



St. Kitts and Nevis

International Religious Freedom Report 2005

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country, which is a 2-island federation, has an area of 104 square miles, and its population is approximately 46,000. Christianity is the dominant religion; an estimated 50 percent of the population adheres to Anglican beliefs, and 25 percent is Roman Catholic. Methodist, Moravian, Seventh-day Adventist, and Jehovah's Witnesses denominations also are present. Evangelical Christian denominations have been gaining followers. There is a small Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) community. Minority religions include Rastafarianism and the Baha'i Faith. There is no organized Jewish community, although there is a Jewish cemetery on Nevis.

There are two Catholic schools in the country—one primary and the other a primary and secondary school. There also is a Seventh-day Adventist primary school. The Government does not contribute financially to these schools.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government is secular and does not interfere with an individual's right to worship.

The Ministry of Social Development is responsible for the registration of religious groups.

Christian holy days, such as Good Friday, Easter, Whit Monday, and Christmas, are national holidays.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

In the past, Rastafarians in prison routinely had their dreadlocks cut off, a practice that ran counter to their religious beliefs. This practice has stopped; dreadlocks must now be secured by a net. Rastafarian children are allowed to wear long hair in school. Adherents to the Rastafarian faith complained that the use of marijuana, used in their religious rituals, was illegal and that their members were victims of societal discrimination, especially in hiring.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Abuses by Terrorist Organizations

There were no reported abuses targeted at specific religions by terrorist organizations during the period covered by this report.

Section III. Societal Attitudes

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. The Federation's citizens have a history of being open and tolerant of all faiths. Society is dominated by Christian attitudes, values, and mores; however, citizens respect the rights of followers of minority religions. The St. Kitts Christian Council, which includes the Anglican, Catholic, Methodist and other traditional Christian faiths, conducts activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of different Christian denominations. The Evangelical Association unites 11 churches in the evangelical community and promotes their interests. Rastafarians complained that there was widespread discrimination against their members, especially in hiring and in schools.

While maintaining its secular nature, the Government required all schools to conduct morning Christian prayers and hymns. Government meetings generally began with a Christian religious invocation.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The U.S. Embassy (resident in Barbados) also discusses religious freedom issues with local religious groups.

Released on November 8, 2005

[International Religious Freedom Report Home Page](#)