

# **GRENADA 2022 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT**

## **Executive Summary**

The constitution protects freedom of conscience, including freedom of thought and religion. The criminal code prohibits the publication and sale of blasphemous language; however, the code is not enforced.

The government continued to review its religious affairs program to determine appropriate resource allocation, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. The Religious Affairs Unit moved from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Health following the June 23 general elections. A government faith-based and community-based skills training program that began in 2021 continued throughout the year. Denominational and ecumenical Christian worship services and prayer continued to form part of official festivities on national holidays, religious holidays, and in other public functions. Government officials worked with religious groups regarding the safe reopening of all religious services and activities following the pandemic. The government held a national day of spiritual reflection and prayer on June 26.

The Conference of Churches Grenada (CCG), an ecumenical Christian body with Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian members, continued to promote unity and mutual understanding among members of the Christian community. The CCG held meetings and continued to encourage discussions with other faith-based groups, including evangelical Protestants and the Muslim community.

U.S. embassy officials discussed the government's support for religious diversity and tolerance with Jonathan LaCrette, the Minister for Health, Wellness, and Religious Affairs, in August and September. Embassy representatives also used social media to promote religious freedom, including freedom of conscience, belief, and thought.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 114,000 (midyear 2022). According to the latest government estimate (2011), 49.2 percent of the population identifies as Protestant (Pentecostal 17.2 percent; Seventh-day Adventist 13.2 percent; Anglican 8.5 percent; Baptist 3.2 percent; Church of God 2.4 percent; evangelical Protestant 1.9 percent; Methodist 1.6 percent; and other 1.2 percent). Approximately 36 percent identifies as Roman Catholic; 1.2 percent as Jehovah's Witnesses; 1.2 percent as Rastafarian; 5.5 percent as other; 5.7 percent as having no religious affiliation; and 1.3 percent as unspecified. Smaller groups include Brethren, Baha'is, Hindus, Moravians, Muslims, Mennonites, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Salvation Army. There is a small Jewish community. All these groups have fewer than 1,000 members.

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

### **Legal Framework**

The constitution protects freedom of conscience, including freedom of thought and religion. It guarantees the right to change one's religion and to manifest and propagate it. The constitution prohibits forced participation in any religious ceremony or instruction.

The criminal code prohibits the publication and sale of materials containing language deemed blasphemous; however, the government does not enforce the law.

To qualify for customs and tax exemptions, a religious group must obtain recognition from the government as a nongovernmental organization (NGO). The group must also register with the Corporate Affairs and Intellectual Property Office (CAIPO) and with the Inland Revenue Office in the Ministry of Finance, and it must provide a letter of request to the ministry. The Attorney General grants final approval, and the ministry grants applications for tax exemptions; these are

routinely approved. To be recognized as an NGO, the group must submit details to CAIPO regarding the organization, including information about its directors, as well as a description of the group's general activities and the location of these activities. According to 2011 government statistics, the most recent available, and information from CAIPO, there are approximately 20 religious groups registered in the country.

By law, the government allows religious head coverings of certain types, including the hijab and the Rastafarian head wrap, in photographs for national identity documents, provided the face is clearly visible.

The government, by law, subsidizes all public denominational schools staffed by the associated faith-based organization, including those of the Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, and Mennonite communities. Students at such schools may attend religion classes and may use credits from those classes towards completion of the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate. Students from religious groups other than the one associated with a school may also attend these schools and are not obligated to attend religion classes. There are no non-Christian denominational schools.

As part of the visa process, foreign missionaries must apply to the Ministry of Labor for a work permit costing 500 East Caribbean dollars (ECD) (\$185), along with an application fee of 100 ECD (\$37); the permit must be renewed annually. To be approved, foreign missionaries must demonstrate prior experience, and a registered religious group must sponsor them.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

### **Government Practices**

Following June 23 general elections, the Office of Religious Affairs, also known as the Religious Affairs Unit, moved from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Health and Wellness, creating the Ministry of Health, Wellness, and Religious

Affairs. Reshuffling of ministries and government offices is customary following elections. The government continued to review its religious affairs program to determine appropriate resource allocation through year's end, especially in light of the office's transfer and the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Minister LaCrette, the government's stated objective for making the transfer was to ensure the holistic (physical, mental, and spiritual) wellbeing of the country and its people. LaCrette said his goal was to see a nation that was not only physically well, but also one in which individuals had the freedom to worship and practice their religion.

The government's faith-based skills training program, inaugurated in 2021, continued throughout the year. Community churches organized the program with financial assistance from the government, and it was available to anyone, regardless of religion, interested in acquiring lifelong occupational skills.

Government officials consulted and collaborated with religious groups regarding the safe reopening of all religious services and activities following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The government held a national day of spiritual reflection and prayer on June 26.

As in previous years, the government's official declarations, speeches, and activities attended by the Governor General, Prime Minister, and other officials often included religious references. Examples included Christian prayers, scripture readings, and exhortations from members of the religious community, such as the head of the Conference of Churches. Denominational and ecumenical Christian worship services were part of official festivities on national holidays such as Independence and Thanksgiving Day.

Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell, along with other cabinet ministers, gave remarks at the annual ecumenical church service organized by the National Celebrations Committee in collaboration with the CCG to commemorate the country's Thanksgiving Day, marking the anniversary of the 1983 U.S. military intervention.

The public service featured prayers, scripture readings, and sermons from various Christian denominations.

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

The CCG, an ecumenical Christian body that includes Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian members, continued to serve as a forum to promote mutual understanding, unity, and tolerance among religious organizations. The CCG continued to encourage discussions with different faith-based Christian and non-Christian organizations. During the year, the CCG hosted a monthly televised program, “The CCG Hour,” which encouraged inclusivity with guest speakers from various denominations. In a June broadcast, former CCG chairman Reverend Osbert James stated, “The ecumenical role of the CCG is to promote human rights and to work together with Christians and persons from different faith traditions, including the Muslim and Rastafarian community, for the common interest of the Grenadian people.” According to James, it also sought to help non-Christian religious organizations whose members may have had their rights infringed by providing advocacy or mediation services.

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

In August and September, embassy representatives engaged government officials, including Minister of Health, Wellness, and Religious Affairs LaCrette, regarding the direction of the ministry and key priorities for the government.

Through social media, the embassy recognized different religious holidays, such as Whit Monday (also known as Pentecost Monday), Corpus Christi, Ramadan, the Chinese Lunar New Year, Holi, Yom Kippur, and National Religious Freedom Day. The Ambassador and other embassy officials joined members of the Jewish community in lighting candles during a ceremony on International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The embassy also made frequent use of social media to promote an array of religious freedom issues, to include freedom of conscience, belief, and thought. One such posting stated, “Everyone should feel safe when

attending a religious service, school, a community center event, or while walking down the street wearing the symbols of their faith. We can only fully realize the freedom we wish for ourselves by helping to ensure liberty for all. On Religious Freedom Day, let us rededicate ourselves to these fundamental principles.”