

Institute on Religion and Public Policy Report:

Religious Freedom in Grenada

Executive Summary

(1) In February of 1974, Grenada gained full independence from Britain. The constitution, created in December of 1973, allows for the freedom of religion. The practice of religious freedom receives continued support from the government. The country has minimal reports of societal abuses or discrimination with the impetus of religious affiliation, practice, or belief. The government as well as the people of this country continues to encourage dialogue between religions in Grenada.

The Institute on Religion and Public Policy

(2) The Institute on Religion and Public Policy is an international, inter-religious non-profit organization that strives to guarantee religious freedom worldwide. Twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, the Institute supports all fundamental rights with an emphasis on religious freedom. The Institute works with many influential individuals such as scholars, business executives, policy makers, religious leaders, and non-governmental organizations in order to encourage the furthering of religious freedom in a cooperative way across the globe.

Legal Status

(3) The government of Grenada has a constitution which protects the freedom of religion. The government has consistently upheld the right to practice religion freely. At all levels, the government protects the right of religious liberty from abuse against both the government as well as those not affiliated with the government. Grenada's government is secular. Furthermore, the government does not interfere with a citizen's right to worship. All the religious groups in Grenada must register with the Prime Minister's office. The Prime Minister's office will then issue licenses for the groups, buildings, and events of the registered religious groups. Also, the religious groups who have been registered can receive other benefits from this program such as tax exemptions on customs and imports. The government also observes various religious holidays as national holidays such as Whit Monday, Good Friday, Corpus Christi, and Christmas.

Societal and Cultural Status

(4) Grenada has four major religious groups. Roman Catholics make up 44% of the population while Anglicans are 12%, Pentecostal are 11%, and Seventh-Day Adventists are 11%. Religious groups with 2% or less of Grenada's religious population include Church of God, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Evangelical. Religious groups with 1% or less of Grenada's religious population include Hindu, Muslim, Rastafarian, Salvation Army, Baha'i, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Moravian. Smaller communities than the ones previously mentioned include Latter Day Saints and Mennonites. Furthermore, non-believers make up 4% of the population. Each year these percentages increase with the arrival of foreign

university students but the government does not count them in the percentages provided. Those who consistently practice their faith make up 60% of the population.

- (5) Within the country there exists the Conference of Churches of Grenada. This group which was created over a decade ago helps to support and strengthen the relationships between the various religious communities throughout the country. Faith based organizations throughout the country are very involved with their community. For example, after the damaging hurricanes of 2004 and 2005, these organizations worked together to repair the churches that had been damaged by the hurricanes.

Abuse of Religious Liberty

- (6) There has been minimal abuse of religious liberty within the country of Grenada. There have been no religious prisoners or detainees in the country. Also, there have been no reports of forced religious conversion.
- (7) In 2002, an issue arose about Rastafarian religious rights within the prison system. The prison requires that all men must cut their hair in order to protect public health and, in some cases, insure security. The Rastafarian prisoners proclaimed that keeping their dreadlocks is part of their religion and to cut them would be violating their freedom of religion. The government's lawyer argued that the policy of cutting hair is part of the prison's regulations and the reasons of health and security are valid. The lawyer for the Rastafarians claimed that the prison was discriminating against men as women are not expected to cut their hair while in prison.

United States Government Policy and Efforts

- (8) The United States' policy is to discuss the right of religious freedom with the government of Grenada. The United States' government does this in order to promote human rights.

Conclusion

- (9) The government of Grenada has created a constitution which upholds the right of freedom of religion. The government continues to support this effort. Furthermore, the religious organizations within the country work to ensure good communication between the religions and help out other religious communities in times of need such as when the damage from the hurricanes occurred. The country, including both the government and citizens, seems to be on a stable track of upholding religious freedom within Grenada.