

# THE NETHERLANDS 2020 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

## Executive Summary

The constitution prohibits religious discrimination and protects the freedom of individuals to profess their religion or belief. It is a crime to engage in public speech inciting religious hatred. In a January letter to parliament, Minister of Social Affairs and Employment Wouter Koolmees expressed the cabinet's concern regarding the influence of Salafist organizations that have negative views of Dutch society, the rule of law, the participation of Muslims in society, and generally those who do not agree with them. Parliament continued to pressure the government to counter the foreign funding of mosques and Islamic institutions to stop the influence of Salafist and radical ideas. Muslim, Jewish, and Christian groups stated that a parliamentary report on foreign funding released on June 25 did not make a clear distinction between the small number of "ultra-orthodox" Muslim groups and the majority of Muslims active in mainstream society. Authorities rarely enforced the law banning full-face coverings in schools, hospitals, public transportation, and government buildings, but the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Report Islamophobia stated the "burqa ban" led to a wave of physical and verbal abuse against Muslims, and it called on parliament to reconsider the law. Local and national security officials continued to work with Jewish and Muslim communities to increase security at religious sites. Politicians from some parties made anti-Islam statements during the year that were protected by constitutional provisions on free speech. On January 22, King Willem-Alexander attended the Fifth World Holocaust Forum in Jerusalem, and on January 26, Prime Minister Mark Rutte apologized on behalf of the government for doing too little to protect Dutch victims of the Holocaust. Jewish groups criticized national railway Nederlandse Spoorwegen for announcing on June 26 that it would donate five million euros (\$6.13 million) to Holocaust remembrance sites as a "collective expression of recognition" of all Dutch Holocaust victims without first consulting them. The cornerstone of the National Holocaust Monument in Amsterdam was laid on September 23.

Government and nongovernmental organizations reported hundreds of anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic incidents involving nonlethal violence, threats, harassment, discrimination, hate speech, and vandalism. The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights (NIHR), an independent government advisory body, received 26 complaints of religious discrimination in 2019, mostly in the workplace, compared with 17 in 2018. Police registered 768 anti-Semitic incidents in 2019 (of which 65 percent

involved slurs). Police reported 599 anti-Semitic complaints in the previous year, but those statistics did not include incidents involving slurs. Some observers attributed the rise in complaints to increased political and public attention to anti-Semitism, including urgent appeals to report incidents. The HaCarmel Kasher Restaurant in Amsterdam was the target of several anti-Semitic incidents, including vandalism. On August 26, Dutch national Hassan N. was convicted of placing a fake bomb in front of the restaurant. The Jewish community again stated it was concerned about increasing anti-Semitism. On October 22, the Dutch Protestant Church admitted the Church's guilt for its silence and inaction during the Holocaust. Despite agreements between authorities, the Royal Netherlands Soccer Association (KNVB), soccer clubs, and the Anne Frank Foundation to discourage anti-Semitic behavior at soccer matches, anti-Semitic chanting continued. In 2019, police registered 225 incidents of other forms of religious discrimination, most of which targeted Muslims, compared with 137 incidents in 2018. The governmental Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) found that 57 percent of Muslims experienced discrimination on the basis of religion and 68 percent because of their ethnicity. Monitoring organizations said there was a further increase in anti-Muslim hate speech online, particularly by those they considered to be extremist groups, and that many instances of workplace discrimination against Muslims were directed at women wearing headscarves.

The U.S. embassy and consulate general in Amsterdam emphasized the importance of supporting all faiths and engaging in interfaith dialogue in both formal meetings and informal conversations with government officials from multiple ministries and local governments and with parliamentarians. Embassy and consulate general representatives discussed religious freedom issues with leaders of several different faith communities and a broad range of civil society groups. The Ambassador met the owner of the HaCarmel Kasher Restaurant to discuss violent anti-Semitic acts against the restaurant, and with the Dutch Jewish Council (CJO) regarding cooperation with the Jewish community on Holocaust restitution and reparations efforts. The embassy and consulate general highlighted the need for religious tolerance and interfaith understanding and discussed issues of religious integration and violent extremism in outreach to youth, academics, and religious leaders and organizations from various faith traditions. Embassy representatives met with NGOs such as Femmes for Freedom to discuss religious freedom issues, including the ban on full face coverings.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 17.3 million (midyear 2020 estimate). In a 2017 survey, the most recent available, of persons age 15 or older by Statistics Netherlands, the official source of government statistics, 51 percent of the population declared no religious affiliation, 23.6 percent self-identified as Roman Catholic, 14.9 percent as Protestant (6.4 percent Reformed, 2.9 percent Calvinist, and 5.6 percent unspecified Protestant), 5.1 percent as Muslim, and 5.6 percent, including members of the Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, and Baha'i faiths, as "other."

Most Muslims live in urban areas and are of Turkish, Moroccan, or Surinamese background. The Muslim population also includes recent immigrants and asylum seekers from other countries, including Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Syria, Afghanistan, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. While there are no official estimates, most Muslims are believed to be Sunni. The Liberal Jewish Community, the largest Jewish community in the country, estimates there are 40,000-50,000 Jews. A Statistics Netherlands study from 2015, the most recent available, estimates the number of Hindus at 10,000, of whom approximately 85 percent are of Surinamese descent and 10 percent of Indian descent. The Buddhist community has approximately 17,000 members, according to a 2007 report by the SCP, the most recent estimate available.

## **Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

### **Legal Framework**

The constitution prohibits discrimination on religious grounds and provides for the freedom of individuals to profess their religion or belief, individually or in community with others, provided it does not affect their responsibilities under the law. The constitution allows the government to restrict the exercise of religious beliefs outside of buildings or enclosed spaces to protect health, ensure traffic safety, and prevent disorder.

