



Religion

Population

Area

- Christians : **94.9%**
- Agnostics : **1.0%**
- Ethnoreligionists : **1.1%**
- Muslims : **2.8%**
- Others : **0.2%**

527,000

4,033 Km²

Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

A former Portuguese colony, Cape Verde has the highest percentage of Catholics among African countries.^[1] Protestants and Pentecostal groups continue to increase their membership.^[2] Due to mass emigration in the second half of the twentieth century, the number of Cape Verdeans living abroad is almost twice that of those still living in Cape Verde.^[3]

Freedom of religion and the right to religious self-expression are enshrined in the constitution and laws of Cape Verde.^[4] There is no state religion;^[5] the constitution ensures the separation of Church and state. By law, every citizen is free to choose or change religion, and a recent law, ratified on 16th May 2014, further codifies the right to worship freely and also to provide religious instruction to children.

An agreement signed by Cape Verde and the Holy See in 2013 recognises the independent legal status of the Catholic Church as well as its right freely to carry out missionary activity. It also protects Catholic places of worship and grants church marriages the same status as civil marriages.^[6] However, the special relationship between the state and the Catholic Church has not met with universal approval.^[7]

All religious and secular organisations are required to register with the Ministry of Justice and are not permitted to support violence, illegality, racism or dictatorship.^[8] There are no sanctions in place for organisations failing to register, but there are benefits for those that do. As a matter of principle, no religion enjoys special rights. The Catholic Church wields considerable influence, however, as it is by far the largest religious community in the country.

Incidents

Christianity is firmly rooted in the culture of Cape Verde. Relations between the different religions are fundamentally free of tensions. A source of great joy for many Catholics was the elevation of Bishop Arlindo Gomes Furtado to the position of Cardinal in early 2015.^[9] After his appointment as Bishop of Mindelo in 2004, he became Bishop of Santiago in 2009, the country's main island where the capital Praia is located.

| Prospects for freedom of religion

There were no significant changes in religious freedom or events of special interest during the current reporting period. ^[10] There is no reason to believe that this situation will fundamentally change. Nevertheless, the entire region of West Africa is experiencing major change, and the influence of Islamic hyper-extremism cannot be ruled out.

| Endnotes / Sources

[1] 'Catholic Church in Republic of Cape Verde (Cape Verde)', GicaCatholic, <http://www.gcatholic.org/dioceses/country/CV.htm>, (accessed 28th March 2018).

[2] Munzinger Archiv 2018, <https://www.munzinger.de/search/start.jsp>, (accessed 27th March 2018).

[3] Ibid.

[4] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 'Cabo Verde', International Religious Freedom Report for 2016, U.S. State Department, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>, (accessed 28th March 2018).

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Deborah Castellano Lubov, 'Pope Announces Names of 20 New Cardinals', Zenit, 4th January 2015, <https://zenit.org/articles/pope-announces-names-of-20-new-cardinals/>, (accessed 28th March 2018).

[10] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, op. cit.