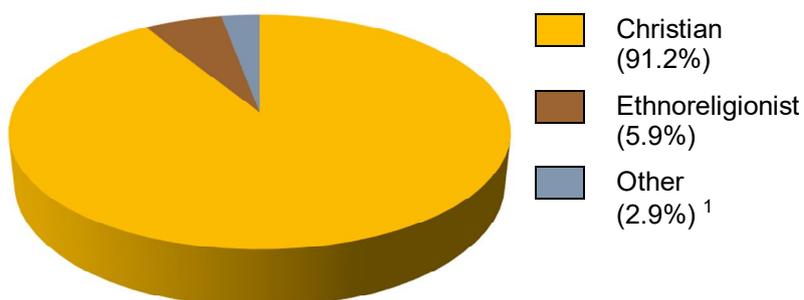


# NAMIBIA



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<b>Area:</b> 824,292 km <sup>2</sup>	<b>Population<sup>2</sup>:</b> 2.4 million	<b>Political system:</b> Democracy	<b>Major Language(s):</b> English (official) <sup>3</sup>
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## Legal Framework on Freedom of Religion and actual application

The legacy of Namibia's colonial past, which ended as late as 1990, is the dominant presence of Christianity, especially Protestantism. There are also small numbers of Muslims, Baha'is, Jews and Buddhists.<sup>4</sup> The number of Pentecostalist communities is growing rapidly, above all in the north-east of the country along the Zambezi River. Many religious believers combine Christian beliefs with traditional African rituals and customs.

Namibia's constitution guarantees religious freedom and protects its citizens from religious discrimination under article 10.<sup>5</sup> Article 21 recognises the "freedom to practise any religion and to manifest such practice", while article 19, relating to culture, states: "Every person shall be entitled to enjoy, practise, profess, maintain and promote any culture, language, tradition or religion subject to the terms of this constitution..." Namibia is a secular state and does not give preferential treatment to any one or more faith community.<sup>6</sup>

The spirit of the constitution is also reflected in government practice. The state does not place restrictions on the formation of religious communities, which can gain recognition through registration, though this is not compulsory. Church communities wishing to secure exemptions from income taxes and other duties must register as welfare organisations with the Ministry of Health and Social Services. Religious organisations involved in income-generating projects must register as charitable associations with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Although there is a continuous succession of new religious groups being established, the relationship between the religious communities in Namibia is good and marked by mutual respect. The Catholic Church in Namibia is widely respected as one of the major faith communities in the country and as an important force and moral authority in civil society.

## Incidents

During the ad limina visit to the Vatican by the Catholic bishops of Namibia and Lesotho on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2015, the chairman of the Namibian Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Nashenda Liborius Ndumbukuti of Windhoek stated: "We have good relations with state authorities, pursuant to an agreement of understanding, to the point that we have designated a person to liaise between the Episcopal Conference and the government. We cooperate but we remain an independent voice from the authorities. The government still appreciates our efforts and provides subsidies to our schools and hospitals."<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis recognised the many challenges faced by the Church and society in their countries but urged them nonetheless to support and teach the people in their faith. At a time of an apparent decrease in vocations to the priesthood and religious life, it was important for priests to speak openly about the fulfilling and joyful experience of offering one's life to Christ, he said.<sup>8</sup>

There were no reports of any infringements of religious freedom, either within Namibian society or on the part of the government, during the period of this report.<sup>9</sup>

## Prospects for Freedom of Religion

The concept of a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious nation has found a particularly positive expression in Namibia. While in Rome, Archbishop Nashenda Liborius Ndumbukuti also commented: "We are no longer in the emergency of the times of the war of independence, and now we can carry out an ordinary pastoral program focused on the teaching of the Gospel. Next to this, we place the emphasis on social programs to alleviate poverty. We have invested in particular in schools, and this is our biggest contribution to the development of the country."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country\\_157\\_1.asp](http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_157_1.asp)

<sup>2</sup> BBC

<sup>3</sup> 13 different nationally recognised languages are spoken: Afrikaans, German, Ju'hoansi, Khoekhoegowab, Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga, Otjiherero, Rukwangali, Rumanyo, Setswana, Silozi, Thimbukushu, CIA, The World Factbook 2016

<sup>4</sup> U.S. State Department, International Religious Freedom Report for 2014

<sup>5</sup> The Constitution of The Republic of Namibia (2010 Version), [http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file\\_id=222893](http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=222893)

<sup>6</sup> U.S. State Department, International Religious Freedom Report for 2014

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.fides.org/de/news/35986-AFRIKA\\_NAMIBIA\\_Vorsitzender\\_der\\_Bischofskonferenz\\_Die\\_Kluft\\_zwischen\\_Armen\\_und\\_Reichen\\_wird\\_groesser#.VoFO8V5zAo0](http://www.fides.org/de/news/35986-AFRIKA_NAMIBIA_Vorsitzender_der_Bischofskonferenz_Die_Kluft_zwischen_Armen_und_Reichen_wird_groesser#.VoFO8V5zAo0)

<sup>8</sup> [http://de.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/04/24/papst\\_franziskus\\_an\\_die\\_bisch%C3%B6fe\\_von\\_lesotho\\_namibia/1139316](http://de.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/04/24/papst_franziskus_an_die_bisch%C3%B6fe_von_lesotho_namibia/1139316)

<sup>9</sup> U.S. State Department, International Religious Freedom Report for 2014

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.fides.org/de/news/35986-AFRIKA\\_NAMIBIA\\_Vorsitzender\\_der\\_Bischofskonferenz\\_Die\\_Kluft\\_zwischen\\_Armen\\_und\\_Reichen\\_wird\\_groesser#.VoFO8V5zAo0](http://www.fides.org/de/news/35986-AFRIKA_NAMIBIA_Vorsitzender_der_Bischofskonferenz_Die_Kluft_zwischen_Armen_und_Reichen_wird_groesser#.VoFO8V5zAo0)