

SAINT LUCIA 2015 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution provides for freedom of religion and prohibits discrimination based on religious belief. Individuals have the right to change their religion. Rastafarians stated the government's prohibition of marijuana affected their religious rituals. Rastafarians also stated they faced extra scrutiny from police and immigration officials and their children faced discrimination in schools.

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

The U.S. embassy engaged representatives of the government and civil society on religious freedom issues.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 164,000 (July 2015 estimate). The 2010 Population and Housing Census reports Roman Catholics account for 61.1 percent of the population; Seventh-day Adventists, 10.4 percent; Pentecostals, 8.8 percent; evangelicals, 2.2 percent; Baptists, 2.1 percent; and Rastafarians, 2 percent. Other groups together constituting less than 5 percent of the population include Anglicans, members of the Church of God, Jehovah's Witnesses, Methodists, Muslims, and Bahais. Nearly 6 percent of the population claims no religious affiliation.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution provides for freedom of religion through practice, worship, and education. It protects individuals' rights to change their religion and prohibits discrimination based on religious practice. An antiblasphemy law is not enforced.

The government's registration policy for religious groups regulates missionary work and labor permits. It allows a religious group duty-free import privileges and exemption from some labor requirements. The policy also covers regulation of nondenominational and secular nongovernmental organizations. Among the information requested on the registration form is contact information,

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establishment date and history, declaration of belief, number of members, location of meeting place, and income source.

The public school curriculum includes Christian education; non-Christian students are not required to participate. The constitution grants religious groups the right to establish and maintain schools and provide religious instruction. The Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, and Anglican Churches all sponsor schools.

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

Government Practices

Rastafarians stated the government's prohibition of marijuana use prevented them from carrying out religious practices. Rastafarians also stated they faced extra scrutiny from police and immigration officials. Because of their belief against vaccinating their children, they stated they faced discrimination in the school system.

The government regularly consulted with the Christian Council, consisting of representatives of the Catholic Church and some Protestant denominations.

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 discussed religious freedom with the government. Embassy officials engaged with religious group leaders and civil society, including with the leadership of the Rastafarian communities and an interdenominational group, on freedom of religious expression and discrimination.