

BARBADOS 2013 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

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

There were reports of societal discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

The U.S. embassy discussed religious freedom with the government. Embassy officials met with leaders of various faith groups and discussed religious freedom issues throughout the year.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 288,700 (July 2013 estimate). According to the 2010 census, more than 76 percent of the population is Christian. The most recent census indicates that the two largest groups are Anglicans (24 percent) and Pentecostals (19 percent), followed by Seventh-day Adventists (6 percent), Methodists (4 percent), and Roman Catholics (4 percent). There are small numbers of Baptists, Moravians, Wesleyans, and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons).

According to the 2010 census, 21 percent of respondents did not identify a religious affiliation, and non-Christians constituted less than 3 percent of the population. While the 2010 census reports 1,605 Muslims, local Muslim groups estimate their numbers to be higher. Most Muslims trace their ancestry to the Indian state of Gujarat. Other religious groups include Jews, Rastafarians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Bahais.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies generally protect religious freedom. An unenforced section of the legal code criminalizes blasphemous libel. Religious groups are required to register with the corporate affairs and intellectual property office to obtain duty free import privileges or tax benefits. To register, a religious group must file the applicable form along with a resolution passed by the majority

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of its board of trustees expressly authorizing the application, and file a related statutory declaration.

Religious instruction is included in the public school curriculum as “values education.” The focus is on Christianity, but representatives from other religious groups also are invited to speak to students. Students can excuse themselves from this curriculum and from morning prayers on religious grounds.

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

Government Practices

Rastafarians protested that marijuana use, prohibited by law, was integral to their religious rituals. Rastafarians reported extra scrutiny from police and immigration officials.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were reports of societal discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

Rastafarians stated they faced subtle discrimination, especially in hiring and in schools.

Numerous religious groups conducted activities to promote greater mutual understanding and respect among adherents of different denominations.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. embassy discussed religious freedom with the government. Embassy officials engaged regularly with religious group leaders and all sectors of civil society on the topic of religious freedom. This included meetings with leaders of the Anglican diocese, the Catholic Church, church-based civil society organizations, and the evangelical association. Embassy officials also had ongoing contact and meetings with the leadership of the Muslim association.