The law makes it a crime to engage in public speech that incites religious hatred and provides a penalty of imprisonment for up to two years, a fine of up to 8,100 euros (\$9,900), or both. To qualify as hate speech, statements must be directed at a group of persons; the law does not consider statements targeted at a philosophy or religion, such as "Islam" (as opposed to "Muslims"), as criminal hate speech.

The law does not require religious groups to register with the government. Under the law, if the tax authorities determine a group is "of a philosophical or religious

nature,” contributes to the general welfare of society, and is nonprofit and nonviolent, they grant it exemptions from all taxes, including income, value-added, and property taxes.

The law bans full-face coverings – including ski masks, helmets, *niqabs*, and burqas – in schools, hospitals, public transportation, and government buildings. According to the law, authorities must first ask individuals violating the ban to remove the face covering or to leave the premises. Those refusing to comply may be fined 150 euros (\$180).

The law permits employees to refuse to work on Sundays for religious reasons, but employers may deny employees such an exception depending on the nature of the work, such as employment in the health sector. Members of religious communities for whom the Sabbath is not Sunday may request similar exemptions.

The Council of State and the NIHR are responsible for reviewing complaints of religious discrimination. The Council of State is the highest administrative court in the country, and its rulings are binding. The NIHR serves as the government’s independent human rights watchdog, responsible for advising the government and monitoring and highlighting such issues, including those pertaining to religion. The NIHR hears complaints of religious discrimination, often involving labor disputes, and issues opinions that do not carry the force of law but with which the addressed parties tend to comply. If they do not comply with NIHR’s opinion, plaintiffs may take their case to a regular court.

Local governments appoint antidiscrimination boards that work independently under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. These local boards provide information on how to report complaints and mediate disputes, including those pertaining to discrimination based on religion. Parties involved in disputes are not forced to accept mediation decisions of the local boards.

The government provides funding to religious schools, other religious educational institutions, and religious healthcare facilities. To qualify for funding, institutions must meet government educational standards as well as minimum class size and healthcare requirements. The constitution stipulates that standards required of religious or ideology-based (termed “special”) schools, financed either in part or fully by the government, shall be regulated by law with due regard for the freedom of these schools to provide education according to their religion or ideology.

The constitution stipulates public education shall pay due respect to the individual's religion or belief. The law permits, but does not require, religious education in public schools. Teachers with relevant training approved by the Ministry of Education teach classes about a specific religion or its theology in some public schools, and enrollment in these classes is optional. All schools are required to familiarize students with the various religious movements in society, regardless of the school's religious affiliation. Religion-based schools that are government funded are free to determine the content of their religious classes and make them mandatory, provided the education inspectorate agrees that such education does not incite criminal offenses such as inciting hate speech or action. Approximately 71 percent of government-funded schools have a religious, humanist, or philosophical basis. The Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science is responsible for setting national curriculum standards with which all schools must comply and for monitoring compliance.

Courts may issue fines and arrest warrants against husbands who refuse to give their wives a religious divorce.

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

### **Government Practices**

On January 20, Minister of Social Affairs and Employment Koolmees in a letter to parliament reiterated the cabinet's concern regarding the influence of Salafist organizations that had negative views of those with different opinions, Dutch society, the rule of law, and the participation of Muslims in Dutch society. The government continued working with various Muslim communities to reinforce their "resilience" against authoritarian Salafist doctrine, including meeting with community representatives to discuss the challenges mosques face.

Parliament continued to pressure the government to screen the foreign funding of mosques and Islamic institutions to counter the influence of Salafist and radical ideas. On June 25, the parliamentary committee investigating foreign funding of religious institutions published a report of its findings. The report, based on February hearings on the issue, noted a lack of transparency on foreign funding of mosques, the extensive use of social media to disseminate "strict" religious messages within the Muslim community, and the influence of some countries, including Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, in local mosques through their training of imams. The report, however, made no recommendations on how to counter possible extremist influence accompanying donations from "unfree

countries” to local Islamic institutions. The Muslim community, Dutch Muslim Council (CMO), and Council of Jews, Christians, and Muslims (OJCM) stated they were disappointed with the report, noting that it did not make a clear distinction between the small number of “ultra-orthodox” Muslim groups and the majority of Muslims active in mainstream society. The OJCM also criticized the inquiry report for not using well-defined concepts, particularly when referring to “unfree countries” and “invisible financing,” and for characterizing all Muslims in the country as radicalized. In statements to media, CMO president Muhsin Koktas questioned why the inquiry focused only on mosques and not on churches and political groups that might also be influenced towards radicalism by foreign funding. Koktas also expressed concern that the report produced a “skewed” picture of the Muslim community.

On November 23, the government stated that it shared concerns of undesirable influences through foreign funding and proposed legislation that would give mayors and the Public Prosecution Service the authority to inspect all donations from outside the EU or European Economic Area to any organization. As of year’s end, the bill had yet to pass. The government also pledged to strengthen local Muslim communities by supporting an imam training program and strengthening mosque boards.

In September, the Second Chamber (the lower house of parliament) organized hearings and debates around a November 2019 proposal presented by People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) parliamentarian Bente Becker to “counter repression in the name of culture and religion.” The plan focused on issues found in certain Muslim communities, such as arranged marriages, honor-related violence, repression of women, forcing women to wear niqabs, female genital mutilation or cutting, and polygamy.

The government continued to require asylum seekers requesting a residence permit to sign a statement of participation in civic integration. The statement informed immigrants of their rights and obligations and of fundamental values, including freedom of religion.

