

# **DOMINICA 2015 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 disagree with the government's prohibition of marijuana use and expressed concern about scrutiny from police and immigration offices.

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

The U.S. embassy engaged representatives of the 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 74,000 (July 2015 estimate). According to the 2001 census, approximately 61 percent of the population is Roman Catholic. Protestants comprise 20 percent of the population, with the largest groups being Seventh-day Adventists and Pentecostals with 6 percent each, and Baptists and Methodists with 4 percent each. Other, smaller religious groups include Anglicans, Bahais, Christian Brethren, Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims, Nazarenes, Rastafarians, and members of the Church of Christ. Six 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 in the interests of public order and morality as reasonably required in a democratic society.

Religious groups seeking non-profit 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 along with an address locating 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

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organization denied permission to register has the right to apply for judicial review. By law religious groups must register buildings used to publish banns of marriage or used exclusively as places of worship with the registrar general.

The constitution grants religious groups the right to establish and maintain schools and to provide religious instruction. Public schools offer Christian religious education, but students are not required to participate.

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

### **Government Practices**

Rastafarians disagreed with the government's prohibition of marijuana use, which they described as integral to their religious rituals. Rastafarians also stated they faced extra scrutiny from police and immigration officials.

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

Christian prayer took place during morning assembly in public schools, although non-Christian 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 engaged government officials, religious group leaders and civil society, including the leadership of the Rastafarian communities, on religious freedom issues, including freedom of religious expression and discrimination on the basis of religion.