

THE NETHERLANDS 2018 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 June the government enacted a ban of face coverings in schools and some public spaces and expected to implement the ban in 2019. The Jewish community asked the government to focus more attention on combating anti-Semitism and to appoint an anti-Semitism coordinator. Politicians from several parties made anti-Islamic or anti-Semitic statements. There were several proposals in parliament to reduce benefits for religious groups and eliminate religion from public spaces, but no such legislation was passed.

The government and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) reported hundreds of anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic incidents in 2017, involving violence, threats, harassment, discrimination, hate speech, and vandalism. According to police, incidents targeting Muslims decreased by 45 percent compared with 2016 while anti-Semitic incidents declined by 15 percent over the same period. In August an Afghan man stabbed two persons, stating he had done so in response to Dutch insults to Islam. A study by two historians found most instances of anti-Semitism in recent years involved verbal or written speech, and that Dutch Moroccans and Dutch Turks, but not recent immigrants, were overrepresented among those committing anti-Semitic acts. A study by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) found significant numbers of Muslims held a negative opinion of Dutch society.

The U.S. embassy and consulate general in Amsterdam emphasized the importance of support for refugees of all faiths, integration for newcomers, and interfaith dialogue in formal meetings and informal conversations with government officials, including at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, Social Affairs, and Education and with parliamentarians and police. Embassy and consulate general representatives discussed religious freedom issues with leaders of several different faith communities and a broad range of civil society activists, and they pursued public outreach to youth to increase interfaith understanding and tolerance. The embassy also discussed religious tolerance with refugees.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 17.2 million (July 2018 estimate). In a 2017 survey of persons aged 15 or older by the government's Statistics Netherlands, 51 percent of the population declared no church affiliation, 23 percent self-identified as Roman Catholic, 15 percent as Protestant, 5 percent as Muslim, and 6 percent as "other," including Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, and Baha'i.

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, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Liberal Jewish Community, the largest Jewish community in the country, estimates the number of Jews at 40-50,000. A Statistics Netherlands study from 2015 estimated 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 governmental Netherlands Institute for Social Research (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, without affecting 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 (\$9,300), 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. If the tax authorities determine the groups meet specific criteria, they grant them exemptions from all taxes, including income, value-added, and property taxes. Under the tax law, to qualify for tax exemptions such groups must be "of a philosophical or religious nature," contribute to the general welfare of society, and be nonprofit and nonviolent.

On June 26, the government approved a ban on full-face coverings in schools, hospitals, public transportation, and government buildings. The government did not implement the ban during the year; it expected to do so in 2019 after agreeing on implementation procedures. Individuals violating the law will first be asked to remove the face covering or leave the building. Those refusing to cooperate may be fined 410 euros (\$470).

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 Netherlands Institute for Human Rights (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.

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. Acceptance of mediation decisions by parties involved in disputes is voluntary.

The government provides funding to religious schools, other religious educational institutions, and religious healthcare facilities. To qualify for funding, institutions have to 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, and the law permits, but does not require, religious education in public schools. Specialist teachers teach religion classes in public schools that offer them, 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, which are also government-funded, are free to shape religious education, as long as the education inspectorate agrees that such education does not incite criminal offenses. 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 that all schools must comply with and monitoring compliance.

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

Government Practices

Local governments continued to provide security to mosques and Islamic institutions, as required. Separately, the national government continued to address security issues with representatives of the Muslim community, the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism, and local authorities, through a special working group established in 2017. Local governments, in consultation with the national government, also continued to provide security to all Jewish institutions. The Foundation for Life and Welfare, an NGO that advised the Jewish community on security and protection, stated in its annual report in July that the Jewish community was exposed to substantial threats. It emphasized the importance of maintaining rigorous security measures and expressed regret over the city of Amsterdam's 2017 decision to replace manned police booths at Jewish institutions with camera surveillance.

Ron van der Wieken, president of the Central Jewish Council (CJO), which advocated for the rights and interests of the Jewish community in the country, said that when the CJO met in February with a government delegation that included Prime Minister Mark Rutte, it requested the establishment of a Dutch anti-Semitism coordinator. At year's end the government had not yet taken a position on whether to appoint such a coordinator.