During the year, authorities rarely enforced the law banning full-face coverings – including niqabs and burqas – in schools, hospitals, public transportation, and government buildings. Public transportation representatives reported a decrease of women wearing niqabs using public transportation. Police stated few incidents were reported, and no one was fined. Some hospital officials said the ban was not an impediment to providing medical treatment, and while some incidents in which

healthcare providers requested women wearing niqabs or burqas to take them off in a healthcare facility were reported, no one was denied medical care. Muslim women wearing niqabs reported they were subjected to increased physical and verbal abuse in locations where the ban did not apply, such as parks and shops. On September 22, the DENK political party posted on Twitter, “Niqab-wearers are victims of a badgering law. The women report being verbally and physically attacked because of the ‘burqa law.’ DENK says: ‘Recognize Islamophobia as racism and dismantle the law ASAP!’”

The NGO Report Islamophobia published a report on September 21 stating the “burqa ban” had led to a wave of physical and verbal abuse against Muslims, and it called on parliament to reconsider the law. The report also stated the ban had sparked online “witch hunts” and media articles instructing individuals how to make citizens’ arrests when the law was not enforced. According to the report, minors were involved in approximately half the incidents the foundation studied, usually as the children of the harassment victim. The foundation started a petition to abolish the ban. When the law banning face coverings was passed in 2019, the government said it would evaluate it in 2022, but the foundation called for an earlier review.

The Central Body for Accommodating Asylum Seekers, the agency charged with overseeing asylum centers, said it prohibited religious activities in the centers to avoid inflaming tensions among different religious groups housed together in an already sensitive environment. Other than inside the asylum centers, the government permitted proselytizing within society.

Local and national authorities, the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security, and police consulted closely on security issues with representatives from religious communities.

Local governments, in consultation with the national government, continued to provide security to all Jewish institutions. The volunteer organization For Life and Welfare also provided private security to Jewish institutions and events.

Local governments continued to provide security to mosques and Islamic institutions as necessary, and local authorities worked with Islamic institutions on enhancing the security of mosques and other religious institutes, as well as their visitors. The national government continued to support this local approach and developed materials to assist religious institutes and local governments in implementing such measures. The national government continued to disseminate

the 2019 “Security of Religious Institutes” manual, which was developed in consultation with the Muslim community, local governments, and police.

At year’s end, parliament had not scheduled a debate on legislation proposed by the Animal Rights Party to ban ritual animal slaughter. In 2019, the Council of State said the legislation “constitutes a serious infringement on freedom of religion, violates the human rights of Jews and Muslims,” and should therefore not be introduced. The council stated the interest of protecting animal welfare did not outweigh the freedom of religion. On the occasion of Eid al-Adha, Party for Freedom (PVV) leader and member of parliament Geert Wilders tweeted on July 28, “It is a gross disgrace that the government allows and facilitates this Islamic cruelty of the un-anesthetized slaughter of animals. You should be ashamed of yourselves.” On September 25, the Right Resistance and Allies protest movement started an online petition against ritual animal slaughter, which had more than 2,500 signatures at year’s end. On December 17, the European Union Court of Justice ruled EU member states may impose a requirement that animals be stunned prior to slaughter and that such a requirement did not infringe on the rights of religious groups.

The Democrats 66 party and the Socialist Party included in their election platforms ahead of March 2021 general elections a call to amend the article of the constitution that guarantees freedom of education to give the Minister of Education the power to intervene in order to prevent the founding of schools by groups supporting “radical” and “undemocratic” views.

In January, the Council of State ruled that Minister for Primary and Secondary Education and Media Education Arie Slob had the authority to instruct the city council of the predominantly Christian community of Westland to allow establishment of an Islamic primary school. In November, the town, however, voted to remove the budget set aside for the Islamic school, citing the fact that the school had not submitted an application. Media reported the school had not done so due to the legal debate underway earlier in the year.

The Second Chamber of parliament adopted a resolution in July urging the government to allow Jewish students to observe the Sabbath in the context of school classes, which occasionally occurred on weekends due to the coronavirus pandemic’s impact on school schedules.

The government continued to require imams and other spiritual leaders recruited from abroad to complete a course on integrating into Dutch society before



preaching in the country. This requirement did not apply to clergy from EU countries and those with association agreements with the EU, such as Turkey, whose Religious Affairs Directorate appoints approximately 140 Turkish imams to serve in the country. The government continued to sponsor leadership courses intended to facilitate imam training in Dutch.

The Society and Integration Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment published its research report on domestic mosques on July 14. The research found that many imams could not speak Dutch, had insufficient knowledge of the local social context, and therefore had less authority within Muslim communities. The report assessed that this allowed Salafist organizations to take advantage of this space by using guest speakers who were fluent in Dutch to disseminate their message and spread Salafist doctrine in Dutch on the internet. The study recommended mosques support more Dutch language training for imams.

The NIHR reported receiving 26 complaints of religious discrimination in 2019 – mostly in the workplace – compared with 17 in 2018, and issued opinions in nine cases. In one case, the NIHR judged that a Christian school did not discriminate on the grounds of religion when it terminated the labor contract of a teacher because the teacher’s religious views were not the reasons for the contract’s discontinuance. In another case, it judged that a fitness center discriminated against a woman by not allowing her to wear her headscarf in the facility.

On August 5, the national railway company Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS) finished accepting online applications for compensation to Jewish, Roma, and Sinti Holocaust victims whom NS transported to transit camps, ultimately leading to concentration and extermination camps, during World War II when the country was under Nazi occupation. NS announced it paid more than 40 million euros (\$49.08 million) in compensation to an estimated 500 Holocaust survivors and 5,000 widows and children during the yearlong application acceptance window. On June 26, NS also announced it would donate five million euros (\$6.13 million) to four Holocaust commemoration centers in the country as a “collective expression” of recognition of all Dutch victims of the Holocaust. Domestic and international Jewish communities criticized NS for making this announcement without consulting them as representatives of those who suffered during the Holocaust due to NS’ role. The CJO stated afterward that NS had independently decided the issue, despite Jewish organizations urging NS to work with them to find a way to honor the memory of the many victims by contributing to the care of

surviving victims and supporting the rebuilding of “Jewish life decimated” by the Holocaust.

