

GERMANY 2020 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution prohibits religious discrimination and provides for freedom of faith and conscience and the practice of one's religion. The country's 16 states exercise considerable autonomy on registration of religious groups and other matters. Unrecognized religious groups are ineligible for tax benefits. Federal and some state offices of the domestic intelligence service continued to monitor the activities of certain Muslim groups and mosques. Authorities also monitored the Church of Scientology (COS), which reported continued government discrimination against its members. Certain states continued to ban or restrict the use of religious clothing or symbols, including headscarves, for some state employees. Senior government leaders continued to condemn anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment and acts. In September, Chancellor Angela Merkel described anti-Semitism as an attack on the dignity of individuals that "must be fought decisively" – ideally with education, but with the full strength of the criminal law system when necessary. Government officials responded to revelations of right-wing, anti-Semitic chat groups within police and the military by demanding investigations and dismissing those involved. Two additional state governments appointed anti-Semitism commissioners for the first time, bringing the total number of states with such commissioners to 15 (out of 16), in addition to the federal Jewish life and anti-Semitism commissioner. In October, the government announced it would increase social welfare funding for Holocaust survivors by 30.5 million euros (\$37.4 million) in 2021 and provide an additional 564 million euros (\$692 million) over the next two years to help Holocaust survivors cope with the burdens of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During a Sukkot celebration for students at the Hohe Weide Synagogue in Hamburg on October 4, a man wearing a military-style uniform struck a Jewish student in the head with a shovel, leaving the victim with a serious head injury. Police arrested the attacker, and a criminal trial was pending. Authorities including Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, Minister of Justice Christine Lambrecht, and Hamburg Mayor Peter Tschentscher condemned the attack. There were numerous reports of anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian incidents. These included assaults, verbal harassment, threats, discrimination, and vandalism. Federal crime statistics for 2019 cited 2,032 anti-Semitic crimes during the year, an increase of 13 percent from 2018. Seventy-two of those crimes involved violence. Federal crime statistics attributed 93.4 percent of anti-Semitic crimes in 2019 to the far right. In November, Federal Commissioner for Jewish Life in Germany and the

Fight against Anti-Semitism Felix Klein stated anti-Semitism was emerging as a common theme among groups of widely differing political backgrounds that were gathering to protest pandemic lockdown measures. From mid-March to mid-June, the Research Center for Information on Anti-Semitism (RIAS), which is partially government-funded, registered anti-Semitic incidents at 123 separate demonstrations against restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The head of the Central Council of Jews said to the media in May that right-wing protesters were using anxieties stirred up by the pandemic to spread anti-Semitic conspiracy theories on the internet. Demonstrations also occurred expressing anti-Muslim sentiment.

The U.S. embassy and five consulates general assessed the government's responses to incidents of religious intolerance; expressed concerns about anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian acts; and advocated for more law enforcement and other resources to prevent violent attacks on religious communities. A senior embassy official met with the federal commissioner for global freedom of religion at the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development in September. Consuls General met with state-level government representatives and anti-Semitism commissioners. The embassy and consulates general maintained a dialogue with a broad spectrum of religious communities and human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) on their concerns about religious freedom and on ways to promote tolerance and communication among religious groups.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 80.2 million (midyear 2020 estimate). Unofficial estimates based on the census and figures provided by religious groups indicate approximately 27 percent of the population is Catholic and 25 percent belongs to the EKD – a confederation of Lutheran, Reformed (Calvinist), and United (Prussian Union) Protestant regional churches. Other Protestant denominations, including the New Apostolic Church, Baptist communities, and nondenominational Christians, account for approximately 2 percent of the population. Orthodox Christians represent 1.9 percent of the population.

According to the most recent government estimates, approximately 5.7 percent of the population is Muslim, of which 75 percent is Sunni, 13 percent Alevi, and 7 percent Shia; the remainder includes Alawites (70,000), Ahmadis (35,000), and Sufis (10,000). Intelligence officials estimate there are approximately 12,150 Salafi Muslims in the country. Estimates of the Jewish population vary widely; the

Central Council of Jews estimates it at 94,771, while other estimates place the number at approximately 190,000 when including Jews who do not belong to a specific Jewish community. According to the secular NGO Religious Studies Media and Information Service (REMID), Buddhists (270,000); Jehovah's Witnesses (167,000); Hindus (100,000); Yezidis (100,000); members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Church of Jesus Christ) (40,000); Sikhs (10,000-15,000); and members of the COS (3,400) together constitute less than 1 percent of the population. All of REMID's estimates are based on members who have registered with a religious group. According to the nonprofit Research Group Worldviews Germany, approximately 39 percent of the population either has no religious affiliation or belongs to religious groups not counted in government statistics.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on religious opinion and provides for freedom of faith and conscience, freedom to profess a religious or philosophical creed, and freedom to practice one's religion. It also prohibits an official state church. It stipulates no one shall be required to disclose his or her religious convictions nor be compelled to participate in religious acts. The constitution states religious instruction shall be part of the curriculum in public schools, and parents have the right to decide whether their children receive religious instruction. It recognizes the right to establish private denominational schools. The constitution guarantees the freedom to form religious societies and permits groups to organize themselves for private religious purposes without constraint. It allows registered religious groups with Public Law Corporation (PLC) status to receive public subsidies from the states and to provide religious services in the military, hospitals, and prisons.

