

TANZANIA 2022 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitutions of the union government and of the semiautonomous government in Zanzibar prohibit religious discrimination and provide for freedom of religious choice. Since independence and by tradition, the country has been governed by alternating Christian and Muslim presidents, who then appoint a prime minister from the other religious group. Following the unexpected death of President John Magufuli in 2021, Vice President Samia Hassan, who is Muslim, assumed the presidency and in a break with the tradition, opted to maintain Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa, also a Muslim.

There were isolated reports of converts to Christianity from Islam experiencing physical and verbal abuse from Zanzibar authorities and religious leaders, as well as harassment and stigma from their families and communities concerned with protecting their reputation. Six clerics who were part of a group of 40 members of the Association for Islamic Mobilization and Propagation (UAMSHO) detained in 2013 on terrorism charges remained in prison as of year's end; the terrorism charges against the others were dropped in 2021. The Registrar of Societies continued to require faith-based and religiously affiliated organizations to adhere to a time-based registration of five years, subject to review and verification. In August, Zanzibar President Hussein Mwinyi declared the Islamic New Year an official public and government holiday in Zanzibar. Some religious leaders said religious institutions continued to be discouraged from involvement in politics except to endorse government policy or priorities to the public. In January, police summoned Bishop Josephat Elias Mwingira for questioning after he allegedly used his online ministry to make several public accusations against the government, including that there was a conspiracy by state officials to assassinate him.

Following a September public demonstration by Muslims protesting the construction of a Seventh-day Adventist church on Pemba Island, some Christian leaders expressed feelings of prejudice, discrimination, and intimidation by the community against Christian minorities in Zanzibar. In March, a music video by Tanzanian musician Diamond Platinumz was banned on all social media platforms following public outcry from the National Arts Council and some Christian religious organizations that considered the video, filmed partially inside a church,

to be blasphemous. There was one report of an alleged witchcraft-related attack and one report of an attempt to purchase the limbs of a person with albinism for ritualistic purposes in the country.

The U.S. Ambassador met with senior representatives from Muslim and Christian communities to discuss developments and trends of violent extremism on the mainland and Zanzibar.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 63.9 million (midyear 2022). A 2020 Pew Forum survey estimates approximately 63 percent of the population identifies as Christian, 34 percent as Muslim, and 5 percent practitioners of other religions. According to the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, Christians are approximately evenly divided between Roman Catholics and Protestant denominations. Other local observers believe that Roman Catholics constitute a majority of Christians, with Lutherans as the second largest denomination. Additional Christian groups include Anglicans, Pentecostal Christian groups, Seventh-day Adventists, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Jehovah's Witnesses. A majority of Muslims are Sunni, although significant minority communities exist, including Ismaili, Twelver Shia, Ahmadi, and Ibadi Muslims. On the mainland, large Muslim communities are concentrated in coastal areas, with some Muslim minorities located inland in urban areas. Other groups include Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, Baha'is, animists, and those who did not express a religious preference. A separate 2010 Pew Forum report estimates more than half the population practices elements of African traditional religions.

Zanzibar's 1.3 million residents are 99 percent Muslim, according to a U.S. government estimate. According to a 2012 Pew Forum report, two-thirds are Sunni. The remainder consists of several Shia groups, mostly of Asian descent.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitutions of the union government (United Republic of Tanzania) and of the semiautonomous government in Zanzibar both provide for equality regardless of religion, prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion, and stipulate freedom of conscience or faith and choice in matters of religion, including the freedom to change one's faith. The union government constitution allows these rights to be limited by law for purposes such as protecting the rights of others; promoting the national interest; and safeguarding defense, safety, peace, morality, and health. The Zanzibar constitution allows rights to be limited by law if such a limitation is "necessary and agreeable in the democratic system" and does not limit the "foundation" of a constitutional right or bring "more harm" to society.

Since independence and by tradition, the country has been governed by alternating Christian and Muslim presidents who have, by tradition, appointed a prime minister from the other religious group with the endorsement of parliament.

The law prohibits religious groups from registering as political parties. To register as a political party, a group may not use religion as a basis for approving membership, nor may it follow a policy of promoting a religion.

The law prohibits a person from taking any action or making any statement with the intent of insulting a place of worship, the performance of religious worship, or the religious beliefs of another person. Anyone committing such an offense may be punished with a year's imprisonment.

Religious groups must register with the Registrar of Societies at the Ministry of Home Affairs on the mainland and with the Office of the Registrar General on Zanzibar. Registration is required by law on both the mainland and in Zanzibar. The fines for offenses under the Societies Act, including operating without registration, range from one million to 10 million shillings (\$429-\$4,300).

