



## Dominica

### 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 governmental 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.

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

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

The Government requires all religious organizations to register as nonprofit organizations with the Attorney General's Office; they also must 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; the Government subsidizes teacher salaries at religiously affiliated schools.

##### 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

Although intolerance is gradually decreasing, 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.

#### 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.

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