The General Act on Equal Treatment has been in force since August 2006. The purpose of the act is to prevent or stop discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

The federal criminal code prohibits calling for violence, inciting hatred, or taking arbitrary measures against religious groups or their members. Violations are punishable by up to five years in prison. It also prohibits "assaulting the human dignity of religious groups or their members by insulting, maliciously maligning, or defaming them," specifying a maximum penalty of five years in prison,

although prison sentences are rare. The prohibition and penalties apply equally to online speech. The federal criminal code prohibits disturbing religious services or acts of worship, with violators subject to a fine or imprisonment for up to three years. The law bans Nazi propaganda, Holocaust denial, and fomenting racial hatred, specifying a penalty of up to five years' imprisonment.

By law, social media companies with more than two million registered users in the country must implement procedures to review complaints and remove or block access to illegal speech within seven days of receiving a complaint and within 24 hours for cases considered “manifestly unlawful.” Noncompliance may result in fines of up to 50 million euros (\$61.3 million). Unlawful content includes actions illegal under existing criminal code, such as defamation of religions and denial of historic atrocities.

The law permits the federal government to characterize “nontraditional” religious groups – such as the COS – as “sects,” “youth religions,” and “youth sects” and allows the government to provide “accurate information” or warnings about them to the public. The law does not permit the government to use terms such as “destructive,” “pseudo-religious,” or “manipulative” when referring to these groups. Several court decisions have ruled that the government must remain neutral toward a religion and may provide a warning to the public only if an “offer” by a religious group would endanger the basic rights of an individual or place the individual in a state of physical or financial dependence.

Religious groups wishing to qualify as nonprofit associations with tax-exempt status must register. State-level authorities review registration submissions and routinely grant tax-exempt status; if challenged, their decisions are subject to judicial review. Those applying for tax-exempt status must provide evidence they are a religious group through their statutes, history, and activities.

A special partnership exists between the states and religious groups with PLC status, as outlined in the constitution. Any religious group may request PLC status, which, if granted, entitles the group to levy tithes (8 percent of income tax in Bavaria and Baden-Wuerttemberg, 9 percent in the other states) on members, who must register their religious affiliation with federal tax authorities. Each state collects the tithes on behalf of the religious community through the state's tax collection process, separately from and in addition to income taxes. PLCs pay fees to the government for the tithing service, but not all groups with PLC status utilize the service. PLC status also allows for benefits, including tax exemptions (larger than those given to groups with nonprofit status), representation on supervisory

boards of public television and radio stations, and the right to special labor regulations. State governments subsidize institutions with PLC status that provide public services, such as religious schools and hospitals. In addition, due to historic “state-church contracts” dating back to pre-1919 Germany, all state governments except for Bremen and Hamburg subsidize the Catholic Church and the EKD with different yearly amounts.

According to the constitution, the decision to grant PLC status is made at the state level. Individual states base PLC status decisions on a number of varying qualifications, including an assurance of the group’s permanence, size, and respect for the constitutional order and fundamental rights of individuals. An estimated 180 religious groups have PLC status, including Catholics, the EKD, Baha’is, Baptists, Christian Scientists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Jews, Mennonites, Methodists, the Church of Jesus Christ, the Salvation Army, and Seventh-day Adventists. Ahmadi Muslim groups have PLC status in the states of Hesse and Hamburg; no other Muslim communities have PLC status. The COS does not have PLC or nonprofit status in any state.

Federal animal protection laws prohibit the killing of animals without anesthesia, including as part of halal and kosher slaughter practices. Pursuant to a Federal Administrative Court decision, however, trained personnel may kill animals without anesthesia in a registered slaughterhouse under observation of the local veterinary inspection office if the meat is for consumption only by members of religious communities whose beliefs require slaughtering animals without anesthesia.

According to a 2015 ruling by the Federal Constitutional Court, general headscarf bans for teachers at public schools are a violation of religious freedom, but implementation is left to the states, which may determine if special circumstances apply. The states of Bavaria, North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW), and Saarland render decisions on a case-by-case basis. Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, Bremen, and Lower Saxony do not prohibit headscarves for teachers. Hesse permits teachers to wear headscarves as long as doing so does not impair “school peace” or threaten perceptions of state neutrality. Berlin’s Neutrality Law bans visible signs of religious affiliation for police, lawyers, judges, and law enforcement staff but, as of 2020, not for primary and secondary school teachers. In Lower Saxony, judges and prosecutors may not wear religious symbols or clothing in the courtroom. Other states have laws that restrict religious attire in certain circumstances.

Citing safety reasons and the need for traffic law enforcement, federal law prohibits the concealment of faces while driving, including by a *niqab*. Infractions are punishable by a 60-euro (\$74) fine.

According to federal law, religious groups may appoint individuals with special training to carry out circumcision of males under the age of six months. After six months, the law states circumcisions must be performed in a “medically professional manner” and without unnecessary pain.

All states offer religious instruction and ethics courses in public schools. Religious communities with PLC status (or those without such status that have concluded a special agreement with the state granting them this right) appoint religion teachers and work with the states to ensure the curriculum is in line with the constitution; the states pay the teachers’ salaries. Most public schools offer the option of Protestant and Catholic religious instruction in cooperation with those Churches, as well as instruction in Judaism if enough students (usually 12, although regulations vary by state) express an interest. Bavaria, Baden-Wuerttemberg, Berlin, Hesse, Lower Saxony, NRW, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, and Schleswig-Holstein also offer some religious instruction in Islam. In most federal states, Muslim communities or associations provide this instruction, while in Bavaria and Schleswig-Holstein, the state does. In Hamburg and Bremen, nondenominational religious instruction is offered for all students by the Protestant Church and the state, respectively.

