

# **ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA 2013 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT**

## **Executive Summary**

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

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

The U.S. embassy discussed religious freedom with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with all sectors of civil society.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 90,000 (July 2013 estimate). According to the 2001 census, 74 percent of the population is Christian. The Anglican Church is the largest religious group, accounting for 26 percent of the population. The Antigua and Barbuda Evangelical Alliance, an organization that includes most independent evangelical churches, comprises 25 percent of the population. The Methodist, Moravian, and Roman Catholic churches account for less than 10 percent each. Jehovah's Witnesses number more than 1,000 members. Other religious groups include an estimated 1,000 to 1,500 Rastafarians, more than 200 Muslims, nearly 200 Hindus, and approximately 50 members of the Bahai Faith. There are also approximately 200 members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons).

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

### **Legal/Policy Framework**

The constitution and other laws and policies generally protect religious freedom. Although the Small Charges Act mentions blasphemous language, this law is not enforced for blasphemy.

The government is secular; however, the government maintains a close relationship with the Antigua Christian Council. The prime minister is responsible for the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs, whose role is to coordinate greater interaction

## **ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA**

among churches, other religious organizations, and the government. The ministry is also charged with facilitating the entry of religious workers into the country.

The constitution prohibits members of the clergy from running for elected office.

Religious groups are required to incorporate in order to own property. They must register with the government to receive tax and duty-free concessions, especially for building and renovation.

Public schools are secular; religious education is not part of the curriculum.

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

### **Government Practices**

Rastafarians continued to complain about the government's prohibition of marijuana use, which they stated was integral to their religious rituals. They also complained about public schools' requirement that children be vaccinated, which they say is against their religion, and the requirement to remove headgear for passport photos and at security checkpoints during travel.

### **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**

U.S. embassy officers discussed religious freedom with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with members of non-governmental organizations, religious charitable organizations, and business leaders.