



Malawi – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 23 November 2015

Information on Muslim fundamentalism in Malawi

Information on Muslim fundamentalism in Malawi was extremely scarce among sources available to the Research and Information Unit.

A report on the 2014 elections in Malawi published by the European Commission states:

“Late in the election religion entered the debate. While an undercurrent of resentment has always existed between the indigenous population and the Asian population, caused by the amount of wealth that rests with the Asian sector, attitudes seemed to harden during the pre-election period. In Chipita, a Catholic priest expressed concern about the economic and political situation and suggested that as a result of the President inviting Palestinian and Asian businessmen into the country the Muslim political power base was increasing. It was also reported to LTOs that a Muslim candidate was receiving financial support from Libya. According to press reports, the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission issued guidelines on who its faithful should vote for, based on how the presidential hopefuls presented themselves during a series of meetings with the clergy. In general, the Anglican and Catholic Churches were widely believed to be supporting opposition parties. During the week before the elections, the Civil Liberties Committee (CILIC) reportedly requested Radio Islam and people who participated in panel discussion programmes to ‘desist from promoting hate speech which could divide people on religious lines’. This request followed two radio broadcasts where panellists and telephone callers spoke against Christians in general and Catholic priest, Father Boniface Tamani, Chairman of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC), in particular.” (European Commission (2014) *Presidential and Parliamentary Elections 20 May 2004: European Union Election Observation Mission Final Report*, p.21)

An article from the UK-based newspaper Nyasa Times states:

“A group of irate Muslims went on rampage in the resort district of Mangochi on Wednesday damaging shops including Metro Peoples Trading Centre and forcing banks to close because one businessman was found selling pork in a market. Business came to a halt from 11 am until afternoon hours as sections of Muslims took the law into their hands blocking the main road. The situation went too unbearable and it had to take the police to use tear gas and live bullets to bring sanity to the situation. ‘The bone of contention is that one person was found selling pork in the market. The pork was confiscated and the issue went to court. The court was supposed to pass its verdict today,’ a Mangochi resident working for one of the civil society organizations told Nyasa Times. He added: ‘My family and I and many other people are indoors fearing for their lives. We will get out when the situation is calm.’ Although

police used tear gas to quell the situation, the tension went to the Magistrate Court in the afternoon where a ruling on the issue was expected to be delivered.” (Nyasa Times (27 November 2013) *Malawi Muslims riot*)

A report from the online newspaper Malawi 24 states:

“Malawians must brace themselves for tough times as the Muslim Association of Malawi has decided to challenge the Malawi legal system and establish its own legal structures that tries and punishes people found in fault with the teaching of Islam or questioning it. According to a news website for the association, the first victims of the court which they are pretending is a tribunal were three teenagers who were shooting a musical video which Muslim authorities did not find to be in good taste.” (Malawi 24 (3 August 2015) *Malawi: Sharia Law in Malawi*)

This report also states:

“Malawi24 understands that when interrogated the young people said they were non-active Muslims and their song had nothing to do with the religion. This did not impress the authorities and they later set up a court to try the young people the way ISIS has set up courts in its territories. At the court sitting, the three were fined K25,000 or serve six weeks of Community work in Mosques in default while being forced to learn principles of Islam. The three who could not pay the amount will be serving their punishment by cleaning Mosques in Makhetha.” (ibid)

A Nyasa Times article states:

“The Muslim mother body in Malawi the Muslim Association of Malawi (MAM) has distanced itself from accusations it says are made by the Malawi police officers linking the religious body and its members to a terrorist organization. General-Secretary for MAM Sheikh Dr Salmin Omar Idruss said in a statement issued Sunday [16 November] that the association has heard that some police officers are linking Muslims in Malawi to terrorist groups and that the Muslims are not supposed to own land in Blantyre ‘We found these sentiments to be segregatory. MAM has no connection to any terrorist group or any of its members,’ says Idruss, ‘We are therefore dismayed that some elements in the society are discriminating MAM and its general membership based on their religious beliefs,’ he adds. The sheikh was reacting to the arrest of Muslims on Friday for allegedly hacking and terrorizing the villagers who have encroached piece of land which is believed to belong to an Islamic Institution known as Blantyre Islamic Mission.” (Nyasa Times (17 November 2014) *Malawi Muslim body denies links with terror groups*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

References:

European Commission (2014) *Presidential and Parliamentary Elections 20 May 2004: European Union Election Observation Mission Final Report*
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European Country of Origin Information Network

Google

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Lexis Nexis

Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database

UK Home Office

UNHCR Refworld

US Department of State