

SAINT LUCIA 2012 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government respected religious freedom. The trend in the government's respect for religious freedom did not change significantly during the year.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

Embassy representatives discussed religious freedom with the Red Cross of St. Lucia and with the attorney general. When the media reported that a Seventh-day Adventist claimed that her employment termination was a violation of her religious freedom, an embassy officer discussed the case with the labor commissioner.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to a 2011 World Bank estimate, the population is approximately 176,000. The 2010 Population and Housing Census reports Roman Catholics account for approximately 61.1 percent of the population; Seventh-day Adventists, 10.4 percent; Pentecostals, 8.8 percent; evangelicals, 2.2 percent; Baptists, 2.1 percent; and Rastafarians, 2 percent. Other groups together constituting less than 5 percent of the population include Anglicans, members of the Church of God, Jehovah's Witnesses, Methodists, Muslims, and Bahais. Nearly 6 percent of the population claims no religious affiliation.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom. The anti-blasphemy law is not enforced. The government is secular and does not interfere with an individual's right to worship. The government maintains an active relationship with the Christian Council, an organization consisting of representatives of the Catholic Church and mainstream Protestant denominations.

The government's revised registration policy for religious groups regulates missionary work and labor permits, and allows a religious group to have duty-free

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import privileges and exemption from some labor requirements. It also covers regulation of nondenominational groups.

The public school curriculum includes Christian education; however, non-Christian students are not required to participate. There also are private schools sponsored by the Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, and Anglican churches.

The government prohibits the use of marijuana, including for religious purposes.

The government observes Good Friday, Easter, Whit Monday, the Feast of Corpus Christi, and Christmas as national holidays.

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom.

In an incident widely reported in local newspapers in August, an employee of the St. Lucia Electricity Company (LUCELEC) was fired for refusing to work on Saturday. A Seventh-day Adventist, the employee was quoted in the media as saying she would never work on the Sabbath and she alleged her termination was unjustified on the grounds of religious discrimination. The National Workers Union (NWU) took up the employee's cause. LUCELEC publicly stated that according to the terms of her contract, the employee would be available to work at any time when needed. The labor commissioner reported that the case might not rise to the level of religious discrimination, but he and the labor minister were mediating between the LUCELEC and the NWU. The case was unresolved at year's end.

Rastafarians complained that marijuana was integral to their religious rituals.

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.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

Embassy officers discussed religious freedom with the government, nongovernmental organizations, and religious charitable organizations. The embassy raised the issue of the dismissed Seventh-day Adventist with the

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government. Embassy officers met specifically with the solicitor general and the Red Cross to discuss religious freedom.