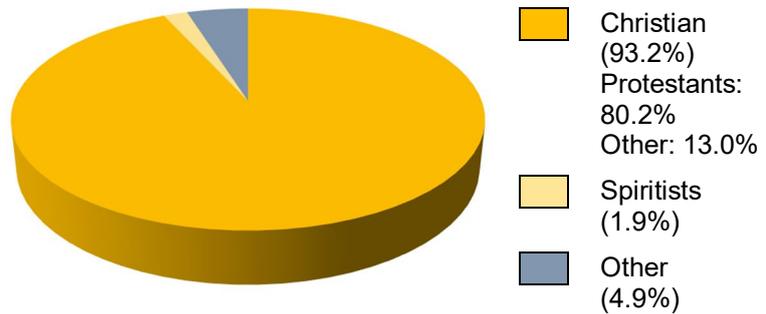


THE BAHAMAS



Area: 13,878 km ²	Population¹: 353,658	Political system: Monarchy ²	Major Language(s): English ³
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Legal framework on religious freedom and actual implementation

The constitution of The Bahamas affirms that the state has a duty to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of every person, whatever his or her race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex, but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for the public interest.

The constitution guarantees the protection of freedom of conscience, which includes freedom of thought and religion, freedom to change one's religion or belief, and freedom to manifest and propagate one's religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance, either alone or in community with others, in public or in private.

No law shall make any provision that is discriminatory either of itself or in its effect, where discriminatory means affording different treatment to different people on the basis of their race, place of origin, political opinions, colour or creed.⁴

Incidents

In October 2014, an article entitled "We are not a Christian Nation constitutionally" noted an alarming level of ignorance among Bahamians about their country's secular nature, as evinced by uninformed opinions aired in the local media. The fact that the preamble of the constitution refers to Christianity does not make The Bahamas a Christian nation or a theocracy, since the preamble has no legal force.⁵

In January 2016, Rastafarian leaders expressed concern that prison officials did not allow some of their co-religionists to receive religious assistance in prison.⁶

Prospects for freedom of religion

During this period, acts of discrimination have continued against certain groups, such as the Rastafarians. This paints a negative picture of religious freedom. The lack of improvement over time in terms of incidents has reflected deterioration.

¹ Some 90% of the population lives on the islands of New Providence, Grand Bahama and Abaco (2010 Census).

² An independent Commonwealth realm, consisting of a parliamentary constitutional monarchy.

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- ³ <http://www.bahamasb2b.com/news/2010/10/2010-census-shows-bahamas-population-growth-3303.html>, accessed on 2 March 2016.
- ⁴ https://www.oas.org/juridico/mla/en/bhs/en_bhs-int-text-const.pdf, accessed on 1 March 2016.
- ⁵ <Http://www.bahamapundit.com/2014/10/we-are-not-a-christian-nation-constitutionally.html>, accessed on 3 March 2016.
- ⁶ Http://restart.typepad.com/my_weblog/2016/01/religious-freedom-the-bahamas.html, accessed on March 3 2016.