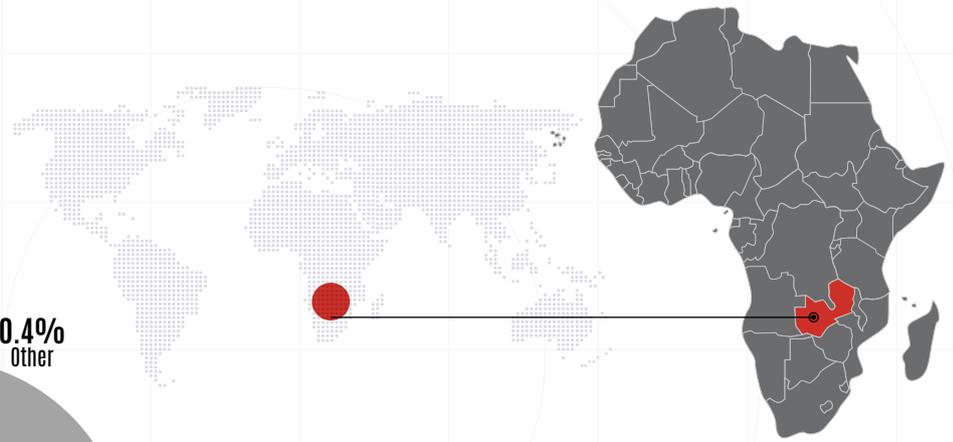
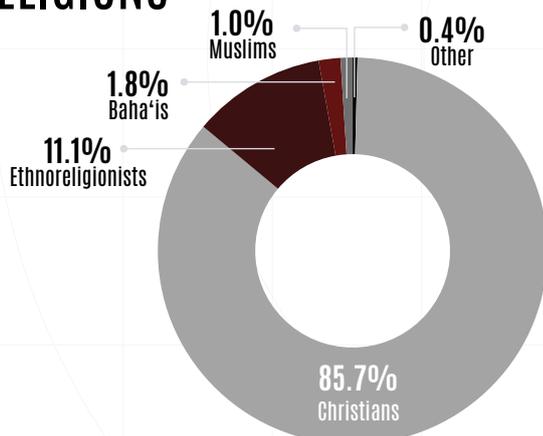




# ZAMBIA

## RELIGIONS



## LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND ACTUAL APPLICATION

Article 19 (1) of Zambia's constitution enshrines freedom of religion. This includes the right to change one's religious faith, to express it publicly and propagate it.<sup>1</sup> In 1996, the Preamble was changed to make Zambia a Christian nation. Even though this makes Zambia a Christian confessional state, the constitution guarantees freedom of conscience and belief (Article 19) and protects non-Christians, who have the right to follow their religion. No laws in the country curtail religious freedom.

People are free to convert to the faith of their choice. Churches can openly evangelise, build places of worship, carry out pastoral and catechetical work and raise funds at home and abroad. Zambian legislation bans discrimination in the workplace, including on the basis of religion.<sup>2</sup>

Religious instruction is mandatory from Grade 1 to 9, with the curriculum centred on Christianity but including elements of other religions.<sup>3</sup> Under Article 19 (3) of the constitution, religious groups can provide their own religious education and run their own schools.<sup>4</sup>

The Ministry of National Guidance and Religious Affairs (MNGRA) is authorised to supervise religious affairs and promote Christian values. New regulations were announced which should be applied from early 2020. At the time of this writing, however, it was unclear whether this regulation was in application already. According to the new regulation, religious groups must: register with the Office of the Registrar of Societies in the Ministry of Home Affairs; are obliged to form or join a single umbrella organisation, "which gathers individual churches and denominations under one administrative authority", and requires formal training for clergy.<sup>5</sup> Registration can be revoked by the minister of home affairs based on failure to pay registration fees or a finding that the group has, or intends to, take actions that run counter to the interests of "peace, welfare, or good order."<sup>6</sup> According to the MNGRA, the aim is to increase transparency and accountability, reduce the phenomenon of self-ordination, control the rapid growth of new churches, and assure compliance of religious groups with the law.<sup>7</sup>

Religious groups can also obtain tax exemptions, which normally apply to "public benefit" organisations, including those affiliated with religious groups.<sup>8</sup>

After Christians and ethno-religionists, Baha'is are Zam-

bia's largest religious community. The country is also home to a small Muslim community, centre mostly in Lusaka and the Eastern and Copper belt provinces, both naturalised immigrants (from South Asia, Somalia, and the Middle East) and some native-born Zambians. There are also about 10,000 Hindus, mostly of South Asian origin.<sup>9</sup>

## INCIDENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

During the period covered by this report, the government has generally respected religious freedom and Zambian society has been tolerant in religious matters. The Ministry of National Guidance and Religious Affairs (MNGRA), however, has come under increasing criticism for undertaking actions “that blur the separation of church and state, including backing an annual National Day of Prayer and building an interdenominational church”.<sup>10</sup>

Isolated incidents have been reported against people suspected of involvement in witchcraft, especially older

people who practise certain ethno-religionist customs. In mid-August 2018, police arrested a 22-year-old man for killing his 86-year-old grandfather, whom he suspected of practising witchcraft.<sup>11</sup> In the same month, a mob killed a man also on suspicion of witchcraft.<sup>12</sup>

While religious and civil society organisations work well together, police have reported that some pastors have inappropriately used their authority to engage in economic, emotional and sexual abuse.<sup>13</sup>

## PROSPECTS FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The right to religious freedom is respected in Zambia, and this is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Even though the country finds itself at a political crossroad, nothing indicates that religious tolerance will be affected. The cases of intolerance reported are isolated incidents.

## SOURCES / ENDNOTES

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- 4 Zambia 1991 (rev. 2016), op. cit.
- 5 Office of International Religious Freedom, “Zambia,” Report on International Religious Freedom for 2019, U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/zambia/> (accessed 13 September 2020).
- 6 Ibid
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- 10 Freedom in the World 2020, Periodical Report - Zambia, Freedom House, 4 March 2020 <https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2030960.html>
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- 12 “Mob kills man in cold blood in Ndola’s Chiwala area,” Lusaka Times, 3 August 2018, <https://www.lusakatimes.com/2018/08/03/mob-kills-man-in-cold-blood-in-ndolas-chiwala-area/> (accessed 28 March 2020).
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