



## Religion

## Population

## Area

- Christians : **47.7%**
- Ethnoreligionists : **33.2%**
- Muslims : **18.3%**
- Others : **0.8%**

7,497,000

56,785 Km<sup>2</sup>

## Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

The Republic of Togo's constitution assures everyone of equality before the law regardless of religion.<sup>[1]</sup> It enshrines freedom of religion and this principle is generally respected by the authorities. It also prohibits the formation of political parties based on a specific religious identity.<sup>[2]</sup>

As in many other countries in West Africa, the north of the country is mostly Muslim whilst the south is predominantly Christian. Catholicism, Islam and Protestantism are "official" religions; other denominations are required to register with the authorities.<sup>[3]</sup> Registration is compulsory for all religious communities if they want to enjoy the same benefits as the "official" faiths, such as duty-free imports.<sup>[4]</sup> To register, a religious association must submit its statutes, together with an explanation of its teachings, the names and addresses of its spiritual leaders, the religious and general qualifications of its clergy, a map with the location of its places of worship, and an overview of the community's financial situation. Registration remains provisional until the authorities have satisfied themselves that the group meets the standards of ethics and public order. This process can take several years to complete.<sup>[5]</sup>

Public celebrations that might cause a disturbance or constitute a nuisance – e.g. loud festivities at night – require special permission by the Directorate of Religious Affairs.<sup>[6]</sup> Formal religious instruction is not offered in state schools. However, there are many Catholic, Protestant and Islamic schools for which the government provides additional teaching staff.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Incidents

During the reporting period, there were no institutional changes affecting religious freedom or reports of significant incidents that restricted freedom of religion in Togo. Relations between the government and religious groups are

generally good, e.g. on 28th January 2016, Pope Francis welcomed the president of the Republic of Togo, Faure Essozimina Gnassingbé, and spoke with him about relations between the Holy See and Togo.<sup>[8]</sup> The topics discussed included the contribution of the Catholic Church to the country's development, particularly in education.

## Prospects for freedom of religion

Togo is one of 34 countries that have joined a coalition put together by Saudi Arabia to combat Islamist terrorism. The practical impact of this remains to be seen.<sup>[9]</sup> However, many analysts view the fact that Togo is one of just four countries in this coalition with a non-Muslim majority population as a sign of just how seriously the threat of jihadist terrorism is now being taken in West Africa.<sup>[10]</sup>

At the same time, Togo's president, who is now in his third term, is coming under increasing pressure. The political opposition speaks of a strictly authoritarian state,<sup>[11]</sup> and according to a report in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* on 23rd September 2017, hundreds of thousands of Togolese protested for a week against the president, calling for his resignation.<sup>[12]</sup> However, relations between religions in Togo are likely to remain peaceful and not suffer in the event of a change of government. This, however, depends on religious communities not being politically exploited by one side or the other.

## Endnotes / Sources

[1] Togo's Constitution of 1992 with Amendments through 2007, [constituteproject.org](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Togo_2007.pdf?lang=en), [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Togo\\_2007.pdf?lang=en](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Togo_2007.pdf?lang=en), (accessed on 3rd March 2018).

[2] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 'Togo', International Religious Freedom Report for 2016, U.S. State Department, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>, (accessed 2nd April 2018).

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] 'President of Togo Visits Pope', *Zenit*, 28th January 2016, <https://zenit.org/articles/president-of-togo-visits-pope/>, (accessed on 2nd April 2018).

[9] "'Islamic State' seeks new foothold in Africa', *Deutsche Welle*, 2nd January 2018, <http://www.dw.com/en/islamic-state-seeks-new-foothold-in-africa/a-41977922>, (accessed on 11th February 2018).

[10] Dietrich Alexander, 'Wenn der Saudi mit dem Somalier paktiert', *Welt*, 15th December 2015, <http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article150009806/Wenn-der-Saudi-mit-dem-Somalier-paktiert.html>, (accessed on 11th February 2018).

[11] 'Munzinger Länder: country name', *Munzinger Archiv* 2018, <https://www.munzinger.de/search/start.jsp>, (accessed 30th March 2018).

[12] Ibid.