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## Barbados

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 166 square miles and a population of 280,000. According to the 2000 official census, more than 95 percent of the population is Christian; however, a recent estimate cites 75 percent. Anglicans number 70,000 members; Seventh-day Adventists, 16,000; Roman Catholics, 11,000; Pentecostals, 7,000; Methodists, 5,000; and Jehovah's Witnesses, 2,500. There are small numbers of Baptists, Moravians, and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons).

The number of non-Christians is small. There are 4,000 Muslims, most of whom trace their ancestry to the Indian state of Gujarat. A few immigrants from Guyana, Trinidad, South Asia, and the Middle East, as well as approximately 200 native-born persons, constitute 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 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 Monday, Whit Monday, and Christmas.

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

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

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

#### 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.

The Barbados Christian Council and the Caribbean Conference of Churches conducted activities to promote greater mutual understanding and respect 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.

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