national cohesion and identity. However, it is not clear which penalties apply in each case, apart from deportation of any foreigners involved in evangelising activities.³ Social pressure and intimidation are often mentioned in the context of converts from Islam to other religions, especially those living in rural environments. That said, there is no actual persecution in the country.⁴

Important religious appointments, such as the one of the Grand Mufti, are made through presidential nomination. Hence there is no clear separation of religion and state. Non-Sunni Muslim groups do not enjoy the same kind of privileges and favourable legal considerations as other fellow Muslims.

Incidents

At the time of writing, there were no relevant incidents during the reporting period.

Prospects for freedom of religion

No changes are foreseen for the near future.

¹ After more than 20 coups or attempted coups, Comoros are trying to consolidate political stability: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13229685>

² Cf. http://www.alwatan.net/index.php?home=actu.php&actu_id=48

³ Cf. <http://religion-freedom-report.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/country-reports/comoros.pdf>

⁴ Cf. *2014 Report on International Religious Freedom*, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE GOVERNMENT BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR (14TH October 2015) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/562105ba19.html>

⁵ Cf. *2013 Report on International Religious Freedom*, U.S. GOVERNMENT BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR (28th July 2014) <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dliid=222035>