

GRENADA 2018 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution protects freedom of conscience, including freedom of thought and religion. The criminal code prohibits the publishing and sale of blasphemous language; however, the code is not enforced. The government continued to fund public schools administered by long-established Christian groups, including the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventists, and Mennonite communities. Denominational and ecumenical Christian worship services continued to form part of official festivities on national holidays. In March the government moved its Religious Affairs Unit to the Ministry of Education.

The Conference of Churches, an ecumenical body, continued to serve as a forum to promote mutual understanding among religious organizations.

The Ambassador and the Principal Officer engaged the government on the importance of respect for religious freedom, diversity, and tolerance and participated in government events that promoted respect for these values. Embassy officials also met with members of the various religious communities to discuss their views on respect for religious diversity and tolerance in the country. The Principal Officer participated in denominational, ecumenical, Muslim, and Jewish community events to emphasize U.S. government commitment to these issues.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 112,000 (July 2017 estimate). According to the U.S. government (2011 estimate), 49.2 percent of the population identifies as Protestant (includes Pentecostal 17.2 percent; Seventh-day Adventist 13.2 percent; Anglican 8.5 percent; Baptist 3.2 percent; Church of God 2.4 percent; evangelical Protestant 1.9 percent; Methodist 1.6 percent; and other 1.2 percent). Approximately 36 percent identifies as Roman Catholic; 1.2 percent as Jehovah's Witnesses; 1.2 percent as Rastafarian; 5.5 percent as other; 5.7 percent as none; and 1.3 percent as unspecified. Smaller groups include Brethren, Baha'is, Hindus, Moravians, Muslims, Mennonites, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Salvation Army. There is a small Jewish community.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution protects freedom of conscience, including freedom of thought and religion. It guarantees the right to change one's religion and to manifest and propagate it. The constitution prohibits forced participation in any religious ceremony or instruction. The criminal code prohibits written blasphemous language; however, the government does not enforce the law.

To qualify for customs and tax exemptions, a religious group must obtain recognition from the government as a nongovernmental organization (NGO). The group must also register with the Corporate Affairs and Intellectual Property Office (CAIPO) and with the Inland Revenue Office in the Ministry of Finance and provide a letter of request to the ministry. The attorney general grants final approval and the ministry grants the applications for tax exemptions. Applications are routinely granted. Recognition as an NGO requires the group to submit details to CAIPO regarding the organization, including information about its directors, as well as a description of the NGO's general activities and the location of these activities.

The government allows religious head coverings of certain types, including the hijab and the Rastafarian head wrap, in photographs for national identity documents, provided the face is clearly visible.

The government subsidizes all existing denominational schools, managed by a board of directors and staffed by the associated faith-based organization, including those of the Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, and Mennonite communities. There are no non-Christian denominational schools. In accordance with the constitution's protections for freedom of conscience and religion, students at such schools may attend religion classes and may use credits from those classes towards completion of the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate. Students from religions other than the one associated with a school may also attend these schools and are not obligated to attend religion classes.

Foreign missionaries require a worker's permit costing 1,000 to 5,000 East Caribbean dollars (\$370 to \$1,900) or a waiver costing 100 East Caribbean dollars (\$37) from the Ministry of Labor. They must demonstrate prior experience, and a registered religious group must sponsor them.

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

Government Practices

In March the government moved the Religious Affairs Unit from the Ministry of Youth to the Ministry of Education. The government also started its review of the religious affairs program to determine appropriate resource allocation and to design a work program for 2019.

The government's official declarations, speeches, and activities often included religious references; denominational and ecumenical Christian worship services were part of official festivities on national holidays.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

The Conference of Churches Grenada, an ecumenical body, continued to serve as a forum to promote mutual understanding among religious organizations. The organization was active; however, unlike in previous years, it did not hold a plenary meeting inviting discussions from different faith-based organizations.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The Ambassador, resident in Barbados and accredited to Grenada, and the Principal Officer, resident in Grenada, engaged the government on the importance of respect for religious diversity, freedom, and tolerance. On multiple occasions they had one-on-one dialogues with a broad spectrum of religious leaders and with human rights NGOs to discuss concerns related to religious freedom and ways to promote tolerance for religious diversity and communication among religious groups.

The Principal Officer participated in denominational, ecumenical, and Muslim and Jewish community events to emphasize the importance of respect for religious diversity, tolerance, and equality under the law, as well as participating in and giving remarks at an official service of thanksgiving, organized by the Grenada Council of Churches. The remarks emphasized the importance of respect for religious diversity, freedom, and tolerance.