



Religion

Population

Area

- Christians : **86.1%**
- Ethnoreligionists : **10.6%**
- Baha'is : **1.8%**
- Muslims : **1.1%**
- Others : **0.4%**

16.717.000

752.618 Km²

Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

Article 19 of Zambia's constitution enshrines freedom of religion. This includes the right to change one's religious faith, to express publicly one's faith and to propagate one's religion.^[1] An amendment to the preamble introduced in 1996 states that Zambia is a Christian nation that respects its citizens' right to freedom of conscience and worship. Even though this makes the country a Christian confessional state, the constitution guarantees protection for non-Christians, who have the right to follow their religion. There are no other laws in the country that curtail religious freedom.

Religious groups are required to register with the Registrar of Societies. Churches can apply for a certificate of exemption from paying taxes, which is normally applicable to non-profit organisations.

As guaranteed by law, citizens are free to convert to the faith of their choice, Churches are free to evangelise openly, to build places of worship, to carry out pastoral and catechetical work and to raise funds inside the country as well as solicit and receive funds from abroad. No cases have been reported of deliberate employment discrimination in government departments on religious grounds.

Zambia has a small Muslim community, whose members are concentrated primarily in Lusaka and in the Eastern and Copperbelt provinces. Many of them are immigrants from south Asia, Somalia and the Middle East who have acquired Zambian citizenship. A small number of native Zambians are also Muslim. According to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Zambia, the Bahá'í community consists of about 6,000 people, located primarily in the north-west and southern provinces. There are about 10,000 Hindus, mostly of South Asian origin.^[2]

Incidents

During the reporting period, religious tolerance and interfaith cooperation appeared to be generally good. Leaders of ecumenical movements – including the Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Christian Council of Zambia and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia – held regular meetings to promote mutual understanding and advocacy on religious issues. Women’s groups such as the Zambian Women Interfaith Network brought together Muslim and Christian women and continued to promote mutual understanding and to work toward common goals, including freedom of worship and the reduction of interdenominational tensions.

In some cases, Muslims complained of apparent verbal attacks by some Christian clergy who referred to the Islamic communities in Zambia as “Satanic”. They singled out Pastor Nevers, founder of the Mumba Victory Ministries, who reportedly said that Muslims have a well-planned strategy to infiltrate Zambia and the rest of southern Africa. The pastor, who is also a political opposition leader, spoke publicly on a number of occasions accusing Muslims of planning the takeover of nations.^[3] Muslims complained several times of what they see as police harassment.

Prospects for freedom of religion

Zambia has always respected the right to religious freedom, and is likely to continue doing so. The incidents reported appear to be either isolated cases of intolerance or linked to immigration policies.

Endnotes / Sources

[1] Zambia’s Constitution of 1991 with Amendments through 2009, [constituteproject.org](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Zambia_2009.pdf?lang=en), https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Zambia_2009.pdf?lang=en (accessed 14th February 2018).

[2] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, (Zambia’, Report on International Religious Freedom for 2016, U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>, (accessed 8th February 2018).

[3] ‘Pastor Nevers Mumba says Islam plans to ‘invade’ Zambia’, Lusaka Times, 5th October 2017, <https://www.lusakatimes.com/2017/10/05/pastor-nevers-mumba-says-islam-plans-invade-zambia/> (accessed 8th February 2018).