A December 7 report by the ad-hoc Kohnstamm Committee, which was tasked in 2019 with evaluating the government’s artwork restitution policy, found that the Advisory Committee on the Assessment of Restitution Applications for Items of Cultural Value and the Second World War (restitution committee) should be more “empathetic” and less “formalistic” in its response to claims for Nazi-looted artwork. The report rejected the restitution committee’s practice of considering the equities of a museum when making restitution rulings, calling for an end to this “balance of interests” calculation. The report’s recommendations also included a call to resume the search for Jewish owners (or their heirs) of unclaimed artwork in the possession of the government and some museums. The report recommended the government establish a unified and clear framework for restitution policy in one policy document – replacing the multiple different applicable policy documents that currently exist – and create a government-run help desk that would offer information on restitution policy to the public. Education Minister Ingrid van Engelshoven, who was responsible for artwork restitution policy and commissioned the report in 2019, was expected to determine by spring 2021 which recommendations to adopt. The CJO publicly praised the Kohnstamm report after its release, highlighting its criticism of the “balance of interests” calculation and expressing hope that van Engelshoven would adopt all of the recommendations.

The government is a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). The government continued to state that it accepted the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism but that it was not legally bound by it. The government shared indicators from this definition with police and Public Prosecutor’s Office so they could take the indicators into account when dealing with incidents of anti-Semitism. The government used the IHRA definition as a practical tool for registration and detection of criminal offenses that could have a discriminatory element. On August 28, Minister of Justice and Security Ferdinand Grapperhaus rejected criticism by the DENK party that the IHRA working definition was used to muzzle criticism of Israel.

On June 15, the government presented the annual update of its *National Action Plan Against Discrimination*, which included specific measures to counter anti-Islamic sentiment and anti-Semitism. The update prioritized local interreligious dialogue and discrimination awareness in education and soccer. In addition to implementing existing measures, the government appropriated 25 million euros (\$30.67 million) to enhance education on World War II (including Holocaust

education), modernize a number of war museums and commemoration centers, implement educational projects (including regarding the Dutch East Indies during the war), fund scientific research into World War II history, and facilitate digital access to resources and archives on World War II. The cabinet also presented legislation on citizenship education with the goal of increasing mutual understanding and knowledge of other cultures and religions and combating intolerance.

As it had in 2019, the government spent one million euros (\$1.23 million) on projects to counter anti-Semitism during the year, with emphasis on the improvement of incident reporting and response. The government appropriation was set to continue until the end of 2021.

In response to a March 2019 resolution by Labor Party parliamentarians Gijs van Dijk and Kristen van den Hul, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment engaged in discussions with representatives of Muslim communities throughout the spring to develop specific policies to counter discrimination against Muslims. The ministry held online focus group sessions comprised of Muslims and non-Muslims to gain insight into countering anti-Muslim discrimination. During the year, the government-funded think tank Knowledge Platform on Integration and Society researched measures other countries were taking to counter anti-Muslim discrimination.

On July 2, the Second Chamber of parliament adopted a nonbinding plan of action put forward by parliamentarians Gert-Jan Segers of the Christian Union Party and Dilan Yesilgoz of the VVD that made concrete proposals to combat anti-Semitism more effectively. The plan proposed improving mandatory education about the Holocaust and anti-Semitism, including the history of the Jewish community in the country; increasing support to teachers to raise these subjects in the classroom; creating a safe environment at school; reaching out to Jewish youth; focusing attention on the Holocaust, World War II, and freedom of religion in the mandatory integration courses for immigrants; providing structural security to Jewish institutes and synagogues; training police to recognize anti-Semitism; promoting policies to encourage victims to file complaints with police; pursuing zero tolerance with respect to anti-Semitism on the internet and during soccer matches; appointing a national anti-Semitism coordinator; and developing a specific national action plan to combat anti-Semitism. Segers stated the fight against anti-Semitism was “a litmus test for our civilization. If we cannot protect the Jewish community of only 50,000 people, we cannot protect anyone.” Yesilgoz stated she received many anti-Semitic messages whenever she spoke out

against anti-Semitism. She said it was a problem that individuals felt free to share anti-Semitic statements on social media.

Segers and Yesilgoz said they advocated a targeted approach to combat anti-Semitism because, in their view, a generic antidiscrimination strategy would be ineffective. The government continued to promote its policy of fighting all forms of discrimination equally under its *National Action Plan Against Discrimination*.

On December 13, Justice Minister Grapperhaus announced the government would establish its first national coordinator for fighting anti-Semitism in early 2021. Grapperhaus said increased anti-Semitism in recent years, particularly online, drove the need for this position, noting that the government “must not leave this battle to the Jewish community alone.” According to Grapperhaus, the coordinator will advise the government on combating anti-Semitism, in cooperation with the Jewish community, for at least one year. The CJO welcomed the news, noting that combating anti-Semitism “requires an integrated approach,” which the future coordinator could influence.

The mayors and aldermen in larger cities, including Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague, met at regular intervals with the Jewish community to discuss security issues and other topics of interest. These city governments continued to support a range of projects, such as educational programs to teach primary schoolchildren about the Holocaust and to counter prejudice against Jews. Amsterdam, with the largest Jewish population in the country, remained particularly active in such programming but postponed visits of school children to the Camp Westerbork Remembrance Center, the transit camp to which the Nazis transported Dutch Holocaust victims before taking them to concentration and extermination camps in eastern Europe, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Government and security officials met throughout the year with the Jewish community to discuss matters of concern, such as security, anti-Semitism, and ritual animal slaughter. The CJO, Netherlands-Jewish Congregation, Netherlands Alliance of Progressive Judaism, OJCM, and NGO Center for Information and Documentation on Israel (CIDI) attended these meetings.

