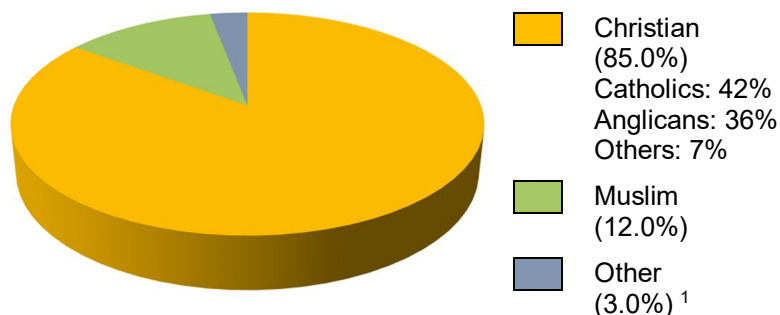


UGANDA



Area:
241,038 km²

Population²:
35.6 million

Political system:
Democracy

Major Language(s):
English, Luganda,
Acholi, Swahili

Legal framework on Freedom of Religion and actual application

Article 29(c) of Uganda's constitution is dedicated to the freedom of worship. In the past, the country's governments have had a generally tolerant attitude towards religious groups. The official calendar observes the main religious holidays of Christians and Muslims (Good Friday, Easter Monday, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha and Christmas).

Islamic Khadi Courts operate informally, although they are recognised as subordinate courts in the Ugandan constitution (Article 129). Khadi Courts deal with matters of marriage, divorce, property inheritance and guardianship. In 2010, several Muslim scholars drafted a bill which proposed giving these courts more powers, but it has not yet been passed despite continuous requests from the Muslim community.³

In the recent past, new religious groups were formed with minimal government involvement. The official recognition by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of places of worship legally entitled to issue marriage certificates prompted the government to create a register of recognised denominations and religious groups. The Religious Affairs Department of the Directorate for Ethics and Integrity (under the Office of the President) has indicated its willingness to introduce a new policy framework to regulate faith-based organisations in the country. This would entail the government vetting the registration of religious groups.⁴ Some religious groups, in particular the Catholic and Anglican Churches, have already expressed concern about the added bureaucracy and invasive nature of this process.⁵

Incidents

Incidents relevant to religious freedom, or violations thereof, include:

Murder on 27th June 2014 : An 18-year-old girl was murdered by machete-wielding Muslim radicals during an attack on a prayer meeting at Chali Born Victory Church in Kyegegwa District.⁶

Murder and attack on 11th December 2014 : An Imam in the Kaliro area beat his 15-year-old daughter to death for converting to Christianity. Her 12-year-old sister barely survived the same beating.

Murder on 8th March 2015: A 16-year-old girl in Iganga town was suspected of having been poisoned to death by relatives after she was beaten for converting to Christianity.⁷

Murder on 17th June 2015: Namumbeiza Swabura, a mother of 11 children, was poisoned by her Muslim In-laws in Nabuli village, Kibuku District. She and her husband, former Sheikh Mugoya Muhammad, converted to Christianity in August 2014.⁸

Murder on 30th June 2015: Sheikh Ibrahim Hassan Kirya was shot down on his way home in Bwoyegerere, one of the Kampala suburbs.⁹ He is the twelfth Muslim cleric killed in Uganda in a period of two years.

Murder attempt on 2nd July 2015: The house of famous Christian convert Hassan Muwanguzi, an evangelist in Budaka District whose conversion and ministry to Muslims have had a significant impact in the region, was attacked and robbed. Last March, Muwanguzi survived a poisoning attempt. He previously lost his 12-year-old daughter who was poisoned by Muslim radicals because of his evangelising activities.¹⁰

Murder on 23rd September 2015: Samson Nfunyeku, a Christian evangelist, was killed by unknown attackers and his mutilated body found close to his home in Kalampete village, Kibuku district. His death seems to be the result of his participation in different Muslim-Christian debates with Islamic scholars at various locations throughout the region.¹¹ Mamwikomba Mwanika, the late evangelist's sister-in-law and mother of eight whose husband converted from Islam to Christianity, was killed on 19th October by an angry mob in Kalampete village, Kibuku District.¹²

Murder on 8th December 2015: Ismail Kuloba, a policeman who had recently converted to Christianity, was killed by several men in Kadama sub-county, Kibuku District. He was accused of converting other Muslims to Christianity. The killers were suspected to be Muslims extremists from the area.¹³