Students who do not wish to participate in religious instruction may opt out; in some states, those who opt out may substitute ethics courses. State authorities generally permit religious groups to establish private schools as long as they meet basic curriculum requirements. Schooling is constitutionally mandated, and homeschooling, including for religious reasons, is prohibited in all states.

The government provides annual payments to Holocaust victims and their descendants, and regularly expands the scope of these programs to broaden the eligibility requirements.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Government Practices

In January and again in July, the Baden-Wuerttemberg Free Democratic Party (FDP) requested an examination of whether Jehovah’s Witnesses fulfilled the

conditions for PLC status in that state. In both instances, the state education ministry affirmed there was no reason to revoke the status. In August, the FDP's speaker for religious affairs once again urged the ministry to review the group's eligibility for PLC status due to its prohibition of blood transfusions for children. Jehovah's Witnesses have held PLC status in all states since 2017.

In March, the federal government established a cabinet committee to combat right-wing extremism and racism. The committee drew up a catalog of 89 concrete measures, many of which aim at combating anti-Semitism. The federal government stated it would provide more than one billion euros (\$1.23 billion) for the projects between 2021 and 2024.

In June, Federal Family Minister Franziska Giffey launched a network to provide government resources and foster connections between educational institutions and research centers working to combat anti-Semitism. The federal government stated it would support a new anti-Semitism competence center with two million euros (\$2.5 million) over the next four years.

In July, more than 60 scientists, academics, writers, and artists wrote to Chancellor Angela Merkel warning of an "inflationary, factually unjustified, and legally unfounded use of the term anti-Semitism." They expressed concern about the suppression of "legitimate criticism of Israeli government policy" and castigated Federal Commissioner for Jewish Life in Germany and the Fight against Anti-Semitism Felix Klein for distracting attention from "real anti-Semitic sentiments."

In September, speaking at the 70th anniversary of the Central Council of Jews in Germany Chancellor Merkel spoke of her "grave concern" over the increasingly open expression of anti-Semitism in the country. She described anti-Semitism as an attack on the dignity of individuals that "must be fought decisively" – ideally with education, but with the full strength of the criminal law system when necessary.

In September, the NRW interior ministry suspended 29 police officers for participating in a right-wing extremist chat group, and some faced criminal investigation. The group shared extremist propaganda, including photographs of Adolf Hitler. The interior ministry also ordered an inspection of the affected police station, and it created a new position to specifically monitor right-wing extremism across the NRW police force.

In April, the NRW commissioner for anti-Semitism published the first NRW anti-Semitism report, which indicated 310 anti-Semitic crimes were registered in NRW in 2019, of which 291 were motivated by right-wing ideologies. The crimes ranged from verbal abuse to physical injury; all cases resulted in criminal investigations. In June, the NRW commissioner announced she was establishing an office to monitor and independently investigate anti-Semitic crimes that would allow victims to report anonymously in part in an effort to increase the reporting of cases.

During the year, Schleswig-Holstein and Hamburg established state-level anti-Semitism commissioner positions, leaving Bremen as the only state without one. The responsibilities and functions of the position vary by state but generally include developing contacts with the Jewish community, collecting statistics on anti-Semitic incidents, and designing education and prevention programs. In 2018, Federal Anti-Semitism Commissioner Klein urged all states to establish anti-Semitism commissioners because the distribution of powers in the country's federal system provided the states with greater authority to combat anti-Semitism.

In February, the Frankfurt general prosecutor's office established a commissioner for combating anti-Semitism. In addition to evaluating anti-Jewish aspects of crimes, the person will serve as point of contact for domestic and foreign authorities.

In January, Hesse inaugurated a new office for reporting anti-Semitic incidents as part of a 2019 state initiative to establish a more comprehensive approach to countering online hate speech and harassment.

In February, the Bremen Senate extended its cooperation with the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial to police officers trained at the College of Public Administration. Among other activities, Yad Vashem teaches a course to police trainees on the history of the Jewish community in Bremen. The course brings trainees to main historical Jewish community sites as well as to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Yad Vashem also led trips to the Warsaw ghetto and to Israel; 18 trainees joined the trip to Israel.

More than 1,000 artists signed an open letter against the 2019 Bundestag decision to designate the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement as anti-Semitic, calling it a restriction of the right to boycott, a violation of democratic principles, and encouragement of a "climate of censorship." They joined concerns by the heads of some German cultural institutions who argued the resolution might

hinder their work. Numerous Bundestag members rejected the accusations, stating the resolution by no means banned dialogue or criticism. They also said that no tax funds should be used for BDS initiatives. State Minister for Culture Monika Gruetters said, “It is part of the Federal Republic of Germany's *raison d’être* to protect Israel's right to exist. It follows that the federal government does not actively support organizations or projects that question Israel's right to exist, even within the framework of cultural funding.”

In July, rap musician Farid Bang collaborated with Duesseldorf Mayor Thomas Geisel on a video promoting COVID-19 distancing measures. The state commissioner for anti-Semitism in NRW criticized the choice due to what he described as Bang’s frequently misogynistic, anti-Semitic, and violent lyrics, saying “This would be a wrong sign for Jewish life in this country.” The story received national publicity, and the video was taken down after one week.

In July, the Federal Constitutional Court confirmed a six-month prison sentence for Sascha Krolzig, federal chairman of the far-right party Die Rechte (The Right). Krolzig published an article calling a prominent member of the Jewish community an “insolent Jewish functionary” and praising the “exemplary and reliable men of the Waffen-SS.” Krolzig was convicted for sedition in February, based on inciting hatred against Jews and the use of National Socialist vocabulary.

