



St. Vincent and the Grenadines

International Religious Freedom Report 2007

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

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

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

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

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 has an area of 150 square miles and a population of 119,000. Christianity is the dominant religion. According to the 2001 population and housing census, the Anglican Church and Pentecostal congregations each consist of approximately 19,000 members, the Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, and Baptist churches each comprised 11,000 adherents, while 8,000 citizens claim to be Roman Catholic. Other denominations, such as evangelical groups, Church of God, and Jehovah's Witnesses are present in smaller numbers. According to the census, there are approximately 1,500 Rastafarians. Baha'is are present in smaller numbers.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

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

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

Students in public schools receive nondenominational religious instruction based on Christianity; however, students are not forced to participate in religious instruction. Representatives from different religious groups are occasionally invited to speak to students. Most speakers represent the Anglican or Catholic churches. Teachers are also allowed to provide information on other religious groups.

The Government occasionally organizes interfaith services through the Christian Council, an organization comprising the Anglican, Catholic, and Methodist Churches, and the Salvation Army.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

Rastafarians complained that the use of marijuana, integral to their religious rituals, was illegal.

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

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.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious belief or practice; however, Rastafarians 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 tolerance among different Christian denominations.

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.

Released on September 14, 2007

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