Murder on 18th December 2015: Five underground Christians belonging to a Bible Study Group in the predominantly Muslim Kachomo village, Budaka District, died after their food was poisoned with pesticide. The names of the dead are: Katooko Aisha Sajjabi, 22; Mwanje Husain Sajjabi, 24; Eric Ali Sajjabi, 29; Musa Namusongi Sajjabi, 26; and Mariam Kurumu, who was pregnant when she was murdered.¹⁴

Murder on 23th December 2015: Pastor Bongo Martin of the Pentecostal Church Ministry in Nansololo village, eastern Uganda, was hacked to death, reportedly because of a land encroachment conflict with some Muslim leaders. The pastor's corpse was thrown into a nearby river.¹⁵

Murder on 28th January 2016: Christian convert Lawrence Maiso was murdered in his house in Numuseru village, Budaka District, after being threatened by Imam Kamulani Hussein. The imam reportedly threatened him in front of witnesses some days before he was murdered. Kamulani Hussein was subsequently arrested.¹⁶

Violence on 12th April 2016: Muslims in Nalugongo Village, eastern Uganda destroyed the Nalugongo Church of Uganda, completely demolishing the building. Some days before the pigs belonging to Samuel Kijali, a lay leader, were slaughtered during a night attack.¹⁷

Violence on 19th April 2016: One woman in Pallisa District, whose name was not released, was seriously beaten and raped by Muslims after she had testified that mosque leader Sheikh Musana Ibrahim had killed her father because on 28th January he had converted to Christianity. He was assisted by two other men.¹⁸

Prospects for freedom of religion

Although collaboration between government and religious groups is generally good and the atmosphere tolerant, the executive has made a deliberate attempt to draw religious groups closer to the centre of power.¹⁹ These attempts are an integral part of the "patronage style" fostered by the president; he has tried to win over prominent members, groups, or institutions of civil society to his party or his personal cause by gifting them money, cars, cattle, or other items.²⁰ Religious groups are tolerated and given freedom to carry out their activities provided they do not challenge

the *status quo* laid down by the president and his party. The new NGO Act vaguely indicates that such groups could be declared illegal if, for instance, they “offend the dignity of the Ugandan people”; this is an open door for arbitrary decisions about groups working with marginalised individuals, persecuted citizens, or minorities of any kind. If the new policy adopts the same stance of controlling religious groups for the wrong reasons, it could indicate a change in the trend towards greater religious freedom shown by the Ugandan government in recent years.

Although Uganda is, on the whole, a peaceful country, the number of violent incidents related to religious freedom over the past two years is worrying. There is a higher recurrence of such events in the eastern part of the country where Islam is more prevalent. Some of these serious incidents – mostly violence between Muslims and Christians – do not seem to be recorded in local (secular) printed or digital media, but mainly on websites focusing on religious persecution, civil liberties and human rights issues which provide detailed testimonies from the ground. The lack of consistent, objective news coverage makes it difficult to quantify or even verify many of the alleged cases.

Internal division within the Ugandan Muslim community mentioned in the last report²¹ continues despite the appointment of a new Mufti for the Kibuli faction.²² The case of the murder of several Muslim clerics remains unsolved,²³ but it may have involved rivalries within the *Tabliq* community compounded by the intervention of Islamic extremists allegedly in contact with the ADF²⁴ armed group in DR Congo, near the Ugandan border. This volatile combination is the official explanation for such killings.²⁵

The presence of Ugandan forces of African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) means that the country regularly receives security alerts on possible terrorist attacks against public places, such as shopping malls and churches. Extremist groups are still under close surveillance. Uganda’s counter-terrorism measures against Al-Shabaab, the killing of prominent Muslim leaders and the subsequent hunt for the perpetrators have polarised the followers of Islam and prompted some Muslim authorities to caution police and security agencies against indiscriminate arrests, overzealous security measures and irregular detention procedures for Muslim suspects.²⁶ Some Muslims leaders feel that there is an anti-Islam bias in the country mainly because of police repression and unbalanced media reporting.²⁷ However, charitable undertakings such as Ugandan Christians in the USA fundraising to build a mosque show that this atmosphere of distrust can be overturned by positive actions.²⁸

¹ Religious demography from The Arda http://thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_230_2.asp

² Source BBC Country Profile Cf. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14107906>