PVV leader Wilders pursued a campaign calling for the “de-Islamization of the Netherlands,” advocating a series of measures, including closing all mosques and Islamic schools, banning the Quran, and barring all asylum seekers and immigrants from Muslim-majority countries. He used social media to disseminate his message. Wilders’ Twitter account, which remained active during the year,

contained hundreds of entries criticizing Islam. For example, Wilders posted, “PVV is the only party that wants to stop the Islamic ideology of discrimination, hatred, and violence in the Netherlands. Enough is enough,” on July 25; “Islam does not belong in the Netherlands,” on July 27; “Islam is terror,” on August 15; and “I have a dream. Stop Islam,” on August 28. On February 19, Wilders said Islam was the main cause of rising anti-Semitism in the country. He asserted that Islam was “synonymous with anti-Semitism” and that the Quran “contains a lot more anti-Semitism than *Mein Kampf*.” Wilders also repeatedly introduced resolutions in parliament calling for a ban on all immigration from Muslim-majority countries to stop “Islamization.”

The Forum for Democracy Party (FvD) stated it did not support the PVV campaign for “de-Islamization” of the country and closure of all mosques, but party leader Thierry Baudet stated that Wilders “has put on the agenda the significant problem of radical Islam and Muslim immigration.” Baudet also called on Islamic schools to embrace Western values.

*NL Times* reported that on November 15, then FvD parliamentarian Theo Hiddema said on the television program *WNL on Sunday* that authorities should install wiretapping equipment in Salafist mosques, which he called criminal organizations. Hiddema said, “They are sowing hatred and division against unbelievers and apostates, and that is a crime.” The former head of the Supreme Court, Geert Corstens, who was also on the WNL broadcast, said evidence would be needed before implementing any such measure.

The FvD expelled from its youth group three members who posted anti-Semitic correspondence in the organization’s WhatsApp group on May 1. One message claimed that “Jews have international pedo[philia] networks and help women en masse into pornography.” A second round of correspondence in the FvD’s youth party in mid-November led to the expulsion of an additional individual and the departure of several senior party members, who said they felt Baudet, as party leader, did not deal strongly enough with the incidents. An internal party investigation into the incidents concluded on December 15 that there was no wrongdoing by the youth party or FvD’s parliamentary group in handling the situations.

Citing freedom of expression, authorities in Amsterdam permitted the weekly demonstration of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement at Dam Square. CIDI reported the demonstrations frequently used anti-Semitic slogans, such as equating Zionism with racism. Due to the domestic coronavirus outbreak,

the city banned all demonstrations on Dam Square as of June. BDS demonstrations were then occasionally held in Amsterdam's Museumplein plaza instead.

In reaction to repeated incidents directed against the HaCarmel Kosher Restaurant in Amsterdam, including a bomb threat involving a fake bomb, and vandalism, Mayor Femke Halsema stated on May 25, "This growing anti-Semitism deserves our attention. It is an old wound in our city. Anti-Semitic tweets, app groups, and the horrible incidents at HaCarmel terrify the Jewish community." She expressed solidarity with the Jewish community and stated that supplemental security measures were taken in consultation with, and to the satisfaction of, the restaurant owner. On June 5, Justice Minister Grapperhaus tweeted, "Fear for intimidation and vandalism. Together with parliamentarians Gert-Jan Segers and Dilan Yesilgoz, I spoke with several Jewish entrepreneurs in Amsterdam who experience this regularly. Unacceptable. I am committed to countering this."

Government ministers, including Prime Minister Mark Rutte, regularly spoke out against anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment in speeches, such as at the annual Auschwitz and Kristallnacht commemorations. King Willem-Alexander attended the Fifth World Holocaust Forum in Jerusalem on January 22, the highest level of Dutch attendance in recent years. In a speech on January 26 at the National Holocaust Commemoration, Prime Minister Rutte apologized on behalf of the Dutch government for having done too little to protect Dutch victims of the Holocaust. This marked the first time the government specifically apologized for actions taken by the state during World War II.

The Anne Frank Foundation continued to organize government-sponsored and government-funded projects, such as the "Fan Coach" project that sought to counter anti-Semitic chanting by educating soccer fans on why their actions were anti-Semitic. Another foundation initiative, the "Fair Play" project, promoted discussion about countering discrimination, including religious discrimination among soccer fans.

On March 12, the Public Prosecutor's Office issued a statement in response to multiple complaints to police and antidiscrimination bureaus regarding the January 2019 publication of the evangelical Christian Nashville Statement on the relationship between men and women, which rejected homosexuality and transgender identity. The office stated the language of the Nashville Statement did not constitute a criminal offense because the freedoms of religion and expression were constitutional rights; therefore no prosecutions were warranted.

On September 23, Jacqueline van Maarsen, a childhood friend of Anne Frank, laid the cornerstone of the National Holocaust Monument in Amsterdam, which is government and privately supported and will carry the names of all 102,000 Dutch victims of the Holocaust. Construction is expected to be completed in 2021. Local residents continued to use legal means of redress to delay construction, saying the monument was too large, the expected large numbers of visitors would become a nuisance, and the residents were not sufficiently consulted.

### **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

There were reports of violence, threats, discrimination, verbal abuse, and vandalism against Jews and Muslims. Agencies collecting data on such incidents stated many occurrences went unreported or were reported to NGOs but not to police. Because religion and ethnicity are often closely linked, it was difficult to categorize many incidents as being solely based on religious identity.

In February, the Pew Research Center published 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, 58 percent of Netherlands respondents considered religious freedom to be “very important,” ranking it among the lowest of their priorities among democratic principles of the nine tested.

In November, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) released data for 2019 on domestic hate crimes motivated by bias. According to ODIHR, there were 257 incidents motivated by anti-Semitism and 100 motivated by “bias against members of other religions or beliefs.” The ODIHR report included a separate set of data from the Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry of Tel Aviv University, which reported that in 2019, there were five “violent attacks against people” motivated by anti-Semitism and 13 violent attacks against persons motivated by anti-Muslim bias. In addition, according to the Kantor Center, there were 11 incidents of threats to persons and 23 “attacks against property” due to anti-Muslim bias.

