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**STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA  
FOR THE 53<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF THE  
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

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## Status of Human Rights in Antigua and Barbuda for the 53<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Universal Periodic Review

### Introduction

1. The European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) is a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights around the world. The ECLJ also holds Special Consultative status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council. This report discusses the status of human rights in Antigua and Barbuda for the 53<sup>rd</sup> session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

### Background

2. Antigua and Barbuda is a country located in the Caribbean Sea and has a population of approximately 105,200 people.<sup>1</sup> The population is predominantly Christian, with approximately 92.5% of the population identifying as Christian, 3.7% as spiritists, 1.4% as agnostics, and 1.1% as Baha'i.<sup>2</sup>

3. Antigua and Barbuda's last review was held on November 8, 2021.<sup>3</sup> As a result of the review, Antigua and Barbuda received 155 recommendations, 36 of which it accepted.<sup>4</sup> No recommendations were made regarding religious freedom. It was recommended by Iceland, and noted by Antigua and Barbuda, that the government “[f]orm a legislative committee to revise the abortion law to allow the termination of pregnancy.”<sup>5</sup> It was also recommended by Indonesia, and supported by Antigua and Barbuda, that the government “[s]trengthen measures to assist victims of human trafficking, taking into account the needs of particularly vulnerable groups such as women domestic workers.”<sup>6</sup> Since Antigua and Barbuda's last review, there has been a constitutional challenge to its abortion law.<sup>7</sup> In our last report, we expressed concern over human trafficking.

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<sup>1</sup> *Antigua and Barbuda*, BRITANNICA (Sep. 9, 2025), <https://www.britannica.com/place/Antigua-and-Barbuda>.

<sup>2</sup> *Antigua and Barbuda: Major World Religions (1900-2050)*(*World Religion Database, 2025*), THE ASSOCIATION OF RELIGION DATA ARCHIVES, <https://www.thearda.com/world-religion/national-profiles?u=10c>.

<sup>3</sup> *Universal Periodic Review – Antigua and Barbuda*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ag-index>.

<sup>4</sup> *Infographic-Antigua and Barbuda*, OHCHR, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/Infographic\\_Antigua\\_Barbuda.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/Infographic_Antigua_Barbuda.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> OHCHR, UPR of Antigua and Barbuda (3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle – 39<sup>th</sup> Session) Thematic List of Recommendations, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/UPR39\\_Antigua\\_and\\_Barbuda\\_Thematic\\_List\\_of\\_Recommendations.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/UPR39_Antigua_and_Barbuda_Thematic_List_of_Recommendations.docx).

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Dominica and Antigua & Barbuda – Historic Constitutional Challenge to Colonial – Era Abortion Laws in the Caribbean*, INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR WOMEN'S RIGHT TO SAFE ABORTION (May 10, 2024), <https://www.safeabortionwomensright.org/news/dominica-and-antigua-barbuda-historic-constitutional-challenge-to-colonial-era-abortion-laws-in-the-caribbean/>.

## Legal Framework

### *Abortion*

4. Article 4 of the Constitution of Antigua and Barbuda states that “[n]o person shall be deprived of his life intentionally save in execution of the sentence of a court in respect of a crime of treason or murder of which he has been convicted.”<sup>8</sup>

5. Article 56 of the Offences Against the Person Act prohibits women from procuring their own abortion.<sup>9</sup> Further, Article 57 prevents other individuals from attempting to procure the abortion of any woman.<sup>10</sup>

6. Under Article 2 Sec. 1 of the Infant Life (Preservation) Act:

(1) Subject as hereinafter in this subsection provided, any person who, with intent to destroy the life of a child capable of being born alive, by any wilful act causes a child to die before it has an existence independent of its mother, shall be guilty of felony, to wit, of child destruction, and shall be liable on conviction thereof on indictment to imprisonment for life with or without hard labour.

