

Adventist Union Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Director, with the help of some Adventist lawyers, has sensitized church members to participate in giving their views to the commission. Adventists have participated fully, calling for a constitution that protects the right to worship without any interference. They have called for a five-day work week for all public institutions and state functions. All forms of religious discrimination and harassment are outlawed. This has set a good precedence for other countries in the region.



Lesotho

The population of Lesotho is 2,143,141 with 90% Christian, 70% of which are Catholics and 4,382 Adventists. There is religious freedom, but Adventist students face problems when it comes to examinations on Saturday. They have taken the matter to court to claim religious liberty rights.



Liberia

The population of Liberia is 3,164,156. There is no single dominant religion with about 40% Christian (including 16,247 Adventist members), 40% practice traditional indigenous religions, and 20% Muslim. The constitution of the country provides religious freedom, and the government generally respects it in practice; however, there are some exceptions. Registration for religious groups is routine. Muslims, Catholics, Adventists, and other groups operate primary and secondary schools, as well as three radio stations. Some tensions exist between the major religious communities. The law prohibits religious discrimination; however, Islamic leaders have complained of societal discrimination against Muslims.



Mali

The population of Mali is 10,951,176 with Islam being the dominant religion. About 90% of the population is Muslim, 5% Christian (including 784 Adventist members), and 5% practice traditional indigenous religions. The constitution of the country provides religious

freedom, and the government generally respects it. The constitution defines the country as a secular state and allows for religious practices that do not pose a threat to social stability and peace. The government also requires that all public associations, including religious associations, register with the Ministry of Territorial Administration. Relations between the Muslim majority, Christian and other religious minorities are generally friendly. Religious tolerance is widespread.



Namibia

The population of Namibia is 1,798,000. About 90% of the population are Christian, including 13,093 Adventist members. Religious freedom is usually well respected.



Reunion

The population of Reunion is 721,000 with 1,254 Adventist members. This island is considered a “French Overseas Department.” The anti-cult policy of the French government may create problems for Adventist children and others in public schools. There are 1,254 Adventists on this mainly Catholic island.



Senegal

The population of Senegal is 9,987,494. Islam is the predominant religion and is practiced by 94% of the country’s population. 4% of the population are Christian, including 330 Adventists, and about 2% practice traditional indigenous religions. The constitution of the country provides religious freedom, and the government generally respects it. The government requires that religious groups register with the Ministry of the Interior in accordance with the civil and commercial code. Registered religious groups are also exempt from many forms of taxes. Because the constitution provides for separation of religion and state, religious education or worship is not permitted in public schools, but there are Christian schools with most of

their students being Muslims. Religion plays an important role in the lives of most citizens and society is generally very open to and tolerant of different religious faiths.



Sierra Leone

The population of Sierra Leone is 4.5 million, with 60% Muslim, 30% Christian, and 10% practice traditional religions. Adventists number 13,139 and there are no problems concerning religious freedom.



South Africa

The population of South Africa is 43,680,000 with 87% Christian, including 69,498 Adventists, 3% follow traditional religions, and 9% claim no religion. Religious freedom is not challenged by authorities. Some problems linked to Sabbath observance may rise up from time-to-time, but most of the cases are positively solved.



Swaziland

The population of Swaziland is 1.1 million with Christianity being the dominant religion. 40% of the population is Zionist, 20% Catholic, and 30% Protestant, including 2,941 Adventist members. No religious problems for Adventists have been reported.



Togo

The population of Togo is 4,629,000. There is no single dominant religion with about 22% Catholic, 12% Sunni Muslim, 7% Protestant, including 6,199 Adventists, and 59% practice other faiths, including traditional indigenous religions. The constitution of the country provides religious freedom and the government generally respects it. The government requires that religious groups register with the Ministry of the Interior Division of Civil Security. Relations among the various religious communities are friendly and religious tolerance is widespread. Members of the different faiths regularly invite one another to their respective ceremonies.

Category 3

Niger

The population of Niger is 11,200,000. Islam is the dominant religion and is practiced by 90% of the population, with 5% Christian, including 85 Adventist members, and 5% animist. The constitution of the country provides for “the right of the free development of each individual in their spiritual, cultural, and religious dimensions,” and the government generally respects the freedom to practice one’s religious beliefs, as long as persons respect public order, social peace, and national unity. The government also requires that religious groups register with the Ministry of the Interior. Relations among the various religious communities are friendly, but there have been instances when members of the Islamic majority were not tolerant of the right of the members of minority religions to practice their faith.