On September 10, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights released a report providing an overview of data on anti-Semitic incidents recorded in EU member states between 2009 and 2019. According to the report, the National

Organization of Anti-Discrimination Bureaus found that in 2019, antidiscrimination bureaus in the country recorded 78 incidents of anti-Semitic discrimination, compared with 48 incidents recorded in 2018. The Public Prosecutor's Office reported 49 of 123 discrimination cases (40 percent) were connected to anti-Semitism.

CIDI reported 135 anti-Semitic incidents during the year, compared with 182 in 2019. These included 26 incidents of direct confrontation between strangers, 29 incidents occurring during the course of daily life (such as at school and work or among neighbors), 15 incidents of vandalism, 25 incidents of written statements, and 40 incidents directed against the Jewish community (as opposed to individuals). The NGO attributed the decrease in incidents to the lack of public gatherings, in which anti-Semitic incidents tend to occur, due to the pandemic. The report did not include incidents of online hate speech, but, according to CIDI, Jews were "portrayed as the cause and/or beneficiaries of the coronavirus with an alarming and growing frequency."

On February 11, Justice Minister Grapperhaus informed parliament that the suspect who stabbed two Jewish individuals in the Albert Cuyp market in Amsterdam in March 2019 appeared to have been motivated by anti-Semitism. As of year's end, the suspect's trial had not been scheduled.

In 2019, the data collection methodology used by police regarding hate crimes changed, making a comparison to prior years difficult. Police reported 768 anti-Semitic incidents, a separate category of police discrimination statistics, in 2019, constituting 14 percent of all discriminatory incidents registered by police. Most incidents occurred in the immediate living environment of those targeted, often involving insults from neighbors or anti-Semitic graffiti or written threats on walls, mailboxes, or personal property. Approximately 65 percent of anti-Semitic incidents involved slurs, including the use of the word "Jew" as an insult. For example, individuals who shouted at police officers frequently called them "Jews." An unspecified number of incidents were soccer related. Police reported 148 incidents of vandalism involving swastikas or anti-Semitic texts sprayed on property and Jewish monuments. Police also reported 45 incidents of individuals using anti-Semitic slurs against police officers or other public officials, which it classified as violent aggression.

The Anti-Discrimination Board received 78 reports of anti-Semitic incidents in 2019, 1.8 percent of all reports, compared with 48 reports of anti-Semitic events in 2018. Most concerned aggression against Jews, including slurs or disputes



between neighbors, soccer-related incidents, or vandalism. The National Expertise Center for Discrimination, a section of the Public Prosecutor's Office dealing exclusively with cases of discrimination, reported that it processed 123 new cases of discrimination in 2019 (compared with 79 new cases in 2018). Forty percent of the new cases in 2019 were related to anti-Semitism (of which 73 percent occurred during soccer matches), and 4 percent involved anti-Muslim sentiment.

The government-sponsored, editorially independent Registration Center for Discrimination on the Internet (MiND Nederland) reported that in 2019, there were 75 Dutch-language expressions of anti-Semitism on the internet, 11 percent of all reported expressions of discrimination, compared with 145 in 2018. MiND Nederland registered 64 inflammatory statements made against Muslims on the internet in 2019, compared with 71 in 2018. The organization gave no explanation for the decreases. CIDI stated it did not track incidents of hate speech online during the year, saying there was too much online anti-Semitic speech to monitor, even focusing only on Dutch content. In 2019, CIDI received 127 reports of hate speech online, compared with 95 in 2018. At the request of CIDI, the Kantar Research Institute – a data analytics consultancy – analyzed approximately 750 Dutch-language anti-Semitic Twitter postings and 300 websites from 2019. It found two-thirds of anti-Semitic messages on Twitter were posted as criticism of Israel or Zionism, such as one that read, “9/11 was a Zionist-inspired plot.”

In February, CIDI repeated its recommendations for the government to combat anti-Semitism more effectively: improve education on the Holocaust and Judaism; help teachers recognize and combat anti-Semitism; combat anti-Semitic bullying; improve knowledge about anti-Semitic crimes; train police and officials on anti-Semitism awareness; identify anti-Semitic incidents more clearly; accelerate reporting procedures for such incidents; encourage victims to report incidents; encourage social media companies to remove anti-Semitic material from their platforms; promote digital citizenship and media awareness to discourage online hate speech; hold accountable individuals who engage in online hate speech; and promote effective measures for social media companies to prevent and combat anti-Semitism. CIDI called for the KNVB to take measures to counter discrimination, including anti-Semitic chanting, during matches.

CIDI supported the July 27 48-hour British campaign #NoSafeSpaceforJewHate, which urged social media platforms to act against online anti-Semitism. CIDI was one of 128 organizations to publicly appeal to Facebook Inc., asking the company to endorse the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. Holocaust survivors and CIDI welcomed Facebook's October 12 announcement that it would ban denial of the

Holocaust under its hate speech policy. CIDI welcomed the August 11 decision by Facebook to remove postings that contained certain anti-Semitic tropes.

On October 22, the Dutch Protestant Church, the largest Protestant denomination in the country, admitted the Church's guilt for its silence and inaction against anti-Semitism and persecution of Jews during the Holocaust. On November 9, the anniversary of the Nazi's 1938 Kristallnacht anti-Jewish pogrom, the Church made a formal statement to the Jewish community acknowledging its failure to help Jews during and after World War II and its present responsibility to combat anti-Semitism. General Synod chairman Rene de Reuver said, "Anti-Semitism is a sin against God and against people," and promised the Church would fight anti-Semitism and work to develop Judeo-Christian relations.