Proponents of the law banning full-face coverings in schools, hospitals, public transportation, and government buildings, which included most political parties (132 out of 150 members of parliament voted in favor of it) argued the law had nothing to do with religion, and was necessary for individuals to integrate into an open democratic society. Opponents, which included the D66 Party, the Green Party, and the DENK Party, stated the legislation targeted devout Muslim women

and religious freedom and was largely symbolic, since the number of women wearing a *niqab* or burka in the country was very small.

Regional Muslim organizations, including SIOHR (the Alliance of Islamic Organizations in The Hague region), SMBZ (the Alliance of Mosque Boards in Brabant and Zeeland), and SPIOR (the Foundation Platform of Islamic Organizations in the Rotterdam Region) also protested the ban. Authorities said they expected to begin enforcing the ban beginning in summer 2019 after coming to agreements on the logistics of enforcement with the leaders of sectors to which the ban applied. The mayors of Amsterdam and Rotterdam said they would give no priority to enforcing the ban.

Freedom (PVV) Party leader Geert Wilders announced in May he would hold a Prophet Muhammad cartoon contest in November in his party's offices in parliament. The government, including National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism Dick Schoof, distanced itself from the event but said it was prepared to provide security in order to protect freedom of expression. In August Prime Minister Rutte said the contest was "not respectful," but the government "stands firmly by freedom of expression." He called it "a provocation." On August 27, police arrested a Pakistani man in The Hague after the man posted a video on Facebook stating he planned to attack the organizer of the cartoon contest or the parliament. Shortly thereafter, Wilders cancelled the contest because of what he said were threats against him and others. He stated the response to the contest had proven his point that Islam was violent and intolerant.

In March the PVV campaign produced a television commercial with the text reading, "Islam equals discrimination, violence, terror, misogyny, hatred of gays, hatred of Jews, hatred of Christians, subjugation, forced marriage, honor killing, totalitarianism, death of apostates, sharia, animal suffering, injustice, slavery, and is lethal." Several organizations, including the Council of Moroccan Mosques in the Netherlands, filed a complaint with police for inciting discrimination of, and violence against, Muslims. On May 1, the prosecutor's office announced the video did not constitute a criminal offense, as it was directed against a religion, and not against people, and did not incite discrimination or violence against Muslims.

In September Forum for Democracy (FVD) Party leader Thierry Baudet, whose party had two seats in parliament, stated in media interviews that Islam posed a threat to society. He said "the radicalization of Muslims [was] increasing" and the construction and architecture of mosques in the country was intentionally provocative. He also stated mosques were "a breeding ground for anti-Dutch

sentiments and behavior,” Islamic schools were a problem, and Christianity was superior to Islam.

On February 14, the discrimination officer at the prosecutor’s office decided that a January statement by a local PVV politician, Henk van Deun, did not constitute hate speech or incitement to commit criminal offenses. Van Deun said in a radio interview about a particular mosque, “We prefer if it was burned down, so to speak. We are truly against mosques. We do not recognize Islam as a religion. It is an ideology.”

In its most recent report, covering 2017, the NGO Center for Information and Documentation on Israel (CIDI) reported half a dozen anti-Semitic statements by politicians from the DENK party and local Hague Unity Party. In October 2017, CIDI said DENK had queried the cabinet about what it said was a slander campaign by the “Israeli lobby” against a minister married to a Palestinian. At the same time, according to the CIDI report, DENK posted on Facebook a picture suggesting that Israel or Jews controlled politics in the country and alluding to the anti-Semitic forgery, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.” In May CIDI filed a complaint with police against a tweet by Hague Unity Party council member Arnoud van Doorn saying, “May Allah destroy the Zionists.”

In September the prosecutor’s office said it had initiated an investigation into whether spokespersons for the Muslim NIDA and Unity Parties broke the law with anti-Semitic statements during a pro-Palestinian rally in Rotterdam in 2017. The investigation continued at year’s end.

The government continued to monitor the foreign funding of Dutch mosques and Islamic institutions and said it was examining whether it was legally possible to obligate foreign countries or organizations to be transparent about their donations.

Spokespersons for Christian political parties such as the Political Calvinist Alliance (SGP) and Christian Democratic Appeal said political parties that were part of the secular majority in parliament regularly presented proposals to ban religion from public spaces and eliminate what it called privileges of religious communities, such as the right to conduct religious slaughter, tax advantages, and death notification services (when the government informs churches of the deaths of citizens.) These proposals failed to gain sufficient support to move forward in parliament. Representatives of religion-based parties in parliament, such as SGP leader Kees van der Staaij, stated in October that true democracy reflected respect for minorities, which included persons of religious belief.

