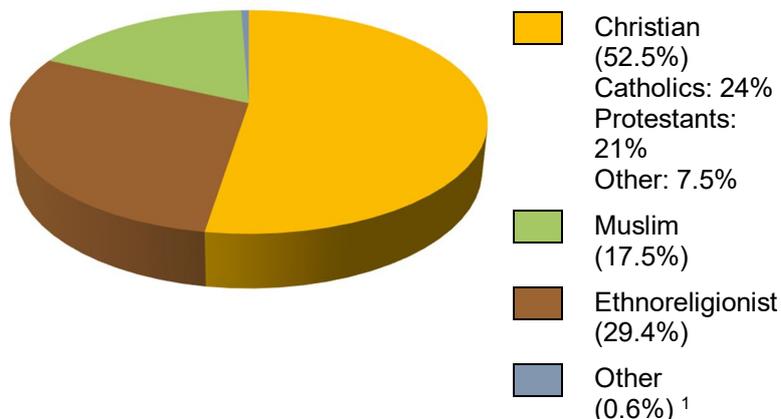
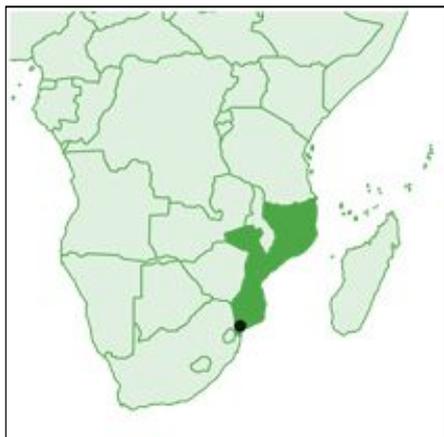


MOZAMBIQUE



Area: 799,380 km ²	Population²: 25.3 million	Political system: Democracy	Major Language(s): Portuguese, Swahili, English ³
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Legal Framework on Freedom of Religion and actual application

In Mozambique, Christians make up the majority in the south and in cities, while the Muslims, most of them Sunnis, are mainly found in the north and along the coast. There are also numerous followers of traditional African beliefs, above all in the rural regions. The religious life of Mozambique is not only exceptionally diverse, but also very dynamic and as a result the country has become a magnet for evangelical missionary groups including the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus.⁴ The IURD are from Brazil, where the main language is Portuguese, as it is in Mozambique. This is another reason why such Brazilian movements have chosen the country for missionary work. In the case of Mozambique's Muslims, young Islamic preachers study abroad in countries such as Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and South Africa. Many of them return, having adopted a strict interpretation of Islam.⁵ There is a concern that Mozambique may be affected by intolerant Islamist ideologies seen in other countries, such as Kenya for example.

The constitution and laws of Mozambique guarantee religious freedom.⁶ Article 54 states: "All citizens shall have the freedom to practise or not to practise a religion. Religious denominations shall have the right to pursue their religious aims freely and to own and acquire assets for realising their objectives." These principles have been broadly respected by the governments in power since the end of the civil war in 1990, albeit with some restrictions. Before 1990, in the Marxist Leninist state of Mozambique, the free practice of religion was at best tolerated.

The constructive role played by the Churches, and especially the Catholic Church, during the peace process between the current ruling party Frelimo and the former armed opposition group Renamo, has strengthened the position of religion in Mozambique. In July 2013, the then Emeritus Archbishop Jaime Gonçalves, a leading figure in the peace talks, lamented the fact that the former Renamo fighters had still not been integrated into the police, as had been envisaged in the peace accords of Rome. Furthermore, among the Mozambican people themselves, the former communist and now social democratic Frelimo party, which has ruled continuously since independence in

1975, is slowly losing support. Therefore, in the presidential elections of 2014, the Frelimo candidate Filipe Nyusi achieved a considerably worse result than in earlier elections.

Incidents

Despite this fact, the Frelimo party still claimed victory in the election, while Renamo accused them of fraud. Christian organisations complained that politicians were attempting to exploit religious occasions in order to promote themselves in the run-up to the 2014 elections.⁷

In 2015 the conflict intensified. On 19th January 2015, the new Frelimo government under President Nyusi took office at a time of great tension. The March 2015 murder of constitutional lawyer Gilles Cistac, a Frenchman by birth and close to Renamo, did nothing to ease the tensions. At the end of April 2015 the parliament rejected a proposal by Renamo to establish autonomous provinces. Renamo's intention was to establish independent regional governments in the six regions where they had gained a majority in the elections, against the will of the central government – and if necessary by force.

The Catholic bishops of Mozambique expressed their concern at the “continuous deterioration” of the political and military situation in the country and called on the government and the Renamo opposition party to put down their weapons.⁸ In their appeal, the bishops also called for the “resumption of dialogue between the conflicting parties” and the involvement of civilian society in the negotiations. The bishops also lamented “the inconsistency between what is said and what is done” and called for gestures of peace and reconciliation. The reality was that in October and November of 2015 there were numerous riots and police confiscated Renamo weapons in Morrumbala.⁹

For a long time, the Catholic Church has worked for peace and reconciliation in Mozambique, but at the same time has continued to speak openly about abuses. Church leaders have often criticised corruption, unjust monopolies of power and separatist tendencies. In a message issued on 6th March 2015, the bishops warned: “National unity is being threatened by selfishness and political divisions.”¹⁰ The statement continued: “The consolidation of national unity, which is a valuable asset for all, a wealth that we cannot give up, can never be regarded as the exclusive monopoly of some groups closed in on themselves and obsessed by the greed of political and economic power.” Increasing numbers of people were being excluded from the decision-making process, as a result of which “the current government appears to be less and less able to achieve the key objectives sanctioned in article 11 of the constitution”, the bishops stated. “In fact”, continues the document, “we are witnessing the blatant injustice of the poor crushed by a minority enriched dishonestly, who lives in luxury.”

During the bishops' ad limina visit to Rome on 9th May 2015, Pope Francis referred to the internal problems that have been constantly tearing Mozambique apart. The Church must present herself as “a unity”, he told them, and contribute to the resolution of conflicts. He also called on the bishops to strengthen pastoral work in schools and to work together with the government for the support of families.

Despite these problems, there were no reports of any serious infringements of religious freedom during the period in question.¹¹

Prospects for Freedom of Religion

Apart from the political tensions and the need to tackle poverty, there are other social challenges to be overcome. Mozambique is increasingly becoming a transit land for those fleeing conflicts in the Horn of Africa and heading for South Africa.

¹ http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_156_2.asp

² CIA, The World Factbook 2016, estimate, July 2015

³ Portuguese (official language, but mother tongue of a small minority, mostly in cities). Regionally, languages of the main ethnic groups are widespread. Swahili and English have also gained in importance; Munzinger Archiv 2016

⁴ Munzinger Archiv 2016

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Art. 54, Constitution of Mozambique (2004), https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Mozambique_2007.pdf?lang=en

⁷ U.S. State Department, International Religious Freedom Report for 2014

⁸ http://www.fides.org/de/news/37156-AFRIKA_MOSAMBIK_Bischoefe_aeussern_sich_besorgt_und_fordern_Dialog_zwischen_Kontliktparteien#.VoGeQV5zAo0

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ http://www.fides.org/de/news/35738-AFRIKA_MOSAMBIK_Bischoefe_Korruption_gefaehrdet_die_Einheit_des_Landes#.VoGjMI5zAo0

¹¹ U.S. State Department, International Religious Freedom Report for 2014