In 2019, police registered 225 religious discrimination incidents, many of which targeted Muslims, compared with 137 incidents in 2018. These included physical and verbal harassment and vandalism. Multiple incidents concerned physical and verbal harassment of women on the street because they were wearing a headscarf, as well as incidents involving anti-Muslim stickers and posters. For example, in one case, an individual said to a social worker, "Muslims should leave. You don't belong here," and "Take off your headscarf. Show your hair. This is a free country." One Muslim woman told media, "It is really difficult wearing the burqa. [They] just see you as the enemy....I am being discriminated against only because I want to practice my religion." Police registered 30 incidents against mosques in 2019.

Using different methodology than that of the police, antidiscrimination boards registered 192 anti-Muslim incidents in 2019 – compared with 200 in 2018 – half of which concerned experiences in the labor market and workplace, often involving women who were discriminated against for wearing a headscarf. For example, there were reports of clients or customers who expressed a preference to be served by non-Muslims over Muslims wearing a headscarf, and in one case, a Muslim woman was fired for refusing to remove her headscarf. Other incidents involved Muslim men who were not hired because they refused to shake hands with women based on religious beliefs.

The HaCarmel Kosher Restaurant in Amsterdam was the target of repeated acts of anti-Semitism. On August 26, Hassan N. was convicted of placing a fake bomb in front of the restaurant on January 15 and sentenced to one year of prison, of which four months were suspended. Another man, Saleh Ali, smashed one of the restaurant's windows on May 8. He had also committed vandalism against the

restaurant in 2017. On August 19, Ali told the court that he was acting “by order of Allah” and threatened to use a firearm the “next time.” In October, the Prosecutor’s Office determined Ali had terrorist motives. At year’s end, he remained under psychiatric observation over a separate incident in which he threatened a Jewish neighbor with a billiard ball. He was awaiting trial for the May vandalism act. On May 19, the text “Find Jew” was spray-painted on the restaurant’s window for the third time since its establishment in 2001. The offender was recorded by surveillance camera but as of year’s end had not been identified. Amsterdam Mayor Halsema and Chief of Police Frank Paauw discussed supplemental security measures with the restaurant’s owner.

On July 2, the largest Dutch online shopping website Bol.com announced it would no longer sell books that incite hatred, including those with anti-Semitic content.

Pro-Israel activist Michael Jacobs was verbally abused on May 16 during the weekly BDS demonstration in Amsterdam’s Dam Square. CIDI reported that on separate occasions, some Israeli tourists who engaged with pro-Palestine demonstrators were also reportedly confronted with threats of physical violence. Jacobs was engaged in a verbal altercation with a pro-Palestinian activist on August 30 who verbally threatened him in Amsterdam’s Museumplein plaza.

CIDI stated the large number of anti-Semitic incidents demonstrated that Jews were disproportionately targeted for discrimination, given their small number in the country. CIDI also stated persons who were recognizable as Jewish because of dress or outward appearance, for instance wearing a kippah, were sometimes targets of confrontations. A CIDI anti-Semitism researcher said perpetrators came from different parts of society, including the far left and right, soccer fans, and segments of the Muslim population.

The SCP published its second report, entitled “Experienced Discriminations in the Netherlands,” which found that 57 percent of the more than 8,500 Muslims surveyed experienced discrimination on the basis of religion, and 68 percent because of their ethnicity.

Media reported that on February 4, unknown individuals painted swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans on several headstones at a Jewish cemetery in Dordrecht. The Organization of Jewish Communities in the Netherlands filed a police complaint. Dordrecht Mayor Wouter Kolff said on Twitter that the incident was “unacceptable” and asked anyone with information about the perpetrators to help bring them to justice.

On December 13, police arrested an individual who spray-painted swastikas on the walls of a mosque and two synagogues in Utrecht the previous day. Mosque representatives told press that the mosque's board was concerned about the safety of mosque visitors throughout the country and called for the mosque's community to maintain "peace and tranquility." The CJO issued a statement that everyone must "watch out for this hatred and act against it together!"

According to its annual report on discrimination cases, covering 2019, the NIHR reported 440 complaints regarding the Nashville Statement, which was viewed as offensive to LGBTI individuals. There were also complaints from supporters of the statement who viewed criticism of the Nashville Statement as an infringement on their freedom to express their religious views. The NIHR stressed that persons have the freedoms of religion and expression in the country, which allow them to express their religious views and criticize the views of others. The NIHR stated, however, "Religious conventions are no excuse to treat people as inferior, [or] to exclude them because of their sexual orientation or gender identity."

Anti-Muslim organizations such as Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West, Identitarian Resistance, National People's Union, Right Resistance and Allies, and Voorpost planned protests near mosques or construction sites of mosques throughout the country. However, most were denied permission to demonstrate due to coronavirus restrictions. Right Resistance and Allies received permission to demonstrate on July 31 in Zaanstad, but counterdemonstrators prevented the demonstration. The group organized a small-scale protest outside the Taibah Mosque in Amsterdam on May 22 and an online protest on September 13 against construction of a new mosque in Enschede.

Yahia Bouyafa, the president of the Council of Moroccan Mosques in the Netherlands, resigned in March following protests by CIDI regarding anti-Semitic emails in which he wrote, "Hitler was a Jew," Hamas was a "legitimate resistance," and "all Jews should be driven out of Israel."

On July 16, CIDI filed a complaint against an individual who hacked the Twitter account of PVV leader Wilders to disseminate anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.

On February 19, the Central Netherlands District Court convicted Brian F. of making a threat with terrorist intent and sentenced him to 90 days' imprisonment, of which 75 days were suspended. Brian F. had posted a message on Facebook approving of the 2019 attack in Christchurch, saying, "Tomorrow I do the same. I

buy a gun. I will kill every [expletive] Muslim.” As he was being arrested, he shouted he planned to shoot 40 Muslims.

