

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution provides for freedom of worship and the freedom to change and practice religion. Rastafarians continued to express concern about government practices impacting their religious activities.

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 91,295 (July 2014 estimate). According to the 2011 census, the Anglican Church is the largest religious group, accounting for 17.6 percent of the population, followed by Seventh-day Adventists at 12.4 percent, Pentecostals at 12.2 percent, Moravians at 8.3 percent, Roman Catholics at 8.2 percent, and Methodists at 5.6 percent. Those having unspecified or no religious beliefs account for 5.5 percent and 5.9 percent, respectively. Baptists, members of the Church of God, and members of Wesleyan Holiness each account for fewer than 5 percent. The census categorizes an additional 12.2 percent of the population as belonging to other religions. Groups that together constitute less than 2 percent of the population include Rastafarians, Muslims, Hindus, and Bahais.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution provides for freedom of worship and freedom to change religion and practice religion. The constitution protects individuals from taking oaths contradictory to their beliefs, participating in events and activities of religions not their own if they do not wish to participate, or receiving religious education they do not wish to receive. It also dictates no law shall be put in place contradicting the aforementioned provisions protecting religious freedom. Although there is legislation outlawing blasphemous language, it is not enforced. The constitution prohibits members of the clergy from running for elected office.

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

Public schools are secular.

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

Government Practices

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

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

U.S. embassy officers discussed religious freedom with various government officials and with members of non-governmental organizations, religious charitable organizations, and business leaders.