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## Dominica

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 291 square miles and a population of 70,000. According to the 2001 population and housing census, approximately 61 percent of the population was Roman Catholic; Seventh-day Adventists and Pentecostals represented 6 percent each; and Baptists and Methodists 4 percent each. There were also Anglicans, members of the Baha'i Faith, Christian Brethren, Church of Christ, Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims, Nazarenes, and Rastafarians. Six percent of the population claimed no religious affiliation.

#### 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 is secular and does not interfere with an individual's right to worship. The government maintained active relationships with religious groups.

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

The government requires all religious organizations to register with the attorney general's office as nonprofit organizations; they also must register their buildings through the government registrar. Such recognition affected a 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 had the right to apply for judicial review.

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

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.

#### 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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