

# **BARBADOS 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT**

## **Executive Summary**

The constitution and other laws provide for freedom of religion, including the freedom to change religion, and prohibit discrimination based on belief.

A Muslim association faced public criticism after media outlets mischaracterized the nature of the community's real estate development. Rastafarians were concerned about discrimination in employment and education.

U.S. embassy officers engaged in discussion about religious freedom with government officials and members of the Muslim and Rastafarian communities.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 289,680 (July 2014 estimate). According to the 2010 census, approximately 76 percent of the population is Christian. The census indicates that the two largest Christian 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). Approximately 21 percent of respondents do not identify a religious affiliation. Other religious groups, which together constitute less than 3 percent of the population, include Muslims, Jews, Rastafarians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Bahais. According to the census, there are 1,605 Muslims; however, local Muslim groups estimate their numbers to be higher.

## **Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

### **Legal Framework**

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, including the freedom of individuals to change their religion, and prohibits discrimination based on creed. A law criminalizing "blasphemous libel" is unenforced.

Religious groups are required to register with the Corporate Affairs and Intellectual Property Office in order to obtain duty free import privileges or tax benefits. To register, a religious group must file the applicable form along with a resolution

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

The public school curriculum includes religious “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 constitution grants religious groups the right to establish and maintain schools and to provide religious instruction.

The government prohibits the use of marijuana, including for religious purposes, and the law is strictly enforced.

### **Government Practices**

Rastafarians were concerned about the government’s prohibition on marijuana use, which they said was integral to their religious rituals. Rastafarians reported extra scrutiny from police and immigration officials.

Muslims said they objected to a government policy that required individuals to remove the hijab for identification and passport photos. The Barbados Muslim Association asked the government to change its practices to permit head coverings in identification photos.

### **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

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

After media mischaracterized as “exclusive” the nature of a Muslim association’s real estate development, which includes plans for a mosque, community center, and residential properties, the association faced public criticism. Association leaders stated, however, that they faced no opposition from the government, and the association was able correct the mischaracterization in the media.

### **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 civil society on issues

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of religious freedom, including with the leadership of the Muslim and Rastafarian communities.