Nigeria

The population of Nigeria is 120,000,000. There is no single dominant religion. Approximately half of the country’s population practices Islam; approximately 40% are Christian, including 192,251 Adventist members, and 10% practice traditional indigenous religions. The constitution of the country provides for freedom of religion, including freedom to change one’s religion or belief, and freedom to manifest and propagate one’s religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, and observance. The constitution prohibits state and local governments from adopting an official religion; however, it also provides that states may elect to use Islamic (Shari’a) customary law and courts.

Although Christians are exempt from Shari’a law, the ramifications of expanded Shari’a law have infringed upon the rights of non-Muslims in the north to live in a society governed by secular laws. The military’s chaplaincy corps includes imams, Catholic priests, and Protestant pastors. Religious differences often correspond to regional and ethnic

differences. For example, the northern region and much of the middle section of the country are overwhelmingly Muslim, as are the large Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups. Many southern ethnic groups are predominantly Christian. In February and May 2000, rioting between Muslim and Christian groups over the proposed extension of Shari'a in Kaduna caused the deaths of more than 1,500 persons and massive property destruction. Over 500 persons, predominantly of Hausa ethnic groups, were killed in reprisals that took place in Abia, Imo, and other eastern states.

Since this time, incidents have ignited reciprocal ethnic violence in the north, predominately Hausa, city of Kano. Approximately 80 persons died over a four-day period; the majority of the victims were Yorubas. Several Adventists were killed among other Christians during the religious violence. Jerald Whitehouse, director of the Seventh-day Adventists Church's Muslim Relations Center in California, says Adventists play an important part in promoting principles of tolerance and religious freedom by building friendship with people of different religions. He adds:

“We also encourage local churches to participate with local mosques in joint seminars and in community projects that enhance the quality of life and values in the community. It's helpful to understand that most Muslims share the same concerns for family, morality, and values, and we can work together to preserve these.” *(ANN, April 30, 2002)*

The Pope's statement, made on April 23, 2002 in Rome against the violations of religious freedom in the twelve northern states of Nigeria, reads as follows:

There are certain parts of the country where proponents of Islam are acting with ever greater militancy, even to the point of imposing their understanding of Islamic law on entire states within the Nigerian Federation and denying other believers the freedom of religious expression.

I strongly encourage and support your every effort to speak out courageously and forcefully in this regard.

Government leaders, both local and federal, as well as people of good will of all persuasion, must be reminded of the obligation of every government to ensure that the equality of all citizens before the law is never violated for religious reasons whether openly or covertly. (*Zenit/APD, April 23, 2002*)



Tanzania

The population of Tanzania exceeds 30 million people. Muslims and Christians are the dominant religious groups. There are about 250,811 Adventist members. The Adventist members have a strong influence, especially in the area surrounding Lake Victoria. Freedom of worship is a constitutional right in Tanzania, but as with other countries, acts of violation are found in schools and workplaces. This year, 2002, four students were dropped from the Sokoine University of Agriculture because they could not take examinations on Saturday. Seventh-day Adventist administrators and lawyers are preparing to assist the students in upholding their rights. They will approach University administrators first, and are prepared to meet with the head of state, if that fails.



Uganda

The population of Uganda is 23 million with 66% of the population Christian, and 16% Muslim. Adventists are a significant group in this country with 120,574 Adventist members. Freedom of worship is a right enshrined in the constitution. The Adventist Church has suffered discrimination in relation to Sabbath observance. For the first time, a breakthrough was made this year (2002) when national elections were rescheduled on a day other than Saturday. The church had threatened to stage a peaceful demonstration and the rescheduling of elections was a good compromise between the Adventist Union and the Election Commission. It is hoped that the government will continue to respect this right.

Adventist students in almost all institutions of higher learning have suffered a violation of their right to worship on Saturday. Selection entry exams are conducted on Saturday. This means that Adventists students will not gain access to these institutions. Students have managed to miss classes conducted on Saturdays without serious harm because they can get study notes from classmates. A serious challenge has arisen when tutorials, weekly tests, and exams have been held on Saturday. More than 14 students from Makerere University have dropped courses. This number would be greater if other institutions would be included. The Adventist Church has always fought this problem for the students. So far no signs of success are showing. The interesting thing is that special arrangements tolerating Muslim students are made during the month of the Ramadan. Up until now, all institutions have refused to accommodate Adventist students. The students and the church in Uganda have exhausted all methods of negotiation. The Adventist Union Executive Committee has voted to seek a constitutional court declaration that a constitutional right is being violated. Lack of funds has halted this move. It has also become common practice that national exams for Home Economics are held on Saturdays. This clearly means that our schools will not teach this subject, nor can Adventist students write this subject in public schools. This could very well start as a problem in one subject and later spread to other subjects and even to all.