In July, the Moenchengladbach public prosecutor's office brought sedition charges against a man suspected of distributing the anti-Semitic manifesto of the 2019 Halle synagogue attacker online. The case was pending as of December.

In August, Lower Saxony’s Jewish community expressed concern after police officer Michael F. from Hanover, who was responsible for designing the security plans for Lower Saxony’s Jewish synagogues and community centers, drew parallels between restrictions to limit the spread of COVID-19 and National Socialism during his speech at a demonstration against the restrictions. The officer was suspended from duty in August. “Anyone responsible for the safety evaluations of Jewish facilities in the police force must be above reproach, not indulging in some abstruse, conspiracy-theoretical nonsense,” said Franz Rainer Enste, the state’s anti-Semitism commissioner.

In February, NRW Minister-President Armin Laschet visited Israel and expressed assurances that Germany would take decisive action against anti-Semitism, racism, and extreme right-wing violence. He said, “I am ashamed that 75 years after the liberation of Auschwitz we are experiencing this again in Germany.” Upon his

return, Laschet received the Israel Jacobson Prize from the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany in recognition of his contribution to liberal Judaism and the strengthening of Jewish life in NRW.

In May, Bavarian Justice Minister Georg Eisenreich and Anti-Semitism Commissioner Ludwig Spaenle presented anti-Semitism guidelines for legal workers to help better identify anti-Semitic incidents.

According to reports from the federal Office for Protection of the Constitution (OPC – domestic intelligence agency) and Scientology members, the federal and state OPCs in Baden-Wuerttemberg, Bavaria, Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg, Lower Saxony, NRW, and Saxony-Anhalt continued to monitor the activities of the COS, reportedly by evaluating Scientology publications and members' public activities to determine whether they violated the constitution. At least four major political parties – the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Christian Social Union (CSU), Social Democratic Party (SPD), and FDP – continued to exclude Scientologists from party membership. "Sect filters," signed statements by potential employees to confirm they had no contact with the COS, remained in use in the public and private sectors. The COS said the government also discriminated against firms owned or operated by its members.

At the September session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the President of the European Office of the Church of Scientology for Public Affairs and Human Rights requested Germany stop using "sect filters" and called on the president of the Human Rights Council to launch an investigation into the religious freedom violations that, he said, the country's executive powers continue to perpetrate against Scientologists.

Following the country's April 30 ban on all Hizballah activities, police raided mosques in Berlin, Bremen, and NRW. Police had previously placed the mosques under surveillance due to what they stated were their pro-Hizballah sympathies and links with extremist groups. In May, police searched the official rooms of the al-Mustafa community in Woltmershausen in Lower Saxony as well as the private residences of community leaders, alleging a close association of al-Mustafa with Hizballah.

Federal and state OPCs continued to monitor numerous Muslim groups, including the terrorist groups ISIS, Hizballah, and Hamas as well as groups such as Turkish Hizballah, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Tablighi Jama'at, Millatu Ibrahim, the Islamic Center Hamburg, the Muslim Brotherhood, Milli Gorus, and various Salafist movements.

Hamburg opposition parties and civil society actors continued to advocate an end to Hamburg's formal relationship with the "Islamic Center," which they described as an important Iranian regime asset.

In May, the OPC in Saxony reported it was monitoring two mosques that it said were dominated by Salafists.

Groups under OPC observation continued to say that OPC scrutiny implied they were extremist and that this constrained their ability to apply for publicly funded projects.

Germany assumed the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union in July, and consistent with its commitment to prioritize the fight against anti-Semitism, it organized an online conference November 18 on combating anti-Semitism and hate speech, and two weeks later, the council unanimously approved a declaration mainstreaming the fight against anti-Semitism across all policy areas. The council also published the largest survey ever conducted among European Jews on their perceptions and experiences of anti-Semitism.

In August, the federal labor court awarded a Muslim computer scientist approximately 5,200 euros (\$6,400) in compensation for religious discrimination. In 2017, the plaintiff had insisted on wearing her headscarf in class as part of an interview for a position in the public school service and was subsequently denied a job. The rejected applicant said this was religious discrimination and sued for compensation under the General Equality Act. The Berlin Labor Court dismissed the claim, but the Berlin-Brandenburg Regional Labor Court upheld it, referring to a ruling by the Federal Constitutional Court in 2015 that stated that rejection of female applicants wearing headscarves must be justified by a concrete threat to the peace of the school. Berlin appealed but lost at the Federal Labor Court, which saw the Berlin position as "a disproportionate interference with freedom of religion." The court called upon Berlin to amend its neutrality law that forbids civil servants from wearing religious clothing and symbols.

In February, the Federal Constitutional Court ruled that a Muslim law clerk could be prohibited from wearing a headscarf during court proceedings. In its ruling, the court said the judiciary's obligation to observe complete neutrality outweighed the clerk's freedom of religion rights. The clerk sued Hesse state in 2017 for not permitting her to follow court proceedings from the bench, lead courtroom sessions, or take evidence from witnesses while she was wearing a headscarf.

In May, the Lower Saxony state parliament amended the law to prohibit judges and prosecutors from wearing religious symbols or clothing in the courtroom. State Justice Minister Barbara Havliza said that it was necessary in view of the increasing diversity in society and important for the perceived neutrality of the judiciary.

In April, the Rhineland-Palatinate state government forbade students in primary and secondary schools from full-face veiling at school (i.e., wearing a niqab or burqa). In July, Baden-Wuerttemberg did the same. For both states, the ban on full covering did not apply in higher education. Teachers in both states had already been forbidden from full-face veiling at school.

