



Togo – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 9 March 2015

Up to date country of origin information referencing a powerful cult or ritual child sacrifice cult in Togo. (Possibly related to “JuJu” or “Oracle”).

Current information on a child sacrifice cult in Togo was not found among sources available to the Research and Information Unit.

The US Department of State religious freedom report for Togo, in “Section I. Religious Demography”, states:

“Many Christians and Muslims also engage in indigenous religious practices. Reliable figures are difficult to obtain due to migration and because the government does not collect religious and ethnic data.” (US Department of State (28 July 2014) *2013 Report on International Religious Freedom – Togo*, p.1)

An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada response to a request for information on the practice of “voodoo” in Togo states:

“The official Web site of the Togo tourism board (Office national togolais du tourisme) states that animist beliefs and voodoo are prevalent in Togolese culture, [translation] ‘despite the proliferation of Christianity and Islam,’ and that, [translation] ‘the role of fetishers and diviners is still fairly significant.’ (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (4 April 2005) *Togo: Influence of “voodoo” or “djakatou” in Togo; relations between practitioners of those religions and Christians in Lomé (January 2003-March 2005)*)

See also Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada response which states:

“According to an article published in 2008 by Agence France-Presse (AFP), 60 percent of the Togolese population practises voodoo (23 July 2008). An article from a private news agency in Togo, Savoir News, published in April 2012, indicates that 52 percent of the Togolese population practises voodoo (Savoir News 9 Apr. 2012). In an interview with Savoir News in December 2011, the national president of voodoo priests in Togo told the journalist questioning him about the practice of voodoo that it would be [translation] ‘very difficult to tell him certain things’ because the journalist was an outsider.” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (6 July 2012) *TGO104139.FE – Togo: The practice of voodoo in Togo, particularly in the Vo Asso tribe; rituals to become a voodoo priest and traditions*)

An article from the New Zealand Herald states:

“Like Ghana to the west, Togo is an enthusiastically religious country, divided between a Muslim north and a Christian south. With both religions so well established, it is difficult to understand how voodoo can sit so easily alongside them. Yet clearly it does - one researcher tells me that as many as half of all Togolese people believe in voodoo powers to at least some extent, and may use them when more traditional methods of medicine or worship fail. Though Abraham is reluctant to admit it, the main proponents of voodoo now seem to be the poor and underprivileged, particularly the migrants from rural areas now crowding into the larger coastal cities of Lome and Accra. While Christianity explodes with vigour - there are Mormon churches in every village, and every power pole here seems to carry an advert for an evangelical revival or sermon by visiting American Baptists - voodoo harks back to traditions both ancient and overlooked by the mainstream church. Or, at least officially overlooked, for as Abraham admits, many practising Christians are the first to turn to fetishes and spells should their prayers go unanswered.” (New Zealand Herald (18 March 2014) *Togo: It's a kind of magic*)

A report on the treatment of disabled children in West Africa published by the children's development organisation Plan International, in a section headed “False beliefs on the causes of impairments” states:

“All four country studies in Togo, Sierra Leone, Niger and Guinea reported many strong negative beliefs about how children acquired their impairment(s) based on cultural, religious and historical beliefs of disability.” (Plan International (September 2013) *Outside the Circle*, pp.23-24)

In a section headed “Discrimination towards children with disabilities by their families” this report states:

“In Togo, it was reported children with disabilities are left anonymously at religious institutions for care. Some families are believed to have killed their children who have an impairment.” (ibid, p.25)

This section of the report also states:

“Before, there were many things being told about children with disabilities, especially those with severe disabilities, such as children with cerebral palsy who cannot stand. In my community, these children are called snakes. We call these children ‘snake’ because they lie on the ground. [...] To eliminate (kill) the child, ceremonies are organized at the river, where the child is left to drown and it is said that the snake is gone and certain ceremonies prevent the return of the snake in the family.” Local NGO representative, Togo” (ibid, pp.25-26)

A report published by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a paragraph headed “Questions from the Experts”, states:

“Another Expert asked about the issue of women or girls with disabilities. The report mentioned that these needs were factored into healthcare provision, but there were reports that with regard to education there were no prioritized programmes for girls. What special programmes were available to ensure access to education and healthcare, as well as employment opportunities? Had the State taken steps to tackle the killing of children with malformations

at birth?" (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (4 October 2012) *Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women considers report of Togo*)

In a paragraph headed "Response from the Delegation" this report states:

"Cases of the killing of deformed infants were an issue of concern and a study was recently completed into the problem which would properly document this field and help build a strategy to combat it." (ibid)

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:

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