

BRAZIL 2018 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution states freedom of conscience and belief is inviolable, and it guarantees free exercise of religious beliefs. The constitution prohibits federal, state, and local governments from either supporting or hindering any religion. On September 19, a court convicted three of 14 defendants of attempted homicide, which the court ruled was motivated by religious and racial discrimination related to a 2005 attack on three men wearing kippahs, Jewish head coverings. In September the Public Ministry of Sergipe State, in conjunction with the Coordination for the Promotion of Ethnic-Racial Equality (COPIER), filed suit against the municipality of Aracaju for violation of religious freedom. The Public Ministry filed the case on behalf of Yalorixa Valclides Francisca dos Anjos Silva after police officers accused her of practicing black magic and abusing animals. In February the government-associated Brasilia-based Religious Diversity and Human Rights Advisory (ASDIR) and the National Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPPIR) launched a national campaign entitled “Religious Diversity: To Know, To Respect, To Value.” The launch coincided with World Interfaith Harmony Week. In April the Rio de Janeiro State government launched a program incorporating discussions on religious intolerance into the curriculum of 1,249 public schools in the state. In May the Ministry of Culture, with the Palmares Cultural Foundation and University of Brasilia, released the results of the first ever mapping exercise of Umbanda and Candomble houses of worship, known as *terreiros*, documenting 330 *terreiros* in the Federal District. In June the Human Rights Commission of the Chamber of Deputies held a public hearing on the development of public policies to combat religious discrimination and intolerance.

Media reported Guarani-Kaiowas, an indigenous group from Mato Grosso do Sul, denounced frequent acts of violence, which they said evangelical Christians committed against their shamanic rituals. According to media reports, unidentified individuals damaged religious buildings at various times throughout the year. These acts included the destruction of religious objects and spray painting of hateful statements at an Afro-Brazilian *terreiro* in Rio de Janeiro in May, spray painting of swastikas on a church in Rio de Janeiro in October, and spray-painting “God is Gay” on a Roman Catholic church in Sao Paulo in the same month. On May 18, unidentified individuals spray-painted messages on the walls of the Jewish Israelite Society of Pelotas building, threatening the Jewish community to “wait” for an “international intifada.” The individuals also attempted to set fire to the building, causing minor damage. Attacks on *terreiros* continued, two

occurring in May and one in July. Religious organizations hosted interfaith community events, including on September 16, the 11th Annual Walk in Defense of Religious Freedom at Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro, which drew approximately 70,000 participants from across the religious spectrum, and on August 19, the Freedom Circuit three-kilometer and five-kilometer run in Brasilia. According to the Ministry of Human Rights' Secretariat of Human Rights (SDH), its hotline received 210 complaints of religious intolerance between January and June compared with 169 complaints during the same period in 2017. The president of the Council for the Defense and Promotion of Religious Freedom for Rio de Janeiro State attributed the reported increase in religious intolerance to three factors: "The creation of a service trusted by society, societal understanding that religious discrimination is a punishable crime, and increased aggression in religious confrontations."

In October embassy officials engaged the Ministry of Human Rights' coordinator for religious diversity, discussing the status of state religious diversity committees and plans for a potential conference on respect for religious diversity. In February embassy officials attended the event commemorating the Federal District's third annual Day to Combat Religious Intolerance. In December an embassy official discussed with the public defender the increase in societal intolerance of African religions and the importance of applying the law to protect the religious freedom of these groups. Sao Paulo consulate officials met with several evangelical Protestant leaders in the months leading up to the October elections – discussing the leaders' views on the participation of religious groups in the political process and their priorities from a religious perspective. Rio de Janeiro consulate officials visited an Afro-Brazilian *terreiro* in Duque de Caxias, in the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro, in June to speak with Conceicao D'Liss, a priest leader of a Candomble *terreiro*.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 208.8 million (July 2018 estimate). According to a 2016 Datafolha survey, 50 percent of the population identified as Catholic, compared with 60 percent in 2014. During the same period, the proportion of atheists increased from 6 percent to 14 percent, and the proportion of evangelical Protestants increased from 24 percent to 31 percent. According to the 2010 census, 65 percent of the population is Catholic and 22 percent is Protestant. Adherents of other Christian groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as well as followers of non-Christian religions, including Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Hindus,

and African and syncretic religious groups such as Candomble and Umbanda, comprise a combined 5 percent of the population. Some Christians also practice Candomble and Umbanda. Those identifying with no religion comprise 8 percent of the population.