To register, a religious group must provide the names of at least 10 members, a written constitution, resumés of its leaders, and a letter of recommendation from the district commissioner. Such groups may then list individual congregations, which do not need separate registration. Muslim groups registering on the mainland must provide a letter of approval from the National Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA). Muslim groups registering in Zanzibar must provide a letter

of approval from the mufti, the government's official liaison to the Muslim community. Christian groups in Zanzibar may register directly with the registrar general.

On the mainland, secular laws govern Christians and Muslims in both criminal and civil cases. In family-related cases involving inheritance, marriage, divorce, and the adoption of minors, the law also recognizes customary practices, which could include religious practices. In such cases, some Muslims choose to consult religious leaders in lieu of bringing a court case.

Zanzibar, while also subject to the union constitution, has its own President, court system, and legislature. Muslims in Zanzibar have the option of bringing cases to a civil or *qadi* (Islamic court or judge) court for matters of divorce, child custody, inheritance, and other issues covered by Islamic law. All cases tried in Zanzibar courts, except those involving Zanzibari constitutional matters and sharia, may be appealed to the Union Court of Appeals on the mainland. Decisions of Zanzibar's *qadi* courts may be appealed to a special court consisting of the Zanzibar chief justice and five other sheikhs. The president of Zanzibar appoints the chief *qadi*, who oversees the *qadi* courts and is recognized as the senior Islamic scholar responsible for interpreting the Quran. There are no *qadi* courts on the mainland.

On the mainland, BAKWATA elects the mufti. On Zanzibar, the president of Zanzibar appoints the mufti, who serves as a leader of the Muslim community and as a public servant assisting with local governmental affairs. The mufti of Zanzibar nominally approves all Islamic activities and supervises all mosques on Zanzibar. The mufti also approves religious lectures by visiting Islamic clergy and supervises the importation of Islamic literature from outside Zanzibar.

Public schools may teach religion, but it is not a part of the official national curriculum. School administrations or parent-teacher associations must approve such classes, which are taught on an occasional basis by parents or volunteers. Public school registration forms must specify a child's religious affiliation so that administrators can assign students to the appropriate religion class if one is offered. Students may also choose to opt out of religious studies. Private schools may teach religion, although it is not required, and these schools generally follow the national educational curriculum unless they receive a waiver from the

Ministry of Education for a separate curriculum. In public schools, students are allowed to wear the hijab but not the niqab.

The government does not designate religious affiliation on passports or records of vital statistics. Police reports must state religious affiliation if an individual will be required to provide sworn testimony. Applications for medical care must specify religious affiliation so that any specific religious customs may be observed. The law requires the government to record the religious affiliation of every prisoner and to provide facilities for worship for prisoners.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Government Practices

Following the unexpected death of President John Magufuli in 2021, Vice President Samia Hassan assumed the presidency. In a break with the country's long-standing tradition of presidents appointing prime ministers of the other religious group, Hassan, who is a Muslim, continued to maintain the sitting Prime Minister, Kassim Majaliwa, also a Muslim.

In 2021 the director of public prosecution dropped charges against 34 of the 40 members of UAMSHO, an Islamist group advocating for Zanzibar's full autonomy, who had been in custody on the mainland following their arrests in 2013 on terrorism charges. The Office of the Mufti of Zanzibar had urged Zanzibar President Hussein Mwinyi to speed up the case against UAMSHO members, citing their almost eight-year detention. At year's end, six clerics – Nassoro Said Hemed, Hamad Omary Hamis Juma, Hamis Haji Machano, Mohamed Ally Omar, Khatibu Hassan Khamis, and Khamis Miraji Hussein – who were included among the 40 UAMSHO members, remained in prison, detained on the original terrorism charges.

In 2021, the Office of the Registrar of Societies issued a directive changing the status of all religious institutions and community faith-based organizations registered under the Ministry of Home Affairs from permanent registration to time-based registration valid for five years. The government subsequently agreed to exclude churches, mosques, and other places of worship from the directive, but not faith-based organizations, such as church-affiliated groups. During the

year, there were no reports of religious associations or faith-based organizations being deregistered under this directive.