Provided that no person shall be found guilty of an offence under this section unless it is proved that the act which caused the death of the child was not done in good faith for the purpose only of preserving the life of the mother.<sup>11</sup>

7. Antigua and Barbuda is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).<sup>12</sup> Under Article 6 of the ICCPR, “[e]very human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.”<sup>13</sup> Antigua and Barbuda also has a responsibility to protect the lives of preborn babies under other international agreements, such as the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development.

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<sup>8</sup> REPUBLIC OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA CONSTITUTION OF 1981 art. 4, <https://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Antigua/antigua-barbuda.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Offences Against the Person Act, Cap. 300, § 56 (Antigua & Barbuda), <https://laws.gov.ag/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/cap-300.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* § 57.

<sup>11</sup> The Infant Life (Preservation) Act art. 2 § 1, <https://abortion-policies.srhr.org/documents/countries/01-Antigua-The-Infant-Life-Preservation-Act-1937.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> *Ratification Status for Antigua and Barbuda*, OHCHR, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=6&Lang=EN](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=6&Lang=EN).

<sup>13</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 6, *adopted* Dec. 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights> [hereinafter ICCPR].

### *Human Trafficking*

8. Article 6 of the Constitution of Antigua and Barbuda states that “[n]o person shall be held in slavery or servitude. No person shall be required to perform forced labour.”<sup>14</sup>

9. Additionally, under Article 13 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention) Act 2010, individuals convicted of human trafficking shall be subjected “to a fine not exceeding four hundred thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding twenty years or to both.”<sup>15</sup>

10. Further, under Article 8 of the ICCPR, “[n]o one shall be held in slavery; slavery and the slave-trade in all their forms shall be prohibited. No one shall be held in servitude.”<sup>16</sup>

11. Antigua and Barbuda is also a party to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.<sup>17</sup> Under Article 9, section 1 of this Protocol:

1. States Parties shall establish comprehensive policies, programmes and other measures:

(a) To prevent and combat trafficking in persons; and

(b) To protect victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, from revictimization.<sup>18</sup>

### **Abortion**

12. Complications related to abortion are a significant cause of morbidity and mortality in Latin American and Caribbean countries.<sup>19</sup> In fact, one study found that complications related to abortions accounted for 9.9% of maternal deaths in countries located in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, the study examined seventy health facilities across six countries in the region and found that 46.3% of women studied who had an abortion had mild complications, 49.5% had moderate complications, and 3.1% had potentially life threatening

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<sup>14</sup> REPUBLIC OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA CONSTITUTION OF 1981 art. 6, *supra* note 8.

<sup>15</sup> THE TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (PREVENTION) ACT, 2010, [https://www.oas.org/dil/The\\_Trafficking\\_in\\_Persons\\_Prevention\\_Act\\_Antigua\\_and\\_Barbuda.pdf](https://www.oas.org/dil/The_Trafficking_in_Persons_Prevention_Act_Antigua_and_Barbuda.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> ICCPR art. 8, *supra* note 13.

<sup>17</sup> *Status of Treaties: 12. A Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*, United Nations Treaty Collection, [https://treaties.un.org/pages/viewdetails.aspx?src=ind&mtdsg\\_no=xviii-12-a&chapter=18](https://treaties.un.org/pages/viewdetails.aspx?src=ind&mtdsg_no=xviii-12-a&chapter=18).

<sup>18</sup> G.A. Res. 55/25, The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children art. 9 § 1 (Nov. 15, 2000), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>.

<sup>19</sup> *Abortion-Related Morbidity in Six Latin American and Caribbean Countries: Findings of the WHO/HRP Multi-Country Survey on Abortion*, BMJ GLOBAL HEALTH (Aug. 20, 2021), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8404437/>.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

complications.<sup>21</sup> This is especially concerning because the number of abortions in the region has been increasing. In the early 90s, an estimated 4.4 million abortions occurred annually in the region.<sup>22</sup> That number has now grown to an estimated 6.5 million abortions annually.<sup>23</sup>

