

DOMINICA 2016 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, including freedom of thought, freedom to practice religion, and freedom from oaths contrary to one's beliefs. Rastafarians continued to disagree with the government's prohibition of marijuana use and said they were subjected to scrutiny from police and immigration officers.

There were no reports of significant societal actions affecting religious freedom.

The U.S. embassy engaged representatives of government and civil society, including leadership of the Rastafarian communities, on religious freedom issues, including freedom of religious expression and discrimination based on religion.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 73,000 (July 2016 estimate). According to preliminary data from the 2011 census, approximately 53 percent of the population is Roman Catholic. Evangelical Protestants comprise approximately 20 percent of the population. The largest evangelical Protestant groups are Pentecostals with 6 percent, Baptists with 5 percent, and the Christian Union Mission with 4 percent. Seventh-day Adventists comprise 7 percent of the population. Other smaller religious groups include Anglicans, Methodists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims, and Rastafarians. Nine percent of the population professes no religious affiliation.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, including freedom of thought, freedom to practice religion, and freedom from taking oaths contrary to one's beliefs. By law, the government may make exceptions to constitutionally required provisions in the interests of public order and morality if the exceptions being made are for activities "shown not to be reasonably justifiable in a democratic society."

Religious groups seeking nonprofit status must register with the attorney general's office. They must submit a letter signed by five executives of the religious group

and provide the official name of the religious group with an address identifying the place of worship. The registration fee is 25 Eastern Caribbean dollars (\$9.25). The attorney general's registry office reviews and approves applications. Any organization denied permission to register has the right to apply for judicial review. By law, religious groups must also register buildings used to publish banns of marriage (announcements of marriage) or used as places of worship.

The constitution grants religious groups the right to establish and maintain schools and to provide religious instruction.

The government prohibits the use of marijuana, including for religious purposes.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Government Practices

Rastafarians stated they continued to disagree with the government's prohibition of marijuana use, which they described as integral to their religious rituals. They said the government continued to enforce a ban on marijuana but reported no arrests during the year. Rastafarians protested the marijuana ban occasionally through marches, including a march on April 20.

The government subsidized teacher salaries at schools affiliated with the Catholic, Methodist, and Seventh-day Adventist Churches.

At public schools, teachers, principals, and students led nondenominational prayers during morning assemblies. Students were not required to participate.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were no reports of significant societal actions affecting religious freedom.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. embassy raised general religious freedom subjects with the government.

Embassy officials engaged religious group and civil society leaders and, including the leadership of the Rastafarian communities, on issues of religious freedom and discrimination.