Adventists in Uganda have been complaining about being discriminated against because they observe Saturday as Sabbath. As far back as 1997 students are systematically penalized with the national tests which are given on Saturday. Elections are also held on Saturday. Adventists organized a peaceful demonstration and got the support from other religious denominations. The government decided to reschedule the national election from Saturday to Thursday.



Zambia

The population of Zambia is 10,285,631 with 85% Christian, including 367,497 Adventist members, and 5% Muslim. In 1996, the constitution of Zambia was amended and the country was declared a Christian nation. The constitution provides freedom of religion, and the government respects the rights of all religions and churches. Adventists have had Sabbath observance problems on the job and at schools. Employees, who for reasons of conscience, cannot work on Saturday often lose their jobs and face difficulties finding other employment. However, government leaders have participated in Adventist meetings, and the people of Zambia have not shown hostility toward Adventists.



Zimbabwe

The population of Zimbabwe is 11,342,521 with 69% Christian, including 351,914 Adventist members, and 1% Muslim. Religion is generally respected as a constitutional right. The country is facing many political and economic problems which may affect the freedom of religion in several aspects. The government is requested by some religious leaders or others to discriminate against citizens on the basis of religion.

Category 4



Comoro Islands

The population of the Comoro Islands is 578,400 with 99% Muslims and 1% Christians. The government does not encourage religious freedom and Christians have difficulties practicing their faith. Proselytism is prohibited.



Djibouti

The population of Djibouti is approximately 650,000 with 99% Sunni Muslim. No reports of religious liberty abuses have been received.



Eritrea

The population of Eritrea is 4,298,000. Approximately 50% of the population are Sunni Muslim and 40% are Orthodox Christian. There is a small percentage of Protestants including 464 Adventist members.

On May 28, the Eritrean government closed all churches in the country except the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Lutheran churches. The other churches or religious associations, such as Adventists, Baptists, and Pentecostal have to go through a registration process.

According to observers, the government is under the pressure of the Orthodox and the Muslims who are concerned about conversions. Evangelical groups, it seems, are viewed as attracting more and more citizens of Eritrea. The main churches and religious groups are trying to use the power of the State to maintain their dominance.



Mauritania

The population of Mauritania is 2,500,000 with Islam as the religion. Virtually 100% of the people are Muslims with a few Christians. The constitution establishes Mauritania as an Islamic Republic and decrees that Islam is the religion of its citizens and the state. Accordingly, the government limits freedom of religion. The government does not register religious groups; however, secular Non-Governmental Organization's (NGOs) must register with the Ministry of the Interior. Relations between the Muslim community and the small Christian community generally are friendly, and religious tolerance is widespread.



Somalia

The population of Somalia is approximately 7,253,137, the vast majority of whom are Sunni Muslims. Without a central government there is no effective legal provision for the protection of religious freedom in this country.



Sudan

The population of Sudan is 35,079,814. There are no accurate figures on the sizes of the country's religious populations. It is estimated that over 75% of the country's population is Muslim.

On February 7, 2002, Cardinal Roberto Tucci, President of the Vatican Radio Administration committee, reacted against the policy of the government of Sudan toward Christians. He took the example of an 18 year-old Christian, Abok Alfa Akok, who was condemned to death by stoning for being pregnant out of wedlock. The young lady said she had been raped. The statement of the Cardinal gives a good illustration of the situation in Sudan for non-Muslims:

For years in Sudan there has been authentic persecution by the Muslim government against the people of the south, black skins, of Christian or animist religion.

At the end of the year 2000, the civil war that began again in 1983 between the Arab Muslim north and the Christian, animist south, had cost the lives of some 2 million people.

The Shariah (Islamic Law) has been applied to a person who is not Muslim. It would be appropriate to start a campaign of protest against what is happening.

(Zenit, February 7, 2002)

A few months later Bishop Macram Max Gassis of the Sudan Relief Fund told *Reuters*:

The Arab militias are armed, trained, and led by government officers. They are trained to destroy villages, to loot them and to take the children, women, and adolescents as slaves.

The international community must get seriously involved to end this as quickly as possible. Many lives are at stake.