

SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution provides for freedom of religion and prohibits discrimination based on religion. Rastafarians stated they experienced discrimination in school enrollment and were concerned the government prohibited their use of marijuana for religious rituals.

Rastafarians stated they continued to face societal discrimination, including when seeking employment.

U.S. embassy officers engaged in discussion about religious freedom with government officials and a leader of the Rastafarian community.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 51,538 (July 2014 estimate). According to the 2010 census, approximately 50 percent of the population is Anglican and 25 percent is Roman Catholic. The remainder includes Methodists, Moravians, Pentecostals, Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Rastafarians, Muslims, Hindus, and Bahais. Evangelical Christian groups are growing in number.

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 religious belief.

The Ministry of Social and Community Development is responsible for registering religious groups. Religious groups are not required to register, but may do so if desired. Registration provides the government with a database of contacts through which it disseminates information to the groups.

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The constitution protects religious education and grants religious groups the right to establish and maintain schools. Public schools conduct morning Christian prayers and hymns as part of daily assemblies, but there is no policy specifically addressing other religions. Those who object are exempt from such prayers and hymns.

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

Government Practices

Rastafarians stated they continued to face discrimination, including cases in which public and private school officials refused to enroll Rastafarian children in violation of national laws. The Ministry of Social Development supported the Rastafarian families and worked to reverse the school policies.

Rastafarians stated they faced extra scrutiny from police and immigration officials, such as longer or additional searches and questioning. They said they were sometimes required to remove hair wraps for identification photos contrary to the policies of the Ministry of National Security. Rastafarian representatives also stated the government prohibited their use of marijuana, which they described as integral to their religious rituals.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Rastafarians stated they continued to face discrimination in seeking employment.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

U.S. embassy officers discussed religious freedom with government officials. Embassy representatives discussed the impact of government policies and societal attitudes on Rastafarians with a leader of the Rastafarian community.