

SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom. The government did not demonstrate a trend toward either improvement or deterioration in respect for and protection of the right to 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.

The U.S. government discussed religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. Members of the embassy met with all sectors of civil society and engaged in discussions of religious freedom on a regular basis.

Section I. Religious Demography

Christianity is the dominant religion. An estimated 50 percent of the population adheres to Anglican beliefs, and 25 percent is Roman Catholic. The remainder of the population includes Methodists, Moravians, Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Rastafarians, Muslims, Hindus, and members of the Baha'i Faith. Evangelical Christian groups are gaining followers.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom.

The Ministry of Social Development is responsible for registering religious groups. Religious groups are not required to register, but can if they desire. Registering helps provide the government with a database with which to disseminate information about any relevant opportunities that may arise.

There are two Catholic schools and a Seventh-day Adventist school. The government does not contribute financially to these schools. Public schools can conduct morning Christian prayers and hymns at the discretion of the principal, but there is no policy specifically addressing other religions. Practicing other religions has generally not been an issue in schools.

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

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

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for 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.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discussed religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. Representatives of the U.S. embassy also discussed religious freedom with members of nongovernmental organizations, religious charitable organizations, and business leaders as part of its regular engagement with members of civil society.