

**Refugee Review Tribunal  
AUSTRALIA**

**RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE**

**Research Response Number:** TZA32096  
**Country:** Tanzania  
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Keywords: Tanzania – Children – Mixed marriages – Muslim-Christian marriages – Muslim converts to Christianity

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**Questions**

- 1. Please provide any information regarding the treatment of children of Muslim-Christian marriages and any evidence that they may constitute a social group vulnerable to persecution in mainland Tanzania.**
- 2. Please provide information on the treatment of Muslim converts to Christianity in mainland Tanzania.**

**RESPONSE**

- 1. Please provide any information regarding the treatment of children of Muslim-Christian marriages and any evidence that they may constitute a social group vulnerable to persecution in mainland Tanzania.**

A search of the sources consulted found no specific information on the treatment of children of Muslim-Christian marriages nor information indicating that such persons may constitute a social group vulnerable to persecution.

One reference was found to mixed Muslim-Christian families in Tanzania, in a Danish Institute of International Studies report published in 2006. The report refers to Tanzania as “an apparently successful instance of the management of religious diversity”. In considering the factors that may have helped mitigate religious conflict in Tanzania, the report observes that “there seems to be a prevalence of cross-cutting identities, including overlapping identities, as in mixed Muslim-Christian families”. The report mentions that:

Tanzania is primarily interesting as a case of “the dog that did not bark”, i.e. as an apparently successful instance of the management of religious diversity without major conflicts – at least

until recently where ominous signs of impending conflicts have appeared, according to some analyses.

... What may also have helped containing and mitigating conflicts is the presence of syncretic elements in both Christianity and Islam in the present Tanzania, where (as elsewhere in Africa) both the two monotheistic religions have incorporated witchcraft beliefs and witchcraft accusations, which have occasionally even been used as a means of politics. There also seems to be a growing influence of charismatic churches, inter alia because of their promises to meet the material needs and dreams of their adherents, e.g. for wealth and healing. Among the marginalised urban youth there even seems to be a growing constituency for Rastafarianism with its message of peace and harmony. Moreover, there seems to be a prevalence of cross-cutting identities, including overlapping identities, as in mixed Muslim-Christian families.

#### *Rise of Fanaticism?*

The general picture of Christian-Muslim relations does thus not appear alarming at all. There have, surely, been some localised clashes, but most of them have been quite small ... The main concern therefore seems to relate to relations between mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, where there does, indeed, seem to be a certain resurgence of Islamic radicalism, even though this may also be due to other factors such as ethnicity and a general feeling of being marginalised. In any case, these sentiments seem to be increasingly articulated in political demands, which would seem to bode well for peace even here – even though recent elections have seen substantial violence (Moller, B. 2006, 'Religion and Conflict in Africa', Danish Institute for International Studies website

[http://www.diis.dk/graphics/Publications/Reports2006/RP\\_06\\_6\\_bmo\\_religion%20and%20conflict.pdf](http://www.diis.dk/graphics/Publications/Reports2006/RP_06_6_bmo_religion%20and%20conflict.pdf) – Accessed 31 July 2007 – Attachment 1).

## **2. Please provide information on the treatment of Muslim converts to Christianity in mainland Tanzania.**

The US Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report for 2006 – Tanzania* notes that:

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. The Government at all levels sought to protect this right in full and did not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

... The Government made some efforts to reduce the tensions between Muslim and Christian communities, which had been escalating in the lead-up to the elections in October 2005. Tensions stemmed from historical disparities between economic and educational opportunities available to Muslims and Christians and were exacerbated by some public rallies at which religious debate resulted in physical altercations.

To promote religious tolerance, President Jakaya Kikwete and Vice President Ali Mohamed Shein, both Muslims, participated regularly in Christian events such as inaugurations and fundraising activities of churches. Government officials frequently participated in interdenominational events sponsored by NGOs.

... The Government does not designate religion on passports or records of vital statistics; however, it requires an individual's religion to be stated on police reports, school registration forms, and applications for medical care. The Government reportedly requires individuals to indicate their religion in police reports in case individuals are later asked to give sworn testimony for which they would need to swear in court according to their religion. The Government requires children to indicate their religion on school registration forms so that

children can be assigned to the appropriate religion class if the school offers religious instruction.

Government policy forbids discrimination against individuals on the basis of religious beliefs or practices; however, individual government and business officials were believed to favor conducting business with persons who shared the same religion. Such favoritism was based on the perceived loyalty that a shared religion was believed to bring to a professional setting.

