



## Barbados

### International Religious Freedom Report 2008

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

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion. The law at all levels protects this right in full against abuse, either by government or private actors.

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 period covered by this report.

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 166 square miles and a population of 280,000. According to the 2000 official census, more than 95 percent of the population is considered Christian, although persons may not be active in any particular denomination. The Anglican Church constitutes the largest religious group, with 70,000 members; an estimated 67 percent are active. The next largest group is the Seventh-day Adventists, numbering 16,000 members, 10,000 of whom are active. There are 11,000 Roman Catholics; an estimated 20 percent are active. Pentecostals number 7,000; more than 50 percent are active. Methodists number 5,000, according to church officials, although many more claimed Methodist affiliation in the previous official census; an estimated 60 percent are active. There are 2,500 members of Jehovah's Witnesses; more than 95 percent are active. Baptists, Moravians, and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) are present in small numbers.

The number of non-Christians is small. There are 4,000 Muslims, most of whom are immigrants or descendants of immigrants from the Indian state of Gujarat. A few immigrants from Guyana, Trinidad, South Asia, and the Middle East, as well as 200 native-born persons, comprise the rest of the growing Muslim community. There are three mosques and an Islamic center. Other religious groups include Rastafarians, Hindus, Buddhists, and members of the Baha'i Faith.

#### Section II. Status of 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 law at all levels protects this right in full against abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

The Government observes Good Friday, Easter Monday, Whit Monday, and Christmas as national holidays.

Religious groups are required to register with the Government to obtain duty-free import privileges or tax benefits, but no complaints were received that the process was onerous.

Religious instruction is included in the public school curriculum as "values education." The focus is on Christianity, but representatives from other religious groups are also invited to speak to students.

#### 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 period covered by this report.

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

Rastafarians complained of discrimination, especially in hiring and in schools. There were no other 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 Barbados Christian Council and the Caribbean Conference of Churches conducted activities to promote greater mutual understanding and tolerance among adherents of 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. U.S. embassy representatives also discussed religious freedom with local groups and other organizations.

Released on September 19, 2008

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