³ Functioning Khadi courts are however recognised as social agents within the community even though a regulatory Act hasn’t yet been passed. Cf *Khadi Courts in Busoga region to be empowered to resolve Gender Based Violence matters* INTER RELIGIOUS COUNCIL UGANDA <https://ircu.or.ug/news/khadi-courts-in-busoga-region-to-be-empowered-to-resolve-gender-based-violence-matters/>

⁴ *Government to introduce policy for faith-based organisations*, UGANDA RADIO NETWORK (2nd February 2016) <http://ugandaradionetwork.com/story/government-to-introduce-policy-for-faith-based-organisations> The person behind this policy is the Canon Aaron Busingye (Church of Uganda/Anglican), Director for Religious Affairs. As justification for the introduction of such policy the government mentions the massive murder of cult followers in Kanungu in March 2000 where more than 700 people died in a mass murder by the cult leadership. Such illegal and criminal events would not happen if there is a clear regulation. An introduction of the Department can be obtained at <http://www.dei.go.ug/religious.html>

⁵ *Catholic, Anglicans Query Govt Regulation*, ALL AFRICA (3rd April 2016) <http://allafrica.com/stories/201604040077.html>

⁶ *2014 Attacks Report*, THE RELIGION OF PEACE <http://www.thereligionofpeace.com/attacks/attacks.aspx?Yr=2014>

⁷ *2015 Attacks Report*, THE RELIGION OF PEACE <http://www.thereligionofpeace.com/attacks/attacks.aspx?Yr=2015>

⁸ *Christian mother of 11 in Uganda poisoned by Muslim in-laws, area sources say*, MORNING STAR NEWS (23th June 2015) <http://morningstarnews.org/2015/06/christian-mother-of-11-in-uganda-poisoned-by-muslim-in-laws-area-sources-say/>

⁹ *Twelfth Muslim cleric killed in Uganda*, TRTWORLD (1st July 2015) <http://www.trtworld.com/nea/twelfth-muslim-cleric-killed-uganda-3959>
12th Muslim cleric killed in Uganda, WORLD BULLETIN (1st July 2015) <http://www.worldbulletin.net/uganda/161543/12th-muslim-cleric-killed-in-uganda>