In February, an administrative court in Hamburg overturned a school's ban on niqabs, ruling that state law does not allow educational authorities to impose such a ban. The court said the 16-year-old who challenged the ban had the right to "unconditional protection" of her freedom of belief. The Hamburg state minister of education said he would seek to change the law, because "only if students and teachers have a free and open face can school and lessons function."

In September, the Higher Administrative Court in Muenster overturned a 2018 decision by an administrative court which banned a local mosque's outdoor amplification of the call to prayer in the town Oer-Erkenschwick. Local residents said this was a noise disturbance. In its ruling, the Muenster court compared the call to prayer with the sound of church bells. During the COVID-19 lockdown, some mosques in NRW received temporary permission to conduct calls to prayer via loudspeaker.

In June, the Lower Saxony Higher Administrative Court ruled a Muslim teacher denied employment for wearing a headscarf could assert a claim for compensation through the General Equal Treatment Act.

In February, a district court ordered a fitness studio in Oststeinbek to compensate a Muslim client 1,000 euros (\$1,200). The studio had prohibited the woman from exercising with a headscarf, citing insurance reasons. The woman brought legal action based on the General Equal Treatment Act.

In September, the Karlsruhe Labor Court ruled the Protestant Regional Church in Baden discriminated against an atheist applicant who had unsuccessfully applied for a secretarial position in 2019. The court ordered the Church to pay

compensation of 5,000 euros (\$6,100) for illegally asking the applicant about her religious beliefs.

According to a May survey of state-level education ministries, more than 900 schools in the country offered Islamic religious instruction. Almost 60,000 students took part in Islamic religious instruction in the school year 2019-20, an increase of 4,000 from the previous year. Since 2017-18, approximately 35 schools have added Islamic religious instruction.

In October, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany (also known as the Jewish Claims Conference) and the government announced an increase of 30.5 million euros (\$37.4 million) in government funding for social welfare services for Holocaust survivors, raising the yearly contribution from 524 million euros (\$642.9 million) in 2020 to 554.5 million euros (\$680.4 million) in 2021. The government also agreed to provide an additional 564 million euros (\$692 million) over the next two years to help financially struggling Holocaust survivors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The government continued to subsidize some Jewish groups. Based on an agreement between the federal government and the Central Council of Jews in Germany, the federal government contributed 13 million euros (\$15.9 million) to help maintain Jewish cultural heritage and support integration and social work. In addition, the federal government provided financial support to the Institute for Jewish Studies in Heidelberg, the Rabbi Seminar at the University of Potsdam, and the Leo Baeck Institute, an international group researching the history and culture of German Jewry.

State governments continued to provide funds to Jewish communities and organizations in various amounts for such purposes as the renovation and construction of synagogues. The federal government continued to cover 50 percent of maintenance costs for Jewish cemeteries. State and local police units continued to provide security for synagogues and other Jewish institutions.

According to the Humanistic Union, an independent civil liberties organization, total state government contributions during the year to the Catholic Church and the EKD totaled approximately 570 million euros (\$699.4 million). The union said it calculated its estimate based on budgets of the 16 states. The Humanistic Union advocates the abolition of state church privileges such as faith-based religious education as a regular school subject, collection of church taxes, and other financial aid.

In July, the Federal Supreme Court rejected the appeals of seven men who had been fined by a lower court in 2019 for wearing yellow vests marked “Sharia Police” and patrolling the streets of Wuppertal in 2014 looking for “non-Muslim” behavior. They had been charged with wearing uniforms as expressions of a common political opinion. A regional court acquitted them in 2016, but the Federal Constitutional Court reversed the acquittal in 2018.

The government continued the German Islam Conference dialogue with Muslims in the country. The dialogue’s aim was to improve the religious and social participation of the Muslim population, give greater recognition to Muslims’ contributions to society, and – in the absence of a central organization representing all Muslims in the country – further develop partnerships between the government and Muslim organizations. The conference held a video discussion on imam training with Interior Minister Horst Seehofer on November 10. Participants discussed initiatives to promote imam training, including imam employment in congregations, religious instruction in public schools, and pastoral care in public institutions, especially prison and military chaplaincies. The Interior Minister discussed the Independent Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Hostility, established in September, which focuses on distinguishing between criticism of religion and hostility toward Muslims.

In May, the Bundestag unanimously approved a bill authorizing rabbis to serve as military chaplains, performing pastoral services for the approximately 300 Jewish soldiers in the Bundeswehr (federal army). The Bundesrat, the chamber representing the federal states, also approved the bill in July. The selection of up to 10 rabbis was scheduled to begin in autumn. The country’s Conference of Orthodox Rabbis welcomed the action as “an important signal, especially in times...when there is again fertile ground for anti-Semitism, hate from the far right, and conspiracy theorists.” The federal government also said it was developing plans to authorize Muslim chaplains for the approximately 3,000 Muslims serving in the Bundeswehr, but the Central Council of Muslims Chair Aiman Mazyek said in a July interview that the government had not yet taken any concrete steps. In December, the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg appointed police rabbis for the first time in its history, one for the Jewish Religious Community of Wuerttemberg, and one for the Baden region. Their tasks included raising awareness of Jewish issues among police officers.