On November 18, local media reported that Seregoma Village residents in Kalambo District, Rukwa Region, threatened to force out Medical Officer in Charge Peter Kazimoto for his opposition to the activities of traditional healers known as *lambalambas*, particularly those related to witchcraft practices, which are outlawed under Tanzanian law. Traditional healers in Rukwa were accused of charging local residents exorbitant prices to receive traditional healing from persons who claimed to be able to resurrect the dead, cleanse “evil” spirits, and protect households from witches. Public outrage occurred after Kalambo District Commissioner Tano Mwela publicly accused the *lambalambas* of disrupting the peace within the district and wreaking havoc on citizens. In response, some residents informed the district commissioner they no longer wanted Kazimoto to serve as the medical officer because of his failure to engage with their beliefs. Mwela allegedly refused to transfer Kazimoto and urged locals to reject such beliefs, calling the so-called traditional healers “liars bent on enriching themselves” and asserting that they have no power to resurrect the dead. The incident with Kazimoto occurred two weeks after four teachers from Zyangoma Primary School reportedly took refuge in a neighboring district after residents accused them of “terrorizing” the community with witchcraft acts and practices, according to the regional police commissioner. Approximately 60 traditional healers were detained by law enforcement authorities in Kalambo and Nkasi Districts for alleged involvement in for-profit, fraudulent witchcraft practices, which carries a penalty of not less than seven years’ imprisonment.

In October, Christian religious leaders reported that government authorities harassed, arrested, and abused two Zanzibari converts to Christianity from Islam. In addition, a group reportedly affiliated with a violent extremist organization harassed and threatened the converts. One convert said he was removed from a flight departing the country in August. They were subsequently interrogated by Zanzibar police officials regarding the religious conversion and charged with “offenses against Islam,” which were later dropped. The other convert reported being arrested, abused, and raped by Zanzibar police officers after converting. Both converts also reported social and familial isolation after converting to Christianity from Islam. Some Islamic authorities and “extremists” identified the two converts as targets for persecution during prayers at a mosque in Zanzibar,

after which, the converts received death threats on social media and at their residences. On social media, a group of six men circulated a video taking responsibility for the death of one of the converts' friends. The group also identified the converts by name in the video, stating they would be next to die for "their actions against Islam." A government official said they were unaware of the video but stated that the group was "not representative of Islam" and affirmed that "Zanzibar was a secular state with no official religion."

On September 13, President Mwinyi announced the Zanzibar Revolutionary Council would support a review of the Qadi Court Act of 2017 in order to enhance the administration of justice. Following stakeholders' call for complete repeal of the act, members of the Qadi Court Act review committee were reportedly determined to address the law's conflict with civil courts. According to legal advocates, the courts are plagued by a poor working environment, absence of rules applicable in the courts, lack of gender representation among litigants, and absence of a proper definition of matrimonial assets. Zanzibar Chief Justice Khamis Ramadhan Abdalla and Advocate Saleh Mbaraka said reforming the law would improve the court's efficiency and reduce the case backlog.

On June 6, while speaking with leaders of the Istiqaama community at the Zanzibar State House, President Mwinyi stated that the Istiqaama community, an Ibadi Islam organization, had promoted peace and stability and provided a range of public social services, including water and electricity, education, and health care, as well as constructing local mosques and assisting Muslims with travel for the Hajj pilgrimage. The deputy secretary of the Istiqaama community, Sheikh Salum Nassor Salum, expressed gratitude to President Mwinyi for working to fulfill his 2020 election promise to meet with different religious leaders and faith-based organizations to foster social cohesion. During his remarks, Mwinyi stressed the importance of educating the community on religious issues and being a good citizen to bring stability to the country. He also noted the Zanzibar government had created a conducive environment for religious organizations to operate peacefully. Mwinyi's meeting with the Istiqaama community followed a May 29 meeting with the Hindu community chairman, Arvind Asawla, at the State House.

According to some religious leaders, the government penalized prominent religious leaders for expressing views it deemed political and inflammatory. In

January, the Dar es Salaam Special Zone Police Force issued a notice to report within 24 hours to Efatha Church Bishop Josephat Elias Mwingira after he allegedly used his online ministry to make several public accusations against the government, including that there was conspiracy by state officials to kill him. The minister of home affairs ordered Zone Commander Jumanne Muliro to summon Bishop Mwingira to a police station for interrogation after he publicly accused the government of burning his farm in Rukwa Region and trying to kill him. Authorities released Mwingira after interrogation. The Special Zone police chief warned that police would arrest and interrogate anyone who abuses the constitutional right to freedom of expression. Bishop Mwingira previously attracted the government's attention after he used his sermons to oppose the government's acceptance of COVID-19 vaccines in 2021 and said that God had showed him that Chadema opposition party candidate Tundu Lissu would be the next president of Tanzania during the 2020 general elections.