According to the 2010 census, approximately 35,200 Muslims live in the country, while the Federation of Muslim Associations of Brazil states the number at approximately 1.5 million. Some observers say the discrepancy in numbers may be because the 1.5 million figure may include the entire Arab-Brazilian population, all of whom the federation may assume are Muslim, but many of whom are Christian or adhere to other faiths. Religious scholars estimate the actual number of Muslims to be between 400,000 and 500,000. There are significant numbers of Muslims in Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba, and Foz do Iguazu, as well as in smaller cities in the states of Parana and Rio Grande do Sul.

According to the Jewish Confederation of Brazil, there are approximately 125,000 Jews, 65,000 of whom reside in Sao Paulo State and 25,000 in Rio de Janeiro State. Many other cities have smaller Jewish communities.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution states freedom of conscience and belief is inviolable and the free exercise of religious beliefs is guaranteed. The constitution prohibits the federal, state, and local governments from either supporting or hindering any specific religion. The law provides penalties of up to five years in prison for crimes of religious intolerance. Courts may fine or imprison for two to five years any individual who displays, distributes, or broadcasts religiously intolerant material; the government did not apply the law during the year. It is illegal to write, edit, publish, or sell literature that promotes religious intolerance.

Religious groups are not required to register to establish places of worship, train clergy, or proselytize, but groups seeking tax-exempt status must register with the Department of Federal Revenue and the local municipality. States and municipalities have different requirements and regulations for obtaining tax-exempt status. Most jurisdictions require groups to document the purpose of their congregation, provide an accounting of finances, and have a fire inspection of any house of worship. Local zoning laws and noise ordinances may limit where a religious group may build houses of worship or hold ceremonies.

Government regulations require public schools to offer religious instruction, but neither the constitution nor legislation defines the parameters. By law, the instruction should be nondenominational, conducted without proselytizing, and with alternative instruction for students who do not want to participate. The law prohibits public subsidies to schools operated by religious organizations.

A constitutional provision provides the right of access to religious services and counsel individuals of all religions in all civil and military establishments. The law states that public and private hospitals as well as civil or military prisons must comply with this provision.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Government Practices

According to media reports, on September 19, a court in Porto Alegre convicted three of 14 defendants of attempted homicide motivated by religious and racial discrimination related to a 2005 attack on three men wearing kippahs, Jewish head coverings. The attack took place in Porto Alegre, capital of Rio Grande do Sul State, on May 8, 2005, the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II. The three convicted defendants were members of a group called *Carecas do Brasil* (Skinheads of Brazil) that disseminates anti-Semitic and Nazi content on the internet. The three sentences totaled 38 years and eight months in prison. According to media sources, the other 11 defendants in the case would also stand trial; however, by year's end the court had not set a date.

In September the Public Ministry of Sergipe State, in conjunction with COPIER, filed suit against the municipality of Aracaju for violation of the constitutional right to religious freedom. The Public Ministry filed the case for reparation of collective moral damages on behalf of Yalorixa Valclides Francisca dos Anjos Silva, who was at the *Rei Hungria terreiro* when six police officers and one official from the Municipal Secretariat for the Environment (MSE) searched her building alleging she practiced black magic and abused animals. Dos Anjos Silva stated she suffered emotional trauma. The Public Ministry required the municipality to pay 50,000 reais (\$12,900). The MSE stated it did not have a policy of restricting the right to use animals for religious worship and ritual and that the inspection was an isolated event carried out without the proper authorization and knowledge of the municipal secretary of the environment or the director of the department of environmental control.