The country is a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and held the organization’s chairmanship during 2020.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

During a Sukkot celebration for students at the Hohe Weide Synagogue in Hamburg on October 4, an individual wearing a military-style uniform struck a Jewish student in the head with a shovel, leaving the victim with a serious head injury. Police arrested the attacker, a 29-year-old male with Kazakh roots residing in Berlin. Authorities, including Foreign Minister Maas, Minister of Justice Lambrecht, and Hamburg Mayor Tschentscher, condemned the attack. The case was awaiting court prosecution at year's end.

On December 21, the gunman who attacked the Halle synagogue and killed two individuals on Yom Kippur 2019 was sentenced to life imprisonment with subsequent preventative detention. The court found the attacker "severely guilty" of two counts of murder; 51 counts of attempted murder for his attack on the synagogue; several counts of attempted murder for his attack on a kebab shop, bystanders, and police officers; incitement; Holocaust denial; grievous bodily harm; and negligent physical injury. The verdict cited the attacker's lack of remorse and expressed desire to reoffend as support for issuing the maximum sentence.

There were numerous reports of anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian incidents, including assaults, verbal harassment, threats, discrimination, and vandalism. According to Ministry of Interior federal crime statistics, there were 2,032 anti-Semitic crimes committed during 2019 (the most recent statistics available), including 72 incidents involving violence. This represented a 13 percent increase from the 1,799 anti-Semitic crimes reported in 2018, of which 69 were violent.

The federal OPC's annual report stated the number of violent right-wing anti-Semitic incidents increased from 48 in 2018 to 56 in 2019. In May, Interior Minister Seehofer stated, "Right-wing extremism, racism, and anti-Semitism...continue to represent the greatest threat to security in Germany. We have every reason to proceed with the greatest vigilance here." According to the report, membership in right-wing extremist parties such as the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party increased from approximately 5,500 persons in 2018 to 13,330 in 2019. The report noted, however, this rise was entirely due to the reclassification of the right-wing populist Alternative for Germany Party's youth organization as well as its far-right faction formerly known as "The Wing" as extremist.

In May, the Ministry of Interior presented its annual report on politically motivated crime, which stated there were 41,177 such crimes in 2019, a 14.2 percent increase from 2018. Police registered 8,585 crimes motivated by racism or xenophobia, which encompasses religion, a 5.8 percent increase.

RIAS, to which victims may report anti-Semitic incidents independent of filing charges with police, reported 1,253 incidents in the states of Berlin, Brandenburg, Bavaria, and Schleswig-Holstein in 2019. RIAS reported 410 anti-Semitic incidents in Berlin in the first six months of 2020, comparable to the 404 incidents over the same period in 2019, despite the stringent COVID-related restrictions on public life. This included 26 incidents involving violence or threatened violence (down from 33), 58 examples of anti-Semitic propaganda, and 301 examples of malicious behavior, such as giving the Nazi salute. RIAS used categories different from official police statistics and included anti-Semitic incidents that did not rise to the level of a criminal offense. According to RIAS, the largest motivating factor for anti-Semitic attacks was right-wing political ideology.

From mid-March to mid-June, RIAS registered anti-Semitic incidents at 123 separate demonstrations against restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Incidents included positive references to Nazis, including comments by protest organizer Attila Hildmann that Adolf Hitler was “a blessing” in comparison to Angela Merkel and the use of anti-Semitic conspiracy myths, including the assertion that Jews were responsible for unleashing the virus.

Lower Saxony’s government recorded 172 anti-Semitic crimes in 2019, up from 127 in 2018. The Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania government counted 34 such crimes for the first half of 2020, up from 18 during the same time period in 2019. Alexander Rasumny of RIAS attributed the increase to two factors: first, he said, every attack potentially triggers another attack, and second, the culture of political and social debate had become more “brutalized” in Germany than in other countries.

In 2019 (most recent data available), the Ministry of Interior registered 950 incidents targeting Muslims and Muslim institutions, such as mosques or community centers. This was an increase from the 910 incidents in 2018. The ministry classified 90.1 percent of these incidents as right-wing extremism. Other recorded incidents included online hate speech against Muslims, hate mail, and aggressive behavior in the street.

A Hildesheim resident was arrested on June 5, suspected of planning attacks against Muslims and mosques, according to prosecutors. Police found weapons at his apartment and “data files with radical right-wing contents.” The suspect had said in an online chat that he wanted to carry out an attack similar to the 2019 mosque attacks in New Zealand and “kill Muslims.” The Celle prosecutor general's office brought charges against the 21-year-old defendant on suspicion of incitement and of preparing a serious act of violence endangering the state. His trial began in December and was continuing at year’s end.

The Ministry of Interior counted 128 anti-Christian incidents in 2019, including 16 cases involving violence. The ministry classified 30 percent of these incidents as motivated by right-wing ideology and 21 percent as motivated by left-wing ideology.

In March, the NRW Department of the Interior released information showing the number of politically motivated attacks on Jews, Muslims, and Christians rose significantly in 2019. Offenses against Jews quintupled since 2018, from seven to 35, attacks against Muslims almost tripled from 15 to 42, and offenses against Christians more than doubled from four to nine. A total of 42 suspects were identified, the vast majority of whom were German citizens and had right-wing backgrounds.

In January, a boy found a homemade explosive device near the access area of the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp memorial site in Thuringia. Due to the proximity to the memorial, the State Security Service was also involved in the investigation, which was ongoing at year’s end.

On July 9 in downtown Munich, four individuals followed Chief Rabbi Shmuel Aharon Brodman and shouted insults at him. Brodman called police, who were unable to locate the perpetrators. The offenders reportedly insulted the rabbi in English and spoke among themselves in Arabic. Bavaria’s Anti-Semitism Commissioner Spaenle expressed concern that several eyewitnesses had not intervened on the rabbi’s behalf.

