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## St. Vincent and the Grenadines

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

### International Religious Freedom Report 2010

November 17, 2010

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

The government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom.

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

#### Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 150 square miles and a population of 119,000. Christianity is the dominant religion. According to the 2001 census, the Anglican Church and Pentecostal congregations each consisted of approximately 19,000 members; the Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, and Baptist churches each had 11,000 adherents; 8,000 citizens were Roman Catholic; and Rastafarians numbered approximately 1,500 persons. There were also other religious groups, such as Church of God, other evangelical groups, Baha'is, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

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

##### Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday, Easter, Whit Monday, and Christmas.

Students in public schools received nondenominational religious instruction based on Christianity; however, attendance was not mandatory. Representatives from different religious groups, especially Anglican and Catholic, were occasionally invited to speak to students. Teachers may provide information on other religious groups.

Rastafarians complained that the government prohibited the use of marijuana, which they claimed was integral to their religious rituals.

The government occasionally organized interfaith services through the Christian Council, an organization consisting of the Anglican, Catholic, and Methodist Churches, and the Salvation Army.

#### Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees in the country.

#### Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion.

#### 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, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom. Rastafarians, however, complained of discrimination, especially in hiring and in schools.

Both the Christian Council of Churches and Association of Evangelical Churches conducted activities to promote greater mutual understanding and respect among different Christian denominations.

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

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

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