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- Muslims and leaders demand proof as link to ADF claims another cleric's life*, THE EAST AFRICAN (4th July 2015) <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/Muslims-leaders-demand-proof-link-to-ADF-claims-another-cleric-/2558/2774984/-/b7wyh2z/-/index.html>
- ¹⁰ *Islamic extremists in Uganda try to kill former Sheikh who survived poisoning*, MORNING STAR NEWS (9th July 2015) <http://morningstarnews.org/2015/07/islamic-extremists-in-uganda-try-to-kill-former-muslim-sheikh-who-survived-poisoning/>
- ¹¹ *Evangelist in Eastern Uganda killed after Muslim-Christian debate*, MORNING STAR NEWS (15th October 2015) <http://morningstarnews.org/2015/10/evangelist-in-eastern-uganda-killed-after-muslim-christian-debate/>
- ¹² *Bloodshed in Eastern Uganda continues as Christian mother of eight is slain*, MORNING STAR NEWS (23rd October 2015) <http://morningstarnews.org/2015/10/bloodshed-in-eastern-uganda-continues-as-christian-mother-of-eight-is-slain/>
- ¹³ *Muslim Extremists in Eastern Uganda Kill Christian Policeman, Kidnap Three Children*, in MORNING STAR NEWS (14th December 2015) <http://morningstarnews.org/2015/12/muslim-extremists-in-eastern-uganda-kill-christian-policeman-kidnap-three-children/>
- ¹⁴ *Pastor hacked to death, Bible study members poisoned in Eastern Uganda*, MORNING STAR NEWS (25th December 2015) <http://morningstarnews.org/2015/12/pastor-hacked-to-death-bible-study-members-poisoned-in-eastern-uganda/>
- ¹⁵ *2015 Attacks Report, THE RELIGION OF PEACE* <http://www.thereligionofpeace.com/attacks/attacks.aspx?Yr=2015>
Pastor hacked to death, Bible study members poisoned in Eastern Uganda, MORNING STAR NEWS (25th December 2015) <http://morningstarnews.org/2015/12/pastor-hacked-to-death-bible-study-members-poisoned-in-eastern-uganda/>
- ¹⁶ *Imam arrested in killing of Christian convert in Eastern Uganda*, MORNING STAR NEWS <http://morningstarnews.org/2016/02/imam-arrested-in-killing-of-christian-convert-in-eastern-uganda/>
2016 Attacks Report, THE RELIGION OF PEACE <http://www.thereligionofpeace.com/attacks/attacks.aspx?Yr=2016>
- ¹⁷ *Muslims in Uganda Kill Christians' Livestock, Demolish Church Building*, MORNING STAR NEWS (21st April 2016) <http://morningstarnews.org/2016/04/muslims-in-uganda-kill-christians-livestock-demolish-church-building/>
- ¹⁸ *Woman in Uganda Says Muslims Beat, Raped Her for Accusing Imam of Killing Her Father*, MORNING STAR NEWS (30th April 2016) <http://morningstarnews.org/2016/04/woman-in-uganda-says-muslims-beat-raped-her-for-accusing-imam-of-killing-her-father/>
2016 Attacks Report, THE RELIGION OF PEACE <http://www.thereligionofpeace.com/attacks/attacks.aspx?Yr=2016>
- ¹⁹ *Uganda: Museveni Promises Funding to Churches*, THE MONITOR (2nd January 2016), <http://allafrica.com/stories/201601041861.html>
- ²⁰ For instance, each newly ordained bishop from the most important churches receives a new car donated by the President and handed over after the liturgical celebration.
- ²¹ These divisions go back to a case in 2006 where a group accused the Muslim leadership of real state fraud and thus the so-called Kibuli faction emerged and chose its own leadership. Kibuli Muslims are accused of being very close to Saudi Wahabism.
- ²² *Sheikh Ndirangwa Named New Supreme Mufti*, THE MONITOR (16th December 2015) <http://allafrica.com/stories/201512171049.html>
Nadduli tasks Supreme Mufti to Unite Rival Muslim factions, UGANDA RADIO NETWORK (29th April 2016) <http://ugandaradionetwork.com/story/nadduli-tasks-supreme-mufti-on-unifying-muslims>
- ²³ Though the rationale behind the killings is still unclear, a certain common pattern however is recurring in most of the cases: most of the murders were carried out by small groups of people riding boda-boda (local taxi motorcycles) Some other Muslim clerics have been arrested in the meantime together with some prominent Ugandans living abroad being accused but it is not clear whether they are the real culprits or they were just taken as scapegoats due to the lack of plausible investigation results from the side of the police. *Pre-Hearing set in Muslim Clerics Murder Case*, UGANDA RADIO NETWORK (12th April 2016) <http://ugandaradionetwork.com/story/pre-hearing-set-in-muslim-clerics-murder-case> Another hindering factor is the fact that the whole country, and also its security agencies, are affected by corruption issues that prevent them from delivering services in an honourable and independent manner.
- ²⁴ ADF – Allied Democratic Forces, an Ugandan rebel group based in eastern Congo. Cf. *Battle for control of the DRC: Who are the Allied Democratic Forces? (ADF, NALU)*, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS TIMES (29th October 2015) <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/battle-control-drc-who-are-allied-democratic-forces-adf-nalu-1526272>
- ²⁵ *Police link killing of Muslim leaders to ADF rebel group*, DAILY MONITOR (31st December 2014) <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Police-link-killing-of-Muslim-leaders-to-ADF-rebel-group/-/688334/2573582/-/10uygs8/-/index.html>
An analysis about issues regarding the suspicion of governmental involvement in the killings can be found in *Who is killing Uganda's Muslim Clerics?*, LONDON EVENING POST (5th July 2015) <http://www.thelondoneveningpost.com/comments/who-is-killing-ugandas-muslim-clerics/>
- ²⁶ *Mufti Mubaje Condemns Random Arrest of Muslim Clerics*, UGANDA RADIO NETWORK (25th April 2015) <http://ugandaradionetwork.com/story/mufti-mubaje-condemns-random-arrest-of-muslim-clerics>
Muslim leaders caution govt on arrests, THE OBSERVER (23rd January 2015) <http://www.observer.ug/news-headlines/36057--muslim-leaders-caution-govt-on-arrests>
- ²⁷ *Ugandan Muslims criticize government's discriminatory acts*, PRESSTV (1st April 2015), <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/04/01/404221/Uganda-Muslims-rap-govt-discrimination>
Statement by the President of the Muslim Centre for Justice and Law (30th March 2015) available at <http://mlamwassawaukae.blogspot.com.es/2015/03/stop-demonising-muslims-stop.html?m=1>

²⁸ *Christians raise funds to refurbish 80-yr-old mosque*, NEW VISION (11th January 2016), http://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1414602/christians-raise-funds-refurbish-80-yr-mosque