In July, as yet unidentified suspects left severed pig heads in front of the Islamic Cultural Center in Greifswald on two separate occasions. As of December, police were investigating.

According to media reports, women who wore the hijab continued to face employment discrimination.

In October, a Brandenburg road construction company rejected an applicant because he was a practicing Muslim. The managing director sent the applicant a rejection notice in which he wrote, “Islam is not compatible with the constitution.” He confirmed this with the local public media, adding “I cannot employ practicing Muslims because there would be unrest.” Brandenburg police told the applicant that he could report an offense like this, because denying employment on the basis of an applicant’s religion contravenes the General Equal Treatment Act.

On January 4, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* reported that local construction companies had declined orders for the construction of a mosque in Erfurt because they feared their involvement would precipitate attacks on their vehicles by opponents of the mosque. One businessman said he had lost orders in the past after his involvement in the construction of a mosque was made public.

There were several reported incidents of arson in churches. In three separate incidents in February, March, and May, unknown individuals set fire to church bulletins, a Bible, and an altar at a church in Krefeld. Unknown individuals damaged a window in a church in Neuenkirchen while attempting to start a fire in August. In September, unknown persons broke a window and unsuccessfully attempted to set a church on fire in Wolgast. Police began investigations of all the cases, which were pending as of December.

In July, unknown perpetrators desecrated a memorial site for the survivors of the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp. No suspects could be identified, and investigations by local authorities were ongoing as of December.

In February, unknown persons vandalized a mosque in Emmendingen, Baden-Wuerttemberg with swastikas and rightwing slogans. Local police said they believed the incident was related to a series of similar acts of vandalism in February.

In April, a restroom in a Jewish-owned restaurant in Frankfurt was vandalized with anti-Semitic and Nazi images. As of December, state police were investigating.

In August, an Israeli-owned bar in Berlin was attacked by arsonists, according to police. A RIAS representative said the bar had been a target of anti-Semitic attacks in the past. In the incident, graffiti including a Star of David and numbers linked to the slogan of the Hitler Youth organization were found in the bar. As of December, police were investigating the incident.

In January, police arrested two individuals in the vandalism of a Jewish cemetery in the town of Geilenkirchen. The police stated the pair knocked over more than 40 gravestones in the cemetery and defaced some of the graves with blue paint.

In June, unknown individuals vandalized Alevi Muslim graves in Ludwigsburg, Baden-Wuerttemberg. As of December, local police were investigating.

In October, a piece of parchment inscribed with verses from the Torah was removed from its case at the Tiferet Israel synagogue's doorpost in Berlin, defaced with swastikas, and replaced. Foreign Minister Maas tweeted, "It simply hurt to see something so disgusting" and called for the crime to be solved quickly and those responsible punished. As of December, state police were investigating.

In April, unknown individuals damaged the door and windows of the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB) mosque in Cologne. The same night, vandals smashed the windows of a DITIB administrative building in Cologne. Local politicians condemned the act. Cologne Mayor Henriette Reker said she rejected all kinds of violence against religious facilities. As of December, police were investigating.

In August, an accomplice in a 2019 incident in which a bloody pig's head, plastic bags filled with blood, right-wing extremist slogans, and swastikas were found in front of the Arrahman Mosque in Moenchengladbach, was sentenced to eight months' probation. As of December, the main suspect's trial was still pending.

The Catholic Church and the EKD continued to oppose the COS publicly. "Sect commissioners" or "departments on sects and worldview matters" of the EKD and the Catholic Church continued to investigate "sects and cults" and publicize what they considered to be the dangers of these groups. On its website, the EKD Center for Questions of World Views continued to warn the public about what it said were the dangers posed by multiple religious groups, including the COS, the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (Unification Church), Bhagwan-Osho, Transcendental Meditation, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Universal Life, and continued to produce literature criticizing the groups.

In May, the University of Duisburg-Essen, Bielefeld University, and the Mercator Foundation published a joint study on the attitudes of young people in NRW towards Islam. The study concluded that, although the majority of young people

supported diversity, rejected discrimination, and had knowledge about Islam, stereotypes and prejudice remained widespread.

The far-right group Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident (PEGIDA) continued to organize weekly demonstrations in Dresden, although media reports indicated significantly fewer demonstrators than in previous years. Approximately 300 to 400 supporters continued to join PEGIDA rallies, even after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The demonstrations were approved by authorities contingent upon participants adhering to mask and social distancing requirements. Amid calls to curb immigration, PEGIDA supporters regularly expressed anti-Muslim sentiments during the rallies, including by carrying posters expressing opposition to women who wear religious head coverings.

On December 14, the Dresden District Court fined PEGIDA's founder and organizer, Lutz Bachmann, 4,200 euros (\$5,200) for incitement and slander. Bachmann had denounced Muslims as "murderer Muslims" and "rapist Muslims."

After the Dresden City Council's October, 2019 declaration of a Nazi emergency, mainstream parties as well as grassroots organizations worked together to counteract right-wing extremism. The Dresden chapters of the CDU, the SPD, and the Greens formally formed a cross-party alliance against the extreme right in February.

