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Antigua and Barbuda

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

July-December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report

Report

September 13, 2011

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally enforced these protections.

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and 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 170 square miles and a population of 86,800. According to the 2001 census, 74 percent of the population is Christian. The Anglican Church is the largest religious group, accounting for an estimated 26 percent of the population. The Methodist, Moravian, and Roman Catholic churches account for less than 10 percent each. The United Evangelical Association, an organization that includes most independent evangelical churches, claims an estimated 25 percent of the population, and Jehovah's Witnesses number more than 1,000 members. Non-Christians include an estimated 1,000 to 1,500 Rastafarians, more than 200 Muslims, nearly 200 Hindus, and approximately 50 members of the Bahai Faith.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

Please refer to Appendix C in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for the status of the government's acceptance of international legal standards <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/appendices/index.htm>.

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally enforced these protections.

The government is secular; however, the government maintained a close relationship with the Antigua Christian Council. The prime minister is responsible for the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs, whose role is to coordinate greater interaction between churches, other religious organizations, and the government, and to facilitate the entry of religious workers into the country.

The constitution prohibits members of the clergy from running for elected office.

Religious groups are not required to register with the government; however, groups are required to incorporate to own property. Registered groups receive tax and duty-free concessions, especially for building and renovation.

Public schools are secular; religious education is not part of the curriculum.

The government prohibits the use of marijuana, including for religious purposes. Rastafarians complained that marijuana is integral to their religious rituals.

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

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and 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 abuses, including religious prisoners or detainees, in the country.

Section III. Status of Societal Actions Affecting Enjoyment of 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.

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. Representatives of the U.S. embassy also discussed religious freedom with local religious groups.

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