



## Religion

## Population

## Area

- Christians : **93.2%**
- Ethnoreligionists : **4.8%**
- Muslims : **1.1%**
- Others : **0.9%**

25,831,000

1,246,700 Km<sup>2</sup>

## Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

The constitution of 2010 and other laws and policies protect religious freedom in Angola, which is defined as a secular state. The constitution respects the principle of separation between religion and state and acknowledges that religious denominations shall be respected. Article 10 (section 2) affirms that: “The state shall recognise and respect the different religious faiths, which shall be free to organise and exercise their activities, provided that they abide by the constitution and the laws of the Republic of Angola.”<sup>[1]</sup> The state also guarantees protection to “churches and faiths, and their places and objects of worship, provided that they do not threaten the constitution and public order” (article 10, section 3). Article 41 also provides for freedom of conscience, religion and worship, and recognises the right to conscientious objection. Finally, this article states that “no authority shall question anyone with regard to their convictions or religious practices, except to gather statistical data that cannot be individually identified” (article 41, section 4).

Law No. 2 of 2004 requires that all religious groups apply for legal status with the Ministries of Justice and Culture. One of the requirements is a minimum membership of 100,000 people and a presence in at least 12 of the country’s 18 provinces. This policy has resulted in a de facto denial of official recognition to some religious minority groups, including Muslims, and some small Evangelical churches, which, however, can perform public acts of worship<sup>[2]</sup>

Only officially-registered groups are entitled to have their own schools and places of worship.

The government observes Good Friday and Christmas as religious holy days.

The Churches have full freedom to evangelise, give catechesis and operate radio stations and print media. During the last few years, some religious minority groups have complained that the Catholic Church is favoured by government officials under the ruling MPLA.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Incidents

In January 2018, the new president, João Lourenço, authorised the Catholic 'Radio Ecclesia' to broadcast countrywide. Up to that date, this radio station was allowed to broadcast only in the capital, Luanda. The spokesman of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Angola, Monsignor José Manuel Imbaba, hailed the decision as "the end of a great injustice" and congratulated the President for "his political courage".<sup>[4]</sup>

During the reporting period, Muslims continued to complain of what they describe as unfair treatment and discrimination, including the deportation of Muslim immigrants from West African countries. The authorities denied such allegations, noting that they only took measures to enforce national security laws against the threat of Islamic extremism to the country and to implement the government's strict immigration policies.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants noted in his 2017 Report on Angola that "Major cultural differences between Angolans and their West African counterparts have resulted in a negative image of people of the Muslim faith. [ . . . ] [T]he Government is yet to publicly respond to help quell the concerns of its citizens about practising Muslims and the need to embrace diversity within society. [ . . . ] [I]n some instances, it is public officials who use negative language when referring to migrants and incite fear of those of Muslim faith"<sup>[5]</sup>

## Prospects for freedom of religion

Angola held its last general election in August 2017. Ahead of the vote, President José Eduardo Dos Santos retired after 40 years. He was replaced by the new MPLA candidate, João Lourenço. During his first months in office, the latter announced that his policies would include respect for the rule of law and for basic human rights. The right to freedom of religion is upheld in many respects but the unclear status of Muslims and other smaller denominations remains an open question. Although they do not suffer open persecution, their situation is still a cause for concern with respect to religious freedom.

## Endnotes / Sources

[1] Angola's Constitution of 2010, [constituteproject.com](https://www.constituteproject.com), [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Angola\\_2010.pdf](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Angola_2010.pdf) (accessed 8th February 2018).

[2] Cristiano d'Orsi, 'The unclear relation between Angola and its Muslim citizens and migrants: Is Angola discriminating against them?', in *AfricLaw*, 6th October 2017, <https://africlaw.com/2017/10/06/the-unclear-relation-between-angola-and-its-muslim-citizens-and-migrants-is-angola-discriminating-against-them/>, (accessed 8th February 2018).

[3] People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA)

[4] 'Angola: Radio Ecclesia désormais autorisée par le président dans tout le pays', *Rfi Afrique*, 15th January 2018, <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20180115-angola-radio-ecclesia-desormais-autorisee-le-president-tout-le-pays>, (accessed 8th February 2018).

[5] UNGA, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants on his mission to Angola, A/HRC/35/25/Add.1, 25th April 2017, paragraph 67, p. 13, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/G1709978.pdf>, (accessed 9th February 2018).