Rio de Janeiro State's hotline, called "Dial to Combat Discrimination," continued to respond to a growing number of incidents targeting practitioners and *terreiros*. The state government signed cooperation agreements with local universities to assist victims of religious intolerance. According to the State Secretariat for Human Rights, between June and September the hotline received 32 calls and assisted 88 victims; no comparable information was available for 2017 because the hotline started operations in August 2017. The secretariat stated 74 percent of the callers were followers of Afro-Brazilian religions. The state also established the Police Station for Racial Crimes and Incidents Related to Religious Intolerance, created in August and officially launched in December.

On January 21, municipalities around the country commemorated the National Day to Combat Religious Intolerance. In Rio de Janeiro, the state governor signed a bill on January 19 to create the State Council for Promotion and Defense of Religious Freedom. The council consists of 32 members from civil society, state officials, members of the Brazilian Bar Association, and religious groups. In Bahia State, practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions and Black Movement nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) organized a debate and cultural activities at Tumba Junsara *terreiro*, Engenheiro Velho de Brotas in the state capital Salvador. Other cities, including Sao Paulo and Recife, also held events.

In February Brasilia-based ASDIR and SEPPIR launched a campaign entitled "Religious Diversity: To Know, To Respect, To Value." The launch coincided with World Interfaith Harmony Week. The campaign launch featured a showing of the short film "By My Side" ("*Do Meu Lado*"), a panel discussion on the theme "Dialogue for Diversity," and the launch of two publications, "Religious Intolerance in Brazil" and "Secular State, Intolerance, and Religious Diversity."

In March the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) prohibited political campaigning in churches and religious spaces as well as in all public spaces. The TSE made its ruling ahead of national elections on October 7 and October 28. Some religious and civil society groups said they did not follow the ruling and continued to campaign for the candidates they supported.

In April the Municipal Office for the Respect of Religious Diversity in Rio de Janeiro organized an interfaith seminar for practitioners of different religions in Rio. Approximately 120 individuals attended the event.

In April the Rio de Janeiro State government launched a joint program between the State Secretariat of Education and the State Secretariat of Human Rights and Women's Policies to incorporate discussions of religious intolerance into the curriculum of all public schools in the state. According to media, students across the state watched a video on religious tolerance produced by students participating in the More Human Education Program at the Pedro II State High School in the northeastern part of the state. This video was the first in a series of five short films; according to media sources, other public schools in the state would also produce original videos, which students could view at school and access on social media platforms. Student discussion would follow video screenings.

In May the Ministry of Culture, with the Palmares Cultural Foundation and the University of Brasilia, released the results of the first ever mapping exercise of Umbanda and Candomble *terreiros* in the Federal District. The study verified the existence of 330 terreiros, of which 87.8 percent are in urban areas. The majority of the *terreiros* – 58 percent – are Umbanda, while 33 percent are Candomble and 9 percent both.

In May the Sao Paulo Legislative Assembly approved a bill to reduce prison sentences for prisoners who read the Bible. Based on a general recommendation from the National Council of Justice (CNJ), the law reduced prison sentences for prisoners engaging in work, study, or reading. The CNJ recommendation included reducing sentences by four days for every completed book with a limit of 12 books per year. The Sao Paulo law allows prisoners to receive credit for each individual book in the Bible. In June Federal Deputy Marco Antonio Cabral introduced similar legislation at the national level.

In June the Human Rights Commission of the Chamber of Deputies held a public hearing on the development of public policies to combat religious discrimination and intolerance. Attendees recommended the creation of police stations in each state dedicated to investigating crimes of racism and religious intolerance, thorough implementation of a law requiring an Afro-Brazilian history and culture class in all schools, a nationwide mapping of violence against followers of Afro-Brazilian religions, and financial compensation for victims of racism and religious intolerance. In August Rio de Janeiro State inaugurated a police station dedicated to investigating crimes of race and intolerance. The Federal District, Parana State, and Mato Grosso do Sul State continued to operate similar police stations.

In June the Religious Diversity Parliamentary Front of the Federal District Legislative Assembly held a seminar on Rights, Public Policy, Religion, and

Racism. The seminar included sessions on racism and religion; racial crimes, hate crimes, and combating intolerance; and public policies on combating racism and religious intolerance.

