



Dominica

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 291 square miles and a population of 72,400. According to the 2001 population and housing census, approximately 61 percent of the population adhered to the Roman Catholic faith. Followers of evangelical churches represented 18 percent of the population, Seventh-day Adventists 6 percent, and Methodists 3.7 percent. Minority religious groups and denominations, whose members ranged in number from 1.6 percent to 0.2 percent of the population, included Rastafarians, Jehovah's Witnesses, Anglicans, and Muslims. According to the census, 1.4 percent of the population belonged to "other" religious groups, including Baptist, Nazarene, Church of Christ, Brethren Christian, and the Baha'i Faith; 6 percent of the population claimed no religious affiliation.

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.

The Government is secular and does not interfere with an individual's right to worship; however, the Government maintains a close relationship with the Christian churches.

The Christian holy days of Good Friday, Whit Monday, and Christmas are national holidays.

The Government requires all religious organizations to register. Organizations must register as nonprofit organizations with the Attorney General's office and also register their buildings through the government registrar. Such recognition affects the religious group's nonprofit organization status, its ability to hold public meetings, and the work status of its missionaries. Any organization denied permission to register has the right to apply for judicial review.

The public school curriculum includes Christian education, and students are led in prayer during morning assembly. Non-Christian students are not required to participate. There are Catholic, Methodist, and Seventh-day Adventist schools, and the Government subsidizes teacher salaries at religiously affiliated schools.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

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

Rastafarians complained that the use of marijuana, employed in 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. The Dominica Christian Council and the Dominica Association of Evangelical Churches conducted activities to promote peace, greater mutual understanding, and tolerance among adherents of different denominations within the Christian faith.

Although intolerance is gradually decreasing, Rastafarians complained that discrimination against their members still exists, especially in hiring and in schools.

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.

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