On June 26, Prime Minister Majaliwa declared the government would continue to value, recognize, and respect the contributions of various religious denominations in the country's development. The prime minister offered remarks during the ordination of Bishop Wolfgang Pisa as the new bishop of the Diocese of Lindi Region. Majaliwa committed to continue cooperation with all religious and faith leaders to promote citizens' economic and social welfare. Tanzania Episcopal Conference President Archbishop Gervas Nyasionga said that the Roman Catholic Church pledged to cooperate with President Hassan's government on issues related to the country's socioeconomic development. Bishop Pisa also said that Lindi residents had received him in unity, regardless of their individual religious affiliations, which are predominately Muslim. He pledged to work with all citizens.

On May 29, more than 800 religious leaders of various denominations and their followers reportedly participated in a National Interreligious Council for Peace prayer rally held in Mbeya Region for President Hassan that emphasized peace, security, political stability, and economic prosperity. President Hassan acknowledged the role of religious and faith leaders in the country and stated that the government looked forward to increased cooperation with religious and faith-based institutions in advancing the country's development. While many religious leaders approved of President Hassan's message, a local resident also

said the President was engaging in faith-based politics by using the religious community's public legitimacy in order to better politically position herself.

On May 15, Vice President Philip Mpango implored religious leaders to avoid interreligious conflicts over struggles for leadership and power within the country. During a National Interreligious Council for Peace iftar in Dar es Salaam, Vice President Mpango stressed that peace must first prevail in places of worship, as "conflicts are against religious teachings." Mpango also ordered regional commissioners across the country to hold regular meetings with Interreligious Council members in order to build understanding between leaders and believers of different faiths, which he said would lead to peace among all Tanzanians. The mainland Chief Sheikh Mufti Abubakar Zubeir bin Ali reiterated Mpango's call to religious leaders and urged his followers to safeguard peace at all costs. The council's secretary, Bishop Jackson Sosthenes, also said the council was prepared to cooperate with the government and curb "evil acts" plaguing the country, including gender-based violence, corruption, and human trafficking.

On March 2, religious leaders across the country met with President Hassan at the State House in Dar es Salaam and pressed for the release of political opposition leader Chadema Chairman Freeman Mbowe, who had been held for seven months on terrorism charges. Mbowe was released on March 4.

On August 15, President Hussein Mwinyi announced that the government had accepted the request by the Office of the Mufti of Zanzibar to make the Islamic New Year (Hijri) a national holiday in Zanzibar. In response to the government's decision, the secretary of the Office of the Mufti of Zanzibar, Sheikh Khalid Ali Mfaume, described President Mwinyi as a "righteous leader and one who practically implements the promises he has made." On July 30, the government of Zanzibar held its first official Islamic New Year celebration, at Zanzibar Grand Masjid.

On June 20, President Mwinyi declared that Zanzibar would enhance government support for Muslims who want to perform the Hajj. President Mwinyi committed to establishing a Hajj fund to assist Muslims who cannot afford the full cost of the pilgrimage to Mecca. Zanzibar Minister for Constitutional and Legal Affairs, Public Service, and Good Governance Haroun Ali Suleiman acknowledged Mwinyi for closely monitoring arrangements for the Hajj. According to chairman of the Hajj

committee, Yusuf Salim Yusuf, the Association of Zanzibar Hajj Institutions coordinated 23 institutions to send 1,600 pilgrims from Tanzania to Mecca for the Hajj during the year. Despite the increase in the number of persons traveling from Zanzibar for the Hajj, the number was small compared to the total Muslim population in the country. For the year, Saudi Arabia reportedly allotted 11,467 slots for pilgrims from Tanzania, but only approximately 1,600 pilgrims traveled from Zanzibar and 1,100 from the mainland.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

In September, local media reported on the increased disappearances of young boys and men from Zanzibar, whom many believe were radicalized by and recruited into violent extremist organizations such as al-Shabaab in Somalia and ISIS-M in Mozambique. Local sources stated that Zanzibar's youth had become increasingly frustrated and marginalized due to socioeconomic and political grievances, which allowed recruiters to use religion as an entry point to take advantage of their vulnerability and susceptibility to radicalization. The media report highlighted a trend of youth reportedly listening to the religious teachings of Sheikh Aboud Rogo Mohammed, a prominent, extremist Kenyan cleric with alleged links to al-Shabaab who was shot and killed in 2012. As the ideological leader of al-Hijra, formerly known as the Muslim Youth Center, Sheikh Mohammed used the extremist group and his teachings as a pathway for the radicalization and recruitment of principally Swahili-speaking Africans for carrying out violent militant activity in Somalia, according to the UN Security Council.