The Supreme Court case on the right to practice animal sacrifice as an element of religious ritual began on August 9. The Public Ministry in Rio Grande do Sul State brought the case before the court, challenging a state court ruling permitting practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions to perform animal sacrifices. Adherents of Afro-Brazilian religions said the criticism of and challenges to the practice of animal sacrifice were motivated more by racism than concern for the welfare of the animals, stating the practice of animal sacrifice was in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Animal Rights. On August 8, the eve of the Supreme Court vote, demonstrators gathered in the capitals of Bahia and Pernambuco States to defend animal sacrifice as part of their religious beliefs. Rapporteur Justice Marco Aurelio and Justice Edson Fachim voted to uphold the state ruling; however, Justice Alexandre de Moraes requested additional time to review the case, which indefinitely postponed the final vote of the 11-member court pending the completion of the review.

On September 28, the Federal Court in Santa Catarina State overturned a regulation of the capital city of Florianopolis that restricted the hours of operation of *terreiros*. The existing regulation adopted in 2013 required *terreiros* to acquire business permits, similar to bars; *terreiros* without business permits had to close by 2 a.m. every day and could not use candles.

On October 23, the Federal District commemorated its third annual Day to Combat Religious Intolerance. The Ministry of Human Rights in partnership with the Federal District Committee for Religious Diversity hosted an interfaith event in Brasilia entitled “Intergenerational Meeting for Respect for Religious Diversity.” Participants discussed the creation of a working group to arrange for public officials to visit places of worship and schools to emphasize the importance of religious tolerance.

A religious diversity specialist at the Ministry of Human Rights said five of the country’s 26 states – Amazonas, Minas Gerais, Sao Paulo, Tocantins, and Rio de Janeiro – as well as the Federal District had committees for the respect of religious diversity. The ministry also stated the 10-member National Committee for the Respect of Religious Diversity remained active, meeting four times during the year.

In May the State Secretariat of Human Rights launched the Itinerant Forum for the Promotion and Defense of Religious Freedom. The forum assisted victims of religious intolerance in several municipalities in Rio de Janeiro State. According to media, members of the forum visited the Afro-Brazilian *terreiro* Tenda Espirita Cabocla Mariana in Seropedica, Baixada Fluminense, and spoke to the *terreiro* priest who received death threats because of her religious leadership role.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Media reported that Guarani-Kaiowas, an indigenous group from Mato Grosso do Sul, denounced what the group said were frequent acts of violence by evangelical Protestants against shamanic rituals of the Guarani-Kaiowas. Izaque Joao, an indigenous researcher and historian, said, “The churches enter in large quantities into the indigenous communities, degrading the traditional culture and devaluing traditional beliefs.” Spensy Pimentel, an anthropologist, journalist, and professor from Federal University of Southern Bahia, said, “The most visible facet of religious intolerance has been in incidents of the Umbanda and Candomble *terreiros* while the attacks on the indigenous groups remain covered up.” Pimentel also said, “Incidents of religious intolerance against shamanic believers are rarely registered, because many times they involve the elderly, who speak Portuguese poorly and aren’t accustomed to leaving their villages.”

In September Wicca Priestess Alana Morgana said she had been receiving death threats since the spread of rumors, including allegations she was involved in abductions and child sacrifices. An origin for the rumors may have been an unauthorized video posted online on August 13 showing Morgana and other Wiccans participating in a religious ceremony in Rio de Janeiro State. Morgana submitted a letter to local police requesting the removal of the video from the internet. She stated this was the first time in 30 years she had suffered religious reprisals. Media reported police continued to try to identify those who sent the death threats.

