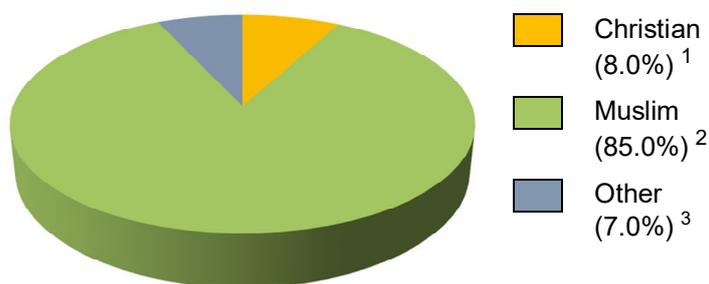
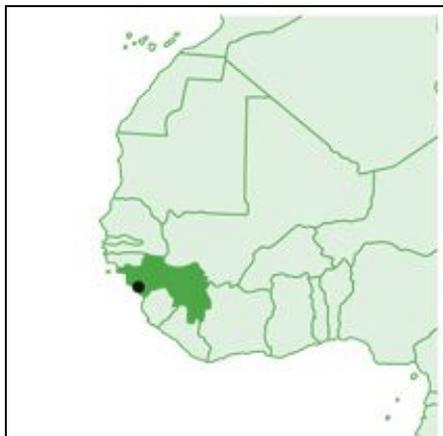


GUINEA-CONAKRY



Area: 245,857 km ²	Population⁴: 11,780,162	Political system: Democracy / Autocracy ⁵	Major Language(s): French, Malinke, Susu, Fulbe, Arabic ⁶
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Legal Framework on Freedom of Religion and actual application

Guinea Conakry, officially called the Republic of Guinea, in West Africa is a country dominated by Islam. Muslims make up the majority of the population in all regions of the country. About seven percent of the population follow traditional African beliefs, and a similar number are Christians. Christian communities are particularly found in the larger towns and also in the south and east of the country. There are also small Baha'i, Hindu and Buddhist minorities.

The laws of the country guarantee broad religious freedom, such as the right to choose one's religion freely and also to convert to another religion. Guinea is a country of wide ethnic and religious diversity, and in practice these rights are generally observed without any major restrictions – even though the attitude of the government towards the various religious groups shows strongly authoritarian tendencies. Thus Islam has traditionally shown a relatively moderate attitude towards other religions. There is also an Inter-religious Council, which works closely together with the government in religious matters.⁷ During the period in question, there were reports by non-Muslim clerics of preferential treatment being given to Muslims by state institutions. However no concrete examples were adduced.⁸

The religious communities are required to register with the relevant authority, the Secretariat for Religious Affairs (SRA), and every officially recognised group must provide a report on its activities every six months. Registration entitles the communities to certain tax exemptions and energy subsidies. There were no reports of any major difficulties in this regard during the period in question.⁹

Religious groups are not permitted to own radio or TV stations. However, they are allowed to broadcast religious programmes via commercial TV channels. The various religious communities are also allocated free broadcasting time on state TV through the SRA. This includes the transmission of Muslim Friday prayers, instruction in the Islamic faith and Christian Sunday worship on a rotating basis. The SRA has inspectors in all parts of the country whose task is to supervise religious worship and preaching. Their remit covers all religions. It also provides weekly topics for preaching, and monitors the religious communities for compliance.¹⁰

Incidents

The SRA also provides support for religious pilgrimages, although the Ebola epidemic in 2014/2015 meant that 10,000 Muslim pilgrims who would have been helped were unable to travel to Mecca, since they were refused entry by Saudi Arabia on account of the epidemic. For the first time ever, the government also subsidised Catholic pilgrims travelling to pilgrimage sites in Europe. 100 pilgrims were given subsidies for pilgrimages to France, Spain and Portugal and similar aid was promised more generally in the future – a gesture widely seen as a sign of the good relations between the various religions in Guinea.¹¹

In the field of education there is a strict separation of state and religion, and consequently there is no religious instruction in the official school syllabus. However there are many private schools run by religious groups throughout the country, both Muslim and Christian, and many of these also received support from the local authorities.¹²

Relations between the various religious communities are essentially good. However, it remains to be seen what impact the outcome of the presidential elections of 11th October 2015 will have in the medium and longer term on the overall social situation. In the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2010 and 2013, the opposition had accused the government of rigging the results, and in 2015 there were again accusations of fraud, this time against the governing party surrounding the sitting president and election winner, Alpha Condé. Opposition leader, Cellou Dalein Diallo and his party called for the results to be declared invalid.¹³ Archbishop Vincent Coulibaly of the diocese of Conakry described the 2015 elections as a “test of political maturity”.¹⁴ There are hopes that the presidency of 77-year-old Mr Condé will bring greater democracy, after decades of dictatorial rule. However, in some quarters President Condé has been accused of arbitrary use of power.

At the same time, Guinea is only slowly recovering from the devastating Ebola epidemic, which broke out in spring 2014 and crippled the country, claiming over 2,500 lives in Guinea alone by the time the country was declared Ebola free by the World Health Organisation on 29th December 2015. And there is still the possibility that further outbreaks could occur.¹⁵ The epidemic has also caused great harm to a number of religious communities, while families have been devastated and village communities torn apart. In many places, the basis of community life has been virtually destroyed. Another grave problem facing the country is the high levels of crime and corruption, and Guinea has become a major transshipment point of international drug trafficking in West Africa.¹⁶

Prospects for Freedom of Religion

Despite political controversy and other issues continuing to afflict the country, broadly speaking the prospects for religious freedom appear to be good. The extension of the SRA's support for pilgrimages to non-Muslim citizens seems to indicate increasing parity for religious groups.

¹ Christian groups include Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Baptists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, and other evangelical groups active in the country and recognized by the Government.

² Muslims are generally Sunni; there are relatively few Shi'a, although they are increasing in number.

³ U.S. Department of State; International Religious Freedom Report for 2014

⁴ CIA 2016: The World Factbook, estimate, July 2015.

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_Index

⁶ French (official language, used in schools and industry, spoken by up to 25% of the population). Other widely used vehicular languages are Malinke and Susu and also Fulbe (Poular). Among the Lebanese and among Muslims in the country Arabic is also important - Munzinger Archiv 2016

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ <http://www.dw.com/de/cond%C3%A9-bleibt-pr%C3%A4sident-in-guinea/a-18789036>

¹⁴ http://de.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/10/15/guinea_erneut_vorwurf_manipulierter_wahlen_/1179451

¹⁵ <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de>

¹⁶ <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?id=182200>