13. The increase in abortions can be attributed to the fact that abortion is increasingly becoming legal in the region.<sup>24</sup> Today, more than 37% of the population in Latin American and Caribbean countries has access to legal abortions, compared to just 3% less than a decade ago.<sup>25</sup> Thankfully, Antigua and Barbuda has rejected the push to legalize abortion and has so far remained steadfast in protecting the lives of mothers and preborn babies, dating back to the colonial era in the 19th century.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, these long held protections are under attack as Antigua and Barbuda’s High Court is hearing a case on the constitutionality of The Offences Against the Person Act, which prohibits women from procuring an abortion. Opponents of Antigua and Barbuda’s abortion law are hoping to repeal these protections and expand access to abortion in the country.<sup>27</sup>

14. Legalizing abortion in Antigua and Barbuda will undoubtedly result in the deaths of thousands of preborn babies annually, in addition to harming women. In Barbados, another Caribbean country, abortion has been legal since 1983 under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act.<sup>28</sup> This has led to approximately 3,000 abortions being carried out annually. Additionally, in Barbados, 58% of unintended pregnancies end in abortion. It is not hard to imagine that if Antigua and Barbuda were to legalize abortions, abortions would drastically increase, especially in cases where the pregnancy is unintended. However, the intent of a pregnancy is not justification for abortion which is neither healthcare nor family planning. In fact, since the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development, Member States have had an affirmative commitment to “reduce the recourse to abortion”<sup>29</sup> and to “take appropriate steps to help women avoid abortion, *which in no case should be promoted as a method of family planning.*”<sup>30</sup>

15. Antigua and Barbuda was correct in rejecting the recommendation from Iceland during Antigua and Barbuda’s last review to “[f]orm a legislative committee to revise the abortion law

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<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> *Abortion in Latin America and the Caribbean*, GUTTMACHER (Mar. 2018), <https://www.guttmacher.org/factsheet/abortion-latin-america-and-caribbean>.

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> Diani Cariboni, *How Latin American Women Are Winning the Battle for Abortion Rights*, NACLA (May 19, 2022), <https://nacla.org/how-latin-american-women-are-winning-battle-abortion-rights/>.

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> *Dominica and Antigua & Barbuda*, INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR WOMEN’S RIGHT TO SAFE ABORTION (May 10, 2024).

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> *Abortion Law Barbados*, WOMEN ON WAVES, <https://www.womenonwaves.org/en/page/4750/abortion-law-barbados>.

<sup>29</sup> International Conference on Population and Development, *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development*, ¶ 8.25, U.N. Doc. A/CONF/F.171/13/Rev. 1, [https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/icpd\\_en.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/icpd_en.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> *Id.* ¶ 7.24, (emphasis added).

to allow the termination of pregnancy.”<sup>31</sup> There is no internationally established right to abortion. In fact, a majority of U.N. Member States have affirmed the rights of the preborn through either prohibiting abortion altogether or only permitting it in cases to save the life of the mother.<sup>32</sup> Even U.N. Member States that have legalized abortion cannot agree on restrictions related to gestational age, with some restricting abortion at twelve weeks, fifteen weeks, twenty-two weeks, or providing no restrictions at all.<sup>33</sup>

16. While U.N. Member States cannot agree on abortion legislation, all U.N. Member States have affirmed the right to life as enshrined in the UDHR and the ICCPR. The UDHR states that “[e]veryone has the right to life”<sup>34</sup> and requires the “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family [as] the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”<sup>35</sup> Likewise, the ICCPR states that “[e]very human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.”<sup>36</sup> Antigua and Barbuda has enshrined these rights for the preborn by enacting legislation to prohibit abortion except in the rare case to save the life of the mother.

## Human Trafficking

17. In Antigua and Barbuda, human traffickers exploit both foreign and local victims for use in the sex trade and labor sectors such as tourism, domestic work, and retail.<sup>37</sup> Children are especially vulnerable to being exploited for labor on farms, in mechanic shops, and for use in domestic service.<sup>38</sup> Women and girls, particularly from Guyana and Jamaica, are at risk for being sexually exploited in bars, taverns, and brothels.<sup>39</sup>

18. In our last report on Antigua and Barbuda, we noted that the authorities have not convicted one case of human trafficking and that authorities lack the resources to help victims of human trafficking, unfortunately this has not changed.