According to media reports, in May heavily armed drug traffickers raided a Candomble *terreiro* in Cordovil, a neighborhood in the city of Rio de Janeiro. According to the State Commission to Combat Religious Intolerance, they forced Didi Yemanja, the priestess on site, to leave the *terreiro* and expelled her from the community. The alleged traffickers said, “She knew she was not allowed to have an Afro-Brazilian *terreiro* in the neighborhood.” After the assailants expelled the religious leader, they remained near the *terreiro* to prevent other practitioners from entering. Yemanja said for a few months prior to the incident, Candomble

practitioners faced discrimination when wearing religious clothing in public in the neighborhood. Yemanjá said she decided not to press charges against the aggressors for fear of reprisals.

According to media reports, on May 18, unidentified individuals spray-painted messages on the walls of the Jewish Israelite Society of Pelotas building, telling the Jewish community to “wait” for an “international intifada”; they also attempted to set fire to the building but caused only minor damage. This was the third incident to occur at this synagogue during the year. In response to the incident, President of the Jewish Federation of Rio Grande do Sul Zalmir Chwartzmann said, “We will not tolerate this kind of attitude; an attack of this magnitude is an offense against the democratic state of law, against freedom of expression and religion, as well as a warning that hate speech is passing from theory to practice, importing a conflict that is not Brazilian and putting our entire society at risk.”

According to media reports, in July a group of unidentified individuals attacked a Candomblé *terreiro* in Buzios in Rio de Janeiro State. Practitioners were inside when a group of individuals threw stones at the building, damaging the roof but not hurting anyone inside. Rio de Janeiro State police opened an investigation, which continued through the end of the year.

Media reported that in May a group of vandals entered the Spiritist Center Caboclo Pena Branca *terreiro* in Baixada Fluminense, setting fire to some areas of the *terreiro*, destroying sacred objects, and spray-painting messages such as “get out of here *macumbeiros* (witches)” and “this is no place for *macumba* (witchcraft).” Followers of Afro-Brazilian religions said these terms were derogatory when nonpractitioners used them.

In September the Jewish Israelite Federation of Rio de Janeiro reported that individuals spray-painted a swastika on a wall of a residence decorated with a mezuzah in the Zona Sul area of the city. They said police were trying to identify the attackers.

According to media, on October 4, individuals vandalized the Church of Our Lady of Aparecida in the center of Teodoro Sampaio in Sao Paulo State. The assailants spray painted “God is gay” on the walls of the church. According to media, police identified two female suspects, but it was unclear whether police detained anyone.

Media reported that on October 17, police arrested two individuals suspected of vandalizing the Sao Pedro da Serra chapel in Nova Friburgo, Rio de Janeiro State.

Police used security camera footage to identify the men who spray-painted swastikas. A third individual turned himself in to police authorities.

Between January and June SDH's nationwide Dial 100 human rights hotline registered 210 complaints related to cases of religious intolerance. The number of complaints during the comparable period of 2017 was 169.

According to the Bahia State Secretariat, there were 47 cases of religious intolerance in the state during the year, compared with 21 cases in 2017.

As of September the Sao Paulo Secretariat of Justice registered 5,290 reports of religious intolerance in the state. All of the reports were of "verbal harassment" and were under police investigation as cases of defamation, libel, or slander. The Brazilian National Movement against Religious Intolerance, created in 2016, sent 13 cases to the Public Ministry of Sao Paulo for further legal proceedings. These cases involved followers of Afro-Brazilian religions, who said they were subjected to slurs such as "son of Satan" or "Satan's envoy."

The Mato Grosso do Sul State Secretariat of Justice and Human Rights and the coordinator of racial equality reported the number of cases of religious intolerance in the state increased 800 percent compared with 2017.

According to the State Secretariat for Human Rights, in Rio de Janeiro there was a 51 percent increase in incidents of religious intolerance from 2017 to 2018. From January until the first week of December, there were 103 incidents of religious intolerance, compared with 68 incidents during the same period in 2017.

According to the State Secretariat for Human Rights, African religious groups experienced the greatest number of incidents, with 31 percent of complaints involving practitioners of Candomble, 26 percent other African religions, and 17 percent Umbanda. The municipalities with the highest record of incidents were Rio de Janeiro, Nova Iguacu, and Duque de Caxias – with 49 percent, 10 percent, and 7 percent of incidents occurring in these municipalities, respectively. Marcio de Jagun, president of the Council for the Defense and Promotion of Religious Freedom, said, "The increase in cases of religious intolerance can be attributed to three factors: the creation of a service in which society trusts, societal understanding that religious discrimination is a punishable crime, and increased aggression in religious confrontations."