Nongovernmental organization (NGO) sources estimated scores of youths between the ages of 12 and 18 had disappeared from Zanzibar during the year. NGO sources also said while the recruitment of Zanzibar youth into violent extremist organizations was not new, radicalization and recruitment efforts had shifted focus from the rural, geographically isolated Pemba Island to the main island of Unguja. Although Zanzibar's police commissioner, Hamad Khamis Hamad, confirmed cases of persons disappearing from the archipelago in unexplained circumstances, the government did not confirm that the missing youth were joining terrorist groups or violent extremist organizations.

On October 31, the Central Council of Ansaar Sunnah in Tanzania (BASUTA) and the Union of Islamic Scholars in Tanzania (Hayat al-Ulamaa) issued a joint condemnation in their biweekly, faith-based newspaper of proposed

amendments to the Marriage Act of 1971 that would raise the legal age of marriage for both boys and girls to age 18 on mainland Tanzania. Under the current law, girls are allowed to marry as young as age 14. The council and the union objected to the proposed amendment on the grounds that it would violate the right to religious freedom and practice for Muslims, as protected by Tanzania's constitution. BASUTA and Hayat al-Ulamaa stated that Islamic law can permit marriage once a person is presumed to have reached puberty – age 15 for boys and age nine for girls. The groups reportedly sent a letter to the constitution and legal affairs parliamentary committee to suggest that the government instead amend the law to reflect individual faith practices and customs related to marriage in order to fulfill the government's constitutional obligations on the freedom of religion and belief. According to some children's rights advocates, the government had yet to amend the marriage law, despite a 2016 High Court ruling requiring them to do so, due to opposition from some religious and ethnic communities in the country.

On September 16, a public demonstration occurred against the construction of a Seventh-day Adventist church in Wete District in North Pemba, Zanzibar. According to a local source, more than 50 Muslim protesters in Kinyasini Village attempted to march to the police station after Friday prayers to express discontent with the proposed church construction and requested police intervention. Government sources said the community's frustration was rooted in a dispute concerning ownership of the land where the church was being built rather than the church itself, citing that the Catholic Diocese of Zanzibar has nine established parishes on the islands of Unguja and Pemba. The regional commissioner reportedly concluded that neither the demonstrators nor the church had rights over the contested land and halted the construction. Some Christian leaders expressed feelings of prejudice, discrimination, and intimidation from the community against Christian minorities in Zanzibar. Although videos of the demonstration were circulated on social media, there were no public responses by government or religious leaders regarding the church's construction or the protest.

In August, Auxiliary Bishop Methodius Kilaini of the Archdiocese of Bukoba Region issued a statement criticizing musician Khalid Ramadhan for his "publicity stunt" at Benjamin Mkapa Stadium in Dar es Salaam. Ramadhan entered the stadium during a soccer match with a coffin with a cross displayed on top, symbolizing the

death of the sports rivalry between the country's primary soccer teams, the Young Africans Sports Club (Yanga) and the Simba Sports Club. In response to the performance, Bishop Kilaini said Ramadhan's act constituted disrespect toward the Catholic Church and its followers. The bishop also demanded that the Simba club issue a public apology for Ramadhan's contempt for the church during the match. In response, the Ministry for Culture, Arts, and Sports instructed the stadium to remove the grounds manager from his position for "failing to manage the stadium for proper use."

On March 6, the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) banned a music video titled "Mtasubiri" (You Will Wait) by singer Diamond Platinumz that included a scene where a Christian choir member leaves the church in a hurry for a romantic getaway. The TCRA announced the video would be banned from all media outlets, including social media, after receiving a recommendation by the National Arts Council to stop the public viewing and distribution of the video. Following the video's release, the council reportedly received complaints from several Christian religious organizations that considered the video to be blasphemous and disrespectful to the church.

Although the government outlawed witchcraft in 2015, the Institute for Security Studies reported that trafficking of persons with albinism was rife in the country. While witchcraft-related killings decreased in recent years, attacks against persons with albinism continued throughout the country. Since 2008, Under the Same Sun – a Christian organization advocating for the rights of persons with albinism – had recorded 205 attacks, killings, and grave desecrations in the country. According to the Africa Albinism Network, police arrested a Shinyanga Region resident on August 28 after he allegedly attempted to purchase the body parts of a woman with albinism for seven million shillings (\$3,000) for ritualistic purposes. The suspect remained in police custody pending an investigation. On April 27, the Legal and Human Rights Center condemned the attempted amputation of the limbs of a person with albinism in Dar es Salaam. As of October, no suspect had been arrested.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The U.S. Ambassador met with prominent Muslim and Christian leaders to discuss the development and trends of violent extremism in Pwani and Mtwara Regions

and media reports regarding the mysterious disappearances of young men in Zanzibar who were believed to have joined extremist groups and terrorist organizations such as al-Shabaab in Somalia.