



Antigua and Barbuda



Stable / Unchanged —

Religion

Population

Area

- Christians : **92.8%**
- Spiritists : **3.7%**
- Agnostics : **1.8%**
- Baha'is : **1.0%**
- Others : **0.7%**

92,700

442 Km²

Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

The preamble of the constitution states that Antigua and Barbuda is a sovereign nation that acknowledges “the supremacy of God, the dignity and worth of the human person” and “the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual.”^[1]

Under article 3, everyone has the right to the protection of their fundamental human rights and freedoms without distinction of race, place of origin, opinions or political affiliations, colour, creed or sex; such rights include – among others – freedom of conscience, expression, peaceful assembly and association, subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and the public interest.

Conscientious objection to military service is recognised under article 6.

According to article 11, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of their freedom of conscience, which includes freedom of thought and religion, freedom to change one's religion or belief, to manifest it and propagate it through worship, teaching, practice and observance, either individually or collectively, in public or in private.

Except with one's consent or that of a parent or guardian in case of minors under the age of 18, no one attending an educational establishment is required to receive religious instruction, nor take part in religious services or attend religious ceremonies other than those of the religion they profess (article 11).

No person shall be required to take an oath against their beliefs or in a manner that is contrary to their religion or belief (article 11).

No law may be discriminatory in itself or in its effects, where discrimination means different treatment of people by reason

of their race, place of origin, political opinion or affiliation, colour, creed or sex (article 14).

Being a minister of religion is an impediment to appointment to the Senate (article 30) or election to the House (article 39).

Good Friday, Easter, Pentecost Monday and Christmas are public holidays.^[2]

Public schools do not allow religious instruction. Private schools can provide religious instruction. Religious groups must register with the government in order to receive tax exemptions and to have the right to own, build or renovate properties. The law prohibits the use of marijuana, even for religious purposes.^[3]

Incidents

In October 2016, an opinion piece^[4] criticised a pastor (who claimed to be a former lesbian and activist) for saying that Christian-based companies should be able to reject LGBT job applicants, describing her group as bigoted and homophobic.

In October 2016, Dr Tennyson Joseph, who teaches at the Political Science Department of the University of the West Indies (UWI), Cave Hill Campus, criticised what he calls the “tyranny of the majority”, i.e. the imposition of Christian teachings in public schools. He believes that religious education should be left to the private sphere. He pointed out that, in modern democracies, the Church is separate from the state, so religion should not be taught in schools but in the family.^[5]

Prospects for freedom of religion

In the period under review, there were no incidents of intolerance but there is an ongoing debate around the limits to religious freedom. There is no reason to believe that there will be any change in terms of freedom of religion.

Endnotes / Sources

[1] All references to the constitution are from Antigua and Barbuda’s Constitution of 1981, [constitute-project.org, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Antigua_and_Barbuda_1981.pdf?lang=en](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Antigua_and_Barbuda_1981.pdf?lang=en), (accessed 21st April 2018).

[2] ‘Antigua and Barbuda Public Holidays’, Antigua and Barbuda’s Government Information and Services, https://ab.gov.ag/detail_page.php?page=4, (accessed 5th March 2018).

[3] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, ‘Antigua and Barbuda’, International Religious Freedom Report for 2016, U.S. State Department, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>, (accessed 6th March 2018).

[4] ‘Tasheka Responds to Religious Leaders Encouraging Denial of Employment to LGBTQ Antiguan and Barbudans’, Antigua Chronicle, 3rd October 2016, <https://antiguachronicle.net/tasheka-responds-to-religious-leaders-encouraging-denial-of-employment-to-lgbtq-antiguans-and-barbudans/>, (accessed 13th March 2018).

[5] ‘Keep religion out of school, UWI lecturer says’, The Daily Observer, 29th October 2016, <https://antigua-observer.com/keep-religion-out-of-school-uwi-lecturer-says/>, (accessed 13th March 2018).