19. Since its last UPR, Antigua and Barbuda has increased training for law enforcement personnel, enacted a 2025 National Action Plan, and implemented standard operating procedures.<sup>40</sup> However, these efforts have been futile, as authorities still have not convicted a single individual of human trafficking nor have they formally identified a victim of human trafficking.<sup>41</sup> In 2023, authorities investigated twenty-five cases of human trafficking

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<sup>31</sup> OHCHR, UPR of Antigua and Barbuda (3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle – 39<sup>th</sup> Session) Thematic List of Recommendations, *supra* note 5.

<sup>32</sup> See *The World's Abortion Laws*, CTR. FOR REPROD. RTS. (June 9, 2023), [https://reproductiverights.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/WALM\\_2023-v3-Updated\\_12-20-23.pdf](https://reproductiverights.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/WALM_2023-v3-Updated_12-20-23.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> *Id.*

<sup>34</sup> G.A. res. 217, (III) A, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 3 (Dec. 19, 1948).

<sup>35</sup> *Id.* pmb1.

<sup>36</sup> ICCPR art. 6, *supra* note 13.

<sup>37</sup> *Antigua and Barbuda*, GLOBAL ORGANIZED CRIME INDEX, <https://ocindex.net/country/antigua-and-barbuda>.

<sup>38</sup> *Antigua Youth are Being Forced into Criminality*, U.S. Report Says, ANTIGUA NEWSROOM (Sep. 30, 2025), <https://antiguanewsroom.com/antiguan-youth-are-being-forced-into-criminality-u-s-trafficking-report-says/>.

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

<sup>40</sup> *Weak Investigative Capacity Stalls Trafficking Cases in Antigua*, U.S. Says, ANTIGUA NEWSROOM (Oct. 1, 2025), <https://antiguanewsroom.com/weak-investigative-capacity-stalls-trafficking-cases-in-antigua-u-s-says/>.

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

involving twenty-six suspects.<sup>42</sup> In 2024, they investigated nine cases of human trafficking involving thirteen suspects. However, no traffickers were ever convicted.<sup>43</sup>

20. Antigua and Barbuda still lacks victim protection services and is unable to effectively collect evidence.<sup>44</sup> Further, a massive backlog in the courts has prevented cases from reaching trial.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, while Antigua and Barbuda has increased funding for awareness campaigns and outreach in multiple languages, overall funding to combat human trafficking has decreased.<sup>46</sup> These factors show why Antigua and Barbuda continues to be unable to secure convictions for human traffickers.

## Recommendations

21. We urge Antigua and Barbuda to remain steadfast in protecting the lives of mothers and preborn babies from the horrors of abortion. Antigua and Barbuda has a responsibility under the UDHR and the ICCPR to protect by law the inherent right to human life, and it has done exactly that. We want to commend Antigua and Barbuda for remaining steadfast in protecting life even when other countries in the region have caved. Further, we want to encourage Antigua and Barbuda to continue protecting all human life and reject efforts that call for the expansion of abortion in the region.

22. Antigua and Barbuda is clearly failing to live up to its obligation under the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime by not combating human trafficking nor protecting victims. Antigua and Barbuda must allocate funding resources so that it can thoroughly investigate cases of human trafficking that will lead to successful convictions.

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<sup>42</sup> *Antigua and Barbuda Stays on Tier 2 on 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report*, ANTIGUA NEWSROOM (Sep. 30, 2025), <https://antiguanewsroom.com/antigua-and-barbuda-stays-on-tier-2-on-2025-trafficking-in-persons-report>.

<sup>43</sup> *Id.*

<sup>44</sup> *Weak Investigative Capacity Stalls Trafficking Cases in Antigua, U.S. Says*, *supra* note 37.

<sup>45</sup> *Antigua and Barbuda Stays on Tier 2 on 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report*, *supra* note 45.

<sup>46</sup> *Id.*