

# **SAINT LUCIA 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT**

## **Executive Summary**

The constitution provides for freedom of religion and prohibits discrimination based on religious belief. Individuals have the right to change their religion. Rastafarians stated that the government's prohibition on marijuana use affected their religious rituals.

There were no reports of significant societal actions affecting religious freedom.

The U.S. embassy discussed religious freedom with representatives of the government and civil society.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 163,362 (July 2014 estimate). The 2010 Population and Housing Census reports Roman Catholics account for 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 Framework**

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, including through practice, worship, and education, and protects the right of individuals to change their religion. It prohibits discrimination based on religious practice. An antiblasphemy law is not enforced.

The government's registration policy for religious groups regulates missionary work and labor permits and allows a religious group duty-free import privileges and exemption from some labor requirements. It also covers regulation of nondenominational and secular nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

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The public school curriculum includes Christian education; non-Christian students are not required to participate. The constitution grants religious groups the right to establish and maintain schools and provide religious instruction. There are private schools sponsored by the Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, and Anglican churches.

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

### **Government Practices**

In September a labor tribunal found that a Seventh-day Adventist employee of the St. Lucia Electricity Company (LUCELEC) was justifiably dismissed for breach of contract and was not a victim of religious discrimination. In 2012, LUCELEC, a public entity, fired the employee for refusing to work on Saturday. The employee was quoted in the media as saying she would never work on the Sabbath and stated her termination was unjustified and due to religious discrimination.

Rastafarians expressed concern about the government's prohibition of marijuana use, which they described as integral to their religious rituals.

The government maintained an active relationship with the Christian Council, an organization consisting of representatives of the Catholic Church and some Protestant denominations.

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

There were no reports of significant societal actions affecting religious freedom.

### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy**

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