...Muslim-Christian relations remained stable in rural areas; however, some tension persisted in urban centers due to perceptions by some Muslim or Christian groups that the Government favored the other community in its hiring or law enforcement practices. Tensions between moderate Muslims and Muslim fundamentalists were eased following the October 2005 elections as the latter expressed satisfaction with appointments of Muslims to key government positions. During the elections, interdenominational dialogues and initiatives existing at the national and community levels without formal government sponsorship helped to prevent religion from becoming a political fault line on which to justify societal violence. Muslim-Christian relations, in particular, benefited from these initiatives.

... In March 2006 the [US] embassy organized a youth leadership speaker program that featured an American imam who spoke to youth at locations in Dar Es Salaam and Zanzibar on the importance of sound leadership and the role of the youths in national development. He noted self-reliance, problem solving, and networking as key aspects of progress, and he highlighted the country as an example of the harmonious relationships that can exist between different faiths. He added that the youth needed to ensure that this harmony continued so that the country continued to be a model for other nations in this respect (US Department of State 2006, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2006 – Tanzania*, September – Attachment 2).

An article reporting the alleged kidnapping of a man in Kilwa in Tanzania after he had “openly confess[ed] his conversion to Christianity” was published on the Barnabas Fund website on 17 May 2005. It was reported that:

a young Swahili man was kidnapped on Friday 13th May by his extended Muslim family after openly confessing his conversion to Christianity... The Tanzania convert, E, converted to Christianity just a few months ago, and since then has been openly sharing his faith with his community in Kilwa, Tanzania, despite his family’s open hostility to his conversion and being thrown out of the family home. He recently entered into an argument on Islamic theology, at a family gathering where Muslim leaders were also present, and the audience threatened to beat him up. Last Friday his uncles kidnapped him, taking him to another location and keeping him incommunicado. He managed to make a phone call on Sunday to ask for help to escape (‘Converts from Islam Kidnapped in India and Tanzania’ 2005, Barnabus Fund website, 17 May [http://www.barnabasfund.org/news/archives/text.php?ID\\_news\\_items=51](http://www.barnabasfund.org/news/archives/text.php?ID_news_items=51) – Accessed 31 July 2007 – Attachment 3).

An article published on the John Mark Ministries website on 19 May 2005 reported that the man was “now safe”:

Prayers have been answered for the safety of a convert from Tanzania who was kidnapped by his extended family... With help from friends he has been able to escape their custody, and is now safe... Now in a safe location E is facing decisions about his future (‘Kidnapped convert escapes’ 2005, John Mark Ministries website, 19 May <http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/15108.htm> – Accessed 31 August 2007 – Attachment 4).

A search of the sources consulted found no further references to this case nor other information regarding the treatment, in Tanzania, of persons choosing to convert from Islam to Christianity.

## **List of Sources Consulted**

### Internet Sources:

#### **Government Information & Reports**

US Department of State website <http://www.state.gov>

#### **Non-Government Organisations**

Amnesty International website <http://www.amnesty.org>

Human Rights Watch website <http://www.hrw.org>

#### **International News & Politics**

Africa Confidential website <http://www.africa-confidential.com>

Africa Daily website <http://www.africadaily.com>

All Africa.com <http://allafrica.com>

BBC News website <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

IRINnews.org website <http://www.irinnews.org>

#### **Topic Specific Links**

Barnabas Fund website <http://www.barnabasfund.org/>

Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity website <http://www.isic-centre.org/>

Tanzania On-Line website <http://www.tzonline.org/>

#### **Search Engines**

Copernic search engine

### Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Country Research database)

## **List of Attachments**

1. Moller, B. 2006, 'Religion and Conflict in Africa', Danish Institute for International Studies website [http://www.diis.dk/graphics/Publications/Reports2006/RP\\_06\\_6\\_bmo\\_religion%20and%20conflict.pdf](http://www.diis.dk/graphics/Publications/Reports2006/RP_06_6_bmo_religion%20and%20conflict.pdf) – Accessed 31 July 2007.
2. US Department of State 2006, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2006 – Tanzania*, September.
3. 'Converts from Islam Kidnapped in India and Tanzania' 2005, Barnabus Fund website, 17 May [http://www.barnabasfund.org/news/archives/text.php?ID\\_news\\_items=51](http://www.barnabasfund.org/news/archives/text.php?ID_news_items=51) – Accessed 31 July 2007.
4. 'Kidnapped convert escapes' 2005, John Mark Ministries website, 19 May <http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/15108.htm> – Accessed 31 August 2007.