

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally enforced these protections.

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom.

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 150 square miles and a population of 119,000. Christianity is the dominant religion. According to the 2001 census, the Anglican Church and Pentecostal congregations each consist of approximately 19,000 members; the Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, and Baptist churches each have 11,000 adherents; 8,000 citizens are Roman Catholic; and Rastafarians number approximately 1,500 persons. There are also other religious groups, such as Church of God, other evangelical groups, Bahais, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

Please refer to Appendix C in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for the status of the government's acceptance of international legal standards <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/appendices/index.htm>.

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Students in public schools received nondenominational religious instruction based on Christianity; however, attendance was not mandatory. Representatives from

different religious groups, especially Anglican and Catholic, were occasionally invited to speak to students. Teachers may provide information on other religious groups.

The government prohibits the use of marijuana, including for religious purposes. Rastafarians complained that marijuana is integral to their religious rituals.

The government occasionally organized interfaith services through the Christian Council, an organization consisting of the Anglican, Catholic, and Methodist Churches, and the Salvation Army.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday, Easter, Whit Monday, and Christmas.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

There were no reports of abuses, including religious prisoners or detainees, in the country.

Section III. Status of Societal Actions Affecting Enjoyment of Religious Freedom

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom. Rastafarians, however, complained of discrimination, especially in hiring and in schools.

Both the Christian Council of Churches and Association of Evangelical Churches conducted activities to promote greater mutual understanding and respect among different Christian denominations.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.