In April and May, some protesters at demonstrations against COVID-19 restrictions in Stuttgart and Berlin wore yellow Stars of David to indicate their opposition to mandatory vaccines, equating the anti-COVID lockdown to Nazi-era persecution of Jews. Josef Schuster, head of the Central Council of Jews, said to the media on May 11 that right-wing protesters were using anxieties stirred up by the pandemic to spread anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and other far-right preaching on the internet. Federal Anti-Semitism Commissioner Klein said anti-Semitic sentiments were regularly part of protests against the government's COVID-19 restrictions. In June and July, respectively, Munich and Wiesbaden banned the Star of David symbol at COVID-19 protests. Ahead of a November protest in Frankfurt, the city banned the display of the Star of David alongside slogans such as "unvaccinated," "vaccination sets you free," "Dr. Mengele," or "Zion."

On August 1, a rally supported by neo-Nazi groups drew more than 20,000 protesters in Berlin to demand an end to coronavirus restrictions. The rally was called a "Day of Freedom" by its organizers, the Stuttgart-based Querdenken 711

(“Thinking Outside the Box”) group. According to RIAS observers, some participants displayed anti-Semitic slogans, while others compared the government’s anti-COVID restrictions to Nazi regulations. Police charged the rally organizer for failure to comply with social distancing rules.

An estimated 23 churches continued to use bells bearing Nazi symbols and inscriptions. In January, a Protestant church in Thuringia replaced a bell with Nazi symbols after the Association of Protestant Churches in Central Germany (EKM) agreed to replace all such bells. The EKM also offered financial support to local churches to cover the cost of new bells.

In February, seven students at a police academy in Baden-Wuerttemberg were expelled for exchanging chat-group messages that included anti-Semitic and Nazi content.

From late 2018 through 2020, more than 85 threatening letters with right-wing extremist content, sometimes including anti-Semitic content, were sent to politicians, journalists, and other prominent figures. Many of the most visible targets were Muslim women. Among the recipients were the heads of the Central Council of Jews in Germany and the Central Council of Muslims in Germany. Personal, nonpublic data gained from police computers appeared in some letters. In September, a Frankfurt police officer was arrested in connection with the case. Investigations continued as of year’s end.

In February, one week after a man killed nine persons with migrant backgrounds at two shisha bars (hookah lounges) in Hanau, a mosque in Hanau received an anonymous threatening letter that made direct reference to the attack. As of December, police were investigating.

In February, mosques in Essen, Unna, Bielefeld, and Hagen received bomb threats by email and were evacuated. No bombs were detected. A DITIB representative said the anonymous bomb threats were signed by the right-wing Kampfgruppe 18 group and were politically motivated.

In February, the Pew Research Center published its findings on attitudes towards democratic principles, such as regular elections, free speech, and free civil society, as well as religious freedom, in 34 countries, based on interviews it conducted in its *Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey*. According to the findings, 72 percent of German respondents considered religious freedom to be “very important,” ranking it in the middle of their priorities for democratic principles among the nine tested.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The U.S. embassy and the five consulates general continued to engage closely with authorities at all levels of government regarding responses to incidents of religious intolerance, although due to the COVID-19 pandemic, online and remote engagements often substituted for face-to-face meetings and special events related to religious freedom issues. Embassy and consulate officials met regularly with a wide variety of federal and state parliamentarians to discuss religious freedom issues.

Embassy and consulate representatives met with members and leaders of numerous local and national religious and civil society groups about their concerns related to tolerance and freedom of religion. Topics of discussion with Jewish groups included concerns about what they characterized as the growing acceptability of anti-Semitism throughout the country and concern that right-wing groups have exacerbated anti-Semitism. Embassy and consulate representatives also discussed issues pertaining to religious freedom and tolerance with the Catholic, Evangelical, and other Protestant churches; the Central Council of Muslims; the Association of Islamic Cultural Centers; the Central Council of Jews in Germany; the Coordination Council of Muslims in Germany; the World Uyghur Congress; Alevi Muslims; Jehovah's Witnesses; and human rights NGOs.

On January 27, the Leipzig Consul General participated in a Holocaust commemoration event hosted by the local Jewish community and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Erfurt, Thuringia. He discussed the consulate's efforts to educate local youth on the Holocaust, for example by planning to bring a Simon Wiesenthal Center exhibition on Jewish history to Leipzig.

The embassy and consulates worked closely with Jewish communities, especially in eastern Germany, to provide small grants in support of programs promoting religious tolerance to leading NGOs countering violent extremism related to religion and anti-Semitism.

In August, the consulate in Leipzig supported the 20th Yiddish Summer Weimar in Thuringia, one of the world's leading summer programs for the study and presentation of traditional and contemporary Yiddish culture. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the concerts and workshops took place outdoors in public spaces in Weimar, Erfurt, and Eisenach, attracting a broader audience than usual.

In February, consulate officers in Duesseldorf met with the chief administrator of the Jewish Community in Cologne. The discussion focused on the experience of the Jewish community across the country and public outreach planning for the 2021 festival “1700 Years of Jewish Life in Germany.”

On December 4 and 5, the embassy organized a virtual teacher academy on “Jewish-American Life and Culture” that engaged German and American experts with 70 teachers from across the country. The program offered tools and content for the classroom to elevate coursework that combats anti-Semitism beyond a simple recounting of history. The conference reached an indirect audience of hundreds of teachers and approximately 10,000 to 14,000 of their students nationwide.

The embassy and consulates actively promoted religious freedom and tolerance through their social media channels, utilizing Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to highlight the engagement of senior embassy officials on the issue. For example, on the one-year anniversary of the attack on the Halle synagogue, the embassy published a statement on its social media accounts that said “we remember the victims of this senseless tragedy, and stand firm in our resolve to confront, condemn, and stop anti-Semitism and right-wing extremism.” The postings reached large audiences.