

GRENADA 2020 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution protects freedom of conscience, including freedom of thought and religion. The criminal code prohibits the publication and sale of blasphemous language; however, the code is not enforced. The government continued to review its religious affairs program to determine appropriate resource allocation and to design a work program for religious groups. Denominational and ecumenical Christian worship services and prayer continued to form part of official festivities on national holidays, religious holidays, and other public functions. Government officials consulted and collaborated with religious groups during the COVID-19 pandemic on emergency protocols to ensure every religious group had the opportunity to practice its beliefs and traditions.

The Conference of Churches Grenada (CCG), an ecumenical body, continued to promote unity and mutual understanding among members of the Christian community despite the restrictions on all gatherings, including religious services, during the global COVID-19 pandemic. The CCG held virtual meetings and continued to encourage discussions with other faith-based groups, including evangelical Protestant groups, as well as non-Christian denominations, including the Muslim community. In May, the CCG and the Alliance of Evangelical Churches held a virtual National Day of Prayer.

The U.S. embassy engaged the Prime Minister, Minister for Religious Affairs, and religious leaders, both in person and virtually, due to the government's declared COVID-19 state of emergency and related restrictions. The Principal Officer held virtual meetings with the presidents of the CCG and the Alliance of Evangelical Churches to discuss religious freedom in the country and the challenges the organizations faced as a result of the pandemic. Embassy representatives also used social media to promote religious freedom, including freedom of conscience, belief, and thought.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 113,000 (midyear 2020 estimate). According to the latest government estimate (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 no religious affiliation; 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. All of these groups have fewer than 1,000 members.

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 the publication and sale of blasphemous language; however, the government does not enforce the law. The Office of Religious Affairs functions within the Ministry of Education.

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 it must 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 group's general activities and the location of these activities. According to the 2011 statistics, the most recent available, there are more than 18 religious groups registered in the country.

By law, 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 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. 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.

As part of the visa process, foreign missionaries must apply to the Ministry of Labor for a work permit costing 500 East Caribbean dollars (\$190) along with an application fee of 100 Eastern Caribbean Dollars (\$37); the permit must be renewed annually. To be approved, foreign missionaries 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

The government continued to review its religious affairs program to determine appropriate resource allocation and to design an annual work program through year's end. With the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, however, the government placed these programs on hold and redirected funding to priority areas such as health. Government officials actively consulted and collaborated with religious groups during the pandemic on emergency protocols to ensure every religious group had the opportunity to practice its beliefs and traditions. The Religious Affairs Unit stated statistical data on the number of religious groups was an area of focus that it expected to address in the coming year.

As in previous years, the government's official declarations, speeches, and activities attended by the Governor General, Prime Minister, and other government officials often included religious references. Denominational and ecumenical Christian worship services were part of official festivities on national holidays such as Independence and Thanksgiving Day. In May, Minister for Religious Affairs Emmalin Pierre commended religious groups for "providing hope in these very difficult times," and she encouraged them to make use of technology to reach their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On October 25, Minister for Religious Affairs Pierre and other cabinet ministers gave remarks at an ecumenical church service organized by the National Celebrations Committee in collaboration with the CCG to commemorate the country's Thanksgiving Day, marking the 1983 U.S. military intervention. The public service featured prayers, scripture readings, and sermons from various Christian denominations.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

The CCG, an ecumenical Christian body that includes Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian members, continued to serve as a forum to promote mutual understanding, unity, and tolerance among religious organizations. The organization held virtual meetings at least once a month during the pandemic lockdown and continued to engage and encourage discussions with different faith-based Christian and non-Christian organizations. Prior to the COVID-19 lockdown from March to July, the CCG met with Christian and non-Christian organizations, including the Muslim community and government representatives, to chart a way forward during the pandemic.

In September, Christian and non-Christian religious groups partnered to conduct an outreach activity with hospital and frontline medical workers. The Alliance of Evangelical Churches and the CCG held a National Day of Prayer in May, which was broadcast live. The Alliance of Evangelical Churches also engaged the Rastafarian community regarding national discussions surrounding the legalization of marijuana.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

Embassy officials engaged government representatives, including the Prime Minister and Minister of Religious Affairs, virtually and in person, due to the government's declared COVID-19 state of emergency and related restrictions.

Embassy officials engaged religious group representatives, holding virtual meetings with the president of the CCG and the president of the Alliance of Evangelical Churches. During these discussions, the Principal Officer discussed challenges the religious community faced as a result of the pandemic, and reinforced the U.S. government's mandate to promote religious freedom and ensure all individuals may practice their religion in private and in public.

Through social media, the embassy shared the Secretary of State's global Eid al-Adha message to the Muslim community in the country and the Eastern Caribbean. Embassy representatives also used social media to recognize other religious holidays, including Whit Monday (also known as Pentecost Monday) and Ramadan. The embassy made frequent use of social media to promote an array of religious freedom issues, to include freedom of conscience, belief, and thought.