

GRENADA 2021 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. In September, government officials met with members of the religious community, including the Islamic Foundation, to discuss the burial of individuals who died of COVID-19-related causes in accordance with religious rites. The government continued to review its religious affairs program to determine appropriate resource allocation, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The government inaugurated a faith-based and community-based skills training program in September, which will continue through 2022. Denominational and ecumenical Christian worship services and prayer continued to form part of official festivities on national holidays, religious holidays, and in other public functions. Government officials consulted and collaborated with religious groups during the COVID-19 pandemic regarding emergency protocols, and religious leaders agreed to hold virtual services during the height of a COVID-19 outbreak from mid-August through October. The government held two national days of spiritual reflection and prayer on September 25 and 26 under the theme, “A Call to Return to God.”

The Conference of Churches Grenada (CCG), an ecumenical Christian body, continued to promote unity and mutual understanding among members of the Christian community despite restrictions on all gatherings, including religious services, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The CCG held in-person and virtual meetings and continued to encourage discussions with other faith-based groups, including evangelical Protestant groups, as well as non-Christian religious groups, including the Muslim community. On September 12, the Alliance of Evangelical Churches held a virtual National Day of Prayer.

U.S. embassy officials engaged the Minister of Education, Human Resources Development, Religious Affairs, and Information and religious leaders, both in person and virtually. In September, the Principal Officer held virtual meetings with representatives from the CCG, the Alliance of Evangelical Churches, the Muslim, Jewish, Rastafarian, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Church of Jesus Christ), and Baha'i Faith communities to discuss religious freedom in the country and the challenges the organizations faced with restrictions on large gatherings and in-person services during September and October as a result of the COVID-19 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 2021). According to the latest government estimate (2011 estimate), 49.2 percent of the population identifies as Protestant (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 having no religious affiliation; and 1.3 percent as unspecified. Smaller groups include Brethren, Baha'is, Hindus, Moravians, Muslims, Mennonites, Church of Jesus Christ, and the Salvation Army. There is a small Jewish community. All 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 materials containing language deemed blasphemous; however, the government does not enforce the law.

The Office of Religious Affairs, also known as the Religious Affairs Unit, functions within the Ministry of Education, Human Resources Development, Religious Affairs, and Information.

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 applications for tax exemptions; these are

routinely approved. To be recognized as an NGO, the group must 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 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, by law, subsidizes all public denominational schools managed by a headmistress/master and staffed by the associated faith-based organization, including those of Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Seventh-day Adventist, and Mennonite communities. 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 religious groups other than the one associated with a school may also attend these schools and are not obligated to attend religion classes. There are no non-Christian denominational schools.

As part of the visa process, foreign missionaries must apply to the Ministry of Labor for a work permit costing 500 East Caribbean Dollars (ECD) (\$190) along with an application fee of 100 ECD (\$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 through year's end. As a result, it postponed projects such as church repairs, updating the government directory with a current list of religions and churches, and hiring a religious affairs coordinator until 2022.

The government inaugurated a faith-based skills training program in September, which will continue through 2022. Community churches organized the program with financial assistance from the government, and it was available to anyone, regardless of religion, interested in acquiring lifelong occupational skills.

Government officials consulted and collaborated with religious groups during the pandemic on emergency protocols and implemented the recommendations the religious groups proposed. These included the suspension of in-person services and arrangements for funerals to only be held at a cemetery with no more than 20 persons present. Both sides agreed to the changes made to the joint protocol agreements between the religious community and government. Religious communities said they understood the importance of COVID-19-related restrictions and looked forward to the day when in-person gatherings could be resumed safely. The unreliability of technology and not being able to carry out more community outreach and evangelism were some of the major challenges religious leaders stated they faced in shifting to online activities. Churches, however, were among the first institutions to restrict in-person gatherings during the COVID-19 outbreak in August.

On September 16, government officials met with members of the religious community, including the Islamic Foundation, to discuss the burial of individuals who died of COVID-19-related causes in accordance with religious rites. The meeting followed a COVID-19 outbreak in mid-August and a rapid increase in COVID-19-related deaths. Government officials held discussions with the religious community to ensure all religious rites were observed in accordance with laws stipulating the handling of remains of infectious individuals. Representatives from the government, religious community, and funeral homes developed a joint statement that was released during a press briefing on September 20. It reflected an agreement to bury or cremate remains within 72 hours of death, rather than 24 hours, which is stipulated by law.

The government held two national days of spiritual reflection and prayer on September 25 and 26 under the theme, “A Call to Return to God.” Minister of Education, Human Resources Development, Religious Affairs, and Information Emmalin Pierre stated, “The national days of spiritual reflection and prayer should be a catalyst for continued prayer and worship, and not a one-time personal engagement between individuals and God.”

As in previous years, the government’s official declarations, speeches, and activities attended by the Governor General, Prime Minister, and other officials often included religious references. Examples included Christian prayers, scripture readings, and exhortations from members of the religious community, such as the head of the Conference of Churches. Denominational and ecumenical Christian worship services were part of official festivities on national holidays such as Independence and Thanksgiving Day.

As in previous years, on October 25, the Minister of Education, Human Resources Development, Religious Affairs, and Information, along with other cabinet ministers, gave remarks at a virtual ecumenical church service organized by the National Celebrations Committee in collaboration with the CCG to commemorate the country's Thanksgiving Day, marking the anniversary of 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 despite restrictions on all gatherings, including religious services, during the COVID-19 pandemic that were in place from September through October. These organizations continued to encourage discussions with different faith-based Christian and non-Christian organizations. The CCG and the Alliance of Evangelical Churches met with religious organizations and government representatives to agree on COVID-19-related restrictions involving religious groups during the outbreak of COVID-19 cases in August.

In September, the Alliance of Evangelical Churches held a National Day of Prayer under the theme "Heal our Land" that was broadcast live on all social media platforms.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

Embassy representatives engaged government officials, including the Minister of Education, Human Resources Development, Religious Affairs, and Information, virtually and in person, regarding some of the programs suspended as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and on the importance of religious freedom during restrictions stemming from the pandemic.

Embassy officials engaged religious groups by holding virtual meetings with representatives from the CCG, the Alliance of Evangelical Churches, the Muslim, Jewish, Rastafarian, Church of Jesus Christ, and Baha'i Faith communities. During these discussions, the Principal Officer discussed the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and how religious communities were adapting to virtual engagements. The Principal Officer also 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 recognized different religious holidays, such as Whit Monday (also known as Pentecost Monday), Corpus Christi, Ramadan, the Chinese Lunar New Year, Holi, and the country's National Religious Freedom Day. The embassy made frequent use of social media to promote an array of religious freedom issues, to include freedom of conscience, belief, and thought.