In January the Parana State chapter of the NGO Collective of Negro Entities (CEN) signed a technical cooperation agreement with the Center for Legal Practice

at University Positivo and the state's Public Defender's Office for the provision of legal counsel in cases of religious intolerance and racism. CEN also formed a group of researchers with expertise on the Umbanda and Candomble religions. The research group said it would produce articles on *terreiros* and the religious impact of laws and public policy.

Media reported that on August 19, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with support from the Brazilian Bar Association in the Federal District (DF), Regional Psychology Council, Religious Diversity Parliamentary Front of the DF Legislative Assembly, and DF Religious Diversity Committee, organized the first Freedom Circuit run in Brasilia. The objective of the event was to promote respect, tolerance, and understanding of religion. More than 100 individuals from various religious faiths participated, during which organizers collected signatures in support of a local bill to combat religious intolerance in public schools in the Federal District.

On September 16, the NGO Commission to Combat Religious Intolerance organized the 11th Annual Walk in Defense of Religious Freedom at Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro. Organizers estimated the event drew approximately 70,000 practitioners from diverse religious and nonreligious backgrounds, including Muslims, Jews, Christians, Buddhists, and atheists.

The religious freedom commissions of chapters of the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB) across the country remained active throughout the year. OAB Recife organized a panel presentation on Citizenship, Human Rights, and Religious Freedom on April 12. OAB Bahia hosted an event called "Islamophobia" in Brazil on May 10. OAB Ceara held a workshop on religious freedom on May 22. OAB Sao Paulo hosted its sixth State Congress on rights and religious liberty on May 25, as well as a discussion on Religious Freedom and Economic Development on September 6.

The Jewish Museum of Sao Paulo, built on the remains of Beth-El Synagogue, one of the oldest synagogues in the city, was under construction during the year. Funding for the museum was raised primarily through private investors and the local community.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

In October embassy officials engaged the Ministry of Human Rights' coordinator for religious diversity, discussing the status of state religious diversity committees

and plans for a potential conference on respect for religious diversity and attending the launch of the ministry's religious diversity campaign. In February embassy officials attended the event commemorating the Federal District's third annual Day to Combat Religious Intolerance. In December an embassy official discussed with Public Defender Luis Fausto the increase in societal intolerance of African religions and the importance of applying the law to protect the religious freedom of these groups.

Rio de Janeiro consulate officials visited an Afro-Brazilian *terreiro* in Duque de Caxias, in the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro, to speak with Conceicao D'Lisa, a priest and leader of a Candomble *terreiro*. U.S. officials met with sociologist Christina Vital from the Institute for Religious Studies to learn about attacks on the *terreiros* of practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions in the state.

In March Sao Paulo consulate officials visited the site of the city's Jewish Museum under construction on the remains of one of the city's oldest synagogues, to discuss the museum's development and issues affecting the Jewish community.

Sao Paulo consulate officials met with several evangelical Protestant leaders in the months leading up to the October elections – discussing the leaders' views on the participation of religious groups in the political process and their priorities from a religious perspective.

In September Rio de Janeiro consulate officials visited the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (IURD) Cathedral (also known as the *Templo da Gloria do Novo Israel*) to learn about the IURD denomination in the state. They also discussed the IURD's active participation in the October elections, including that of Rio Mayor Marcelo Crivella, an IURD bishop. In June a Rio de Janeiro consulate official met with one of the country's prominent evangelical leaders and televangelists, Assemblies of God pastor Silas Malafaia, to discuss religious priorities and preferences in the elections.

In September a Rio de Janeiro consulate official met with Father Antonio Augusto Dias Duarte, the head of family and youth outreach for the Catholic Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro, to discuss the religious vote and the Church's position on addressing the elections and political issues from the pulpit.