Although authorities, the KNVB, soccer teams, and the Anne Frank Foundation had multiple agreements in place to discourage anti-Semitic behavior at soccer matches, participants did not always carry out the terms of the agreements. For example, one agreement stipulated that if anti-Semitic chanting arose, teams would ask fans to stop immediately and if they did not, suspend the match; however, matches were rarely suspended or paused. On February 2, anti-Semitic chanting among fans of the Jong PSV football team occurred during a match with Ajax, a team whose fans and players are nicknamed “Jews.” Two supporters were arrested, and both Jong PSV and the KNVB initiated an investigation. On February 12, Vitesse team supporters engaged in anti-Semitic chanting during a match with Ajax. CIDI stated it welcomed a joint plan by the KNVB and government to address discrimination and racism but also advocated the use of stronger measures, including technology, to detect misbehaving supporters more quickly.

An Islamic secondary school, the Cornelius Haga Lyceum in Amsterdam, was the target of attempted arson and vandalism on January 6. On December 14, an unknown perpetrator damaged several windows of the Westermoskee Mosque in Amsterdam. The mosque’s closed-circuit television footage revealed the perpetrator performed a Nazi salute during the vandalism. As of year’s end, the offenders had not been identified.

The Security Pact Against Discrimination – a movement established by Muslim, Jewish, and Christian organizations to combat anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim sentiment, and other forms of discrimination – organized online events to promote mutual solidarity. The group’s membership included the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, the representative body of main Christian churches in the country, and several NGOs, including the Turkish Islamic Cultural Federation, Humanist Alliance, Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam, National Council of Moroccans, and Platform to Stop Racism and Exclusion.

CIDI worked with educators who conducted online programs to counter prejudice against Jews and other minorities for classrooms, working with a network of teachers to improve education on the Holocaust. CIDI organized online symposia and lectures.

Due to coronavirus restrictions, multiple initiatives to promote interfaith dialogue among Jews, Muslims, and Christians initiated by NGOs such as OJCM and Belief in Living Together continued, but on a limited in-person basis or online. For example, the Liberal Jewish Community of Amsterdam continued its youth outreach project entitled “Get to Know Your Neighbors,” which explained Jewish practices to participating students. The Mo&Moos (Mohammed and Moshe) program of the Amsterdam-based Salaam-Shalom NGO and Platform for Islamic Organizations in Rijnmond again brought together young Muslim and Jewish professionals. The NGO INS Platform maintained a website where citizens could meet “ordinary” Muslims. In Amstelveen, Jewish and Muslim groups continued to meet with local authorities and political parties to discuss issues of safety, religion, education, and discrimination involving Jews and Muslims.

#### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement**

In conversations with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs; Justice and Security; Social Affairs and Employment; and Education, Culture, and Science, as well as with local governments and parliamentarians, staff from the U.S. embassy and the consulate general in Amsterdam emphasized the importance of religious freedom and tolerance and discussed ritual slaughter, male circumcision, and measures to safeguard religious freedom.

The embassy and consulate general highlighted the need for religious tolerance and interfaith understanding and discussed issues of religious integration and violent extremism in outreach to youth, academics, and religious leaders from various backgrounds, including Muslims, Jews, Christians, Baha’is, and Falun Gong adherents, as well as community organizations such as the CJO, CIDI, CMO, Anne Frank Foundation, and SPIOR, the umbrella organization of Rotterdam mosques. Embassy representatives met with NGOs such as Femmes for Freedom to discuss religious freedom issues, including the ban on full face coverings. Embassy officials communicated with various representatives of religious communities and institutions to discuss the effect of the coronavirus pandemic on religious expression and their community members.

In January, the Ambassador participated, on behalf of the United States as a member of the IHRA, in the annual Holocaust remembrance event hosted by the Dutch Auschwitz Committee in Amsterdam to show solidarity with the Jewish community and U.S. support for religious tolerance. The Ambassador and Israeli Ambassador to the Netherlands Naor Gilon met the owner of the HaCarmel Kosher Restaurant on June 29 to discuss his experiences and call for countering domestic

anti-Semitism. The Ambassador participated in a podcast produced by the Israeli embassy about this discussion. The Ambassador met CJO chairman Eddo Verdoner on October 22 to discuss the importance of working with the Jewish community in Holocaust restitution and remembrance initiatives, including the national railway's collective expression announcement.

On January 17, the Ambassador met with representatives of the local chapter of the DENK party in Schiedam to discuss discrimination against the Muslim community and compare the experiences of Muslims in the United States with those in the Netherlands. On the occasion of Ramadan, the Ambassador held a May 15 virtual teleconference with representatives of the CMO, including president Muhsin Koktas, to extend holiday greetings and discuss the importance of communication and the exchange of opinions across society to address anti-Muslim sentiment. On July 8, the Ambassador discussed with representatives of the youth party of DENK discriminatory hiring practices against Muslims and the U.S. commitment to eliminate discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of religion.

A senior embassy official met with Camp Westerbork Memorial Center director Gardien Verschoor on June 23 to learn the history of the memorial site and the importance of Holocaust educational initiatives. The Amsterdam Consul General met with Emile Shrijver, director of the Jewish Cultural Quarter in Amsterdam, on June 24 to discuss the challenges the quarter faced in promoting Holocaust remembrance and countering anti-Semitism. On September 14, the Consul General met with Rabbi Lody van de Kamp and Said Bensellam of the foundation Said and Lody to discuss the importance of interreligious dialogue and integration of different religious and ethnic communities.

On March 2, embassy officials met with Rotterdam-based organizations, including local political party NIDA, the Middenweg Mosque, the Islamic school Avicenna College, and SPIOR, to discuss challenges facing the Muslim community, such as religious freedom, religious education, interfaith dialogue, and civic participation.