

# BARBADOS

## Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom. The government did not demonstrate a trend toward either improvement or deterioration in respect for and protection of the right to 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.

The U.S. government discussed religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. Members of the embassy met with all sectors of civil society and engaged in discussions of religious freedom on a regular basis.

## Section I. Religious Demography

According to the 2000 official census, more than 95 percent of the population is Christian. The 2000 census indicates that the Anglican (28 percent) and Pentecostal (18 percent) denominations are the two most represented religious denominations in Barbados followed by the Seventh-day Adventists (5 percent), Methodists (5 percent), and Roman Catholics (4 percent). 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 Jews, Rastafarians, Hindus, Buddhists, and members of the Baha'i Faith.

## Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

### Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom. Religious groups are required to register with the government to obtain duty-free import privileges or tax benefits.

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

The government prohibits the use of marijuana, including for religious purposes. Rastafarians complained that marijuana is integral to their religious rituals.

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

### **Government Practices**

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom.

### **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

There were a few reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, specifically from Rastafarians, who complained of discrimination, especially in hiring and in schools. 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 respect among adherents of different Christian denominations.

### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy**

The U.S. government discussed religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.