On July 12, the Amsterdam District Court convicted Saleh Ali, a Palestinian refugee from Syria, of vandalism and theft and sentenced him to a six-week prison term. It also ordered him to undergo treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder. In December 2017, Ali waved a Palestinian flag and smashed the windows of a kosher restaurant in Amsterdam. According to his attorney, he carried out the attack out of frustration over Israeli policy toward Palestinians and President Trump's decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem. Minister of Justice and Security Ferdinand Grapperhaus reacted to the attack by saying, "discrimination of population groups in whatever form ... is unacceptable." According to *The Times of Israel* newspaper, Vice President of CJO and former head of CIDI Ronny Naftaniel said Ali's sentence "does not constitute any deterrence" for those contemplating anti-Semitic crimes. On social media, CIDI expressed concern that "someone who constitutes such a risk can walk about freely."

Government ministers, including Prime Minister Rutte, regularly spoke out against anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment in speeches, such as at the annual Auschwitz and Kristallnacht commemorations. At the National Holocaust Commemoration in Amsterdam on January 28, Rutte stated, "Contemporary anti-Semitism still frightens people. There is always fear. Not daring to go outside wearing a yarmulke, and the surveillance at synagogues, Jewish schools, and shops. We must remain alert in the fight against the big evil that may always raise its head again." On April 13, Minister of Justice and Security Grapperhaus said in parliament, "There is no place in our society for anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, honor killings...inciting hatred and violence against those with different opinions and minorities."

On September 11, two parliamentarians, Gert-Jan Segers (Christian Union Party) and Dilan Yesilgoz (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy), organized a roundtable in parliament on anti-Semitism at which Jewish organizations highlighted proposals they believed would help combat anti-Semitism. Proposals included explicit condemnation of anti-Semitic offenses by public officials, heavier penalties for hate crimes, adoption of the European working definition on anti-Semitism drafted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), and Holocaust education initiatives.

In its annual report issued in April and covering 2017, the NIHR said that in November of that year the National Police had discriminated against a police officer by not allowing her to wear a headscarf with her uniform. The police, Minister of Justice and Security Grapperhaus, and politicians from various political

parties, however, stated police must convey a neutral and uniform image, and said that was the basis for the ban on wearing any visible and recognizable sign of religion in combination with a uniform. According to Grapperhaus, the National Police disregarded the NIHR's finding and continued with a policy of not allowing personnel to wear headscarves.

According to several religious community leaders, the government continued its policy of not allowing religiously affiliated organizations to proselytize at asylum centers. The government agency charged with overseeing asylum centers, the Central Body for Accommodating Asylum Seekers, again said it had instituted this policy to avoid inflaming tensions among different religious groups housed together in an already sensitive environment. Some members of religious groups said they continued to have difficulty gaining access to the centers, even as volunteers.

In August Said Bouharrou, spokesman for the Council of Moroccan Mosques in the Netherlands, said the government had not properly communicated the stricter requirements on ritual slaughter that it introduced in 2017, and thereby caused significant unrest within the Muslim community. Richard de Mooij, spokesman for the Association of Slaughterhouses, said the new rules were not unclear, but the procedure had become more cumbersome due to the requirement of having a veterinarian present. According to attorney Herman Loonstein, who represented the only kosher butcher in the country, the stricter rules created some initial problems, but they were resolved after consultations between the communities and the local authorities.

PVV leader Wilders presented draft legislation on September 19 to close mosques and schools teaching Islamic ideology, and to ban the Quran and the wearing of a burqa or *niqab* in public. The bill proposed substantial financial penalties. Wilders tweeted "Islam is no religion but an ideology – totalitarian-like fascism. Let us treat Islam as such and not grant it constitutional protection anymore." Other parties did not support the bill, and at year's end parliament had not taken it up for debate.

Wilders unsuccessfully tried in the spring and fall to void his December 2016 court conviction for inciting discrimination and making insulting racial remarks about Moroccans at a 2014 rally. Wilders argued that the 2016 trial was politically motivated and that his statements were protected free speech. The court did not void the conviction, and Wilders' formal appeal was scheduled to proceed in spring 2019.

Following the release of a 2017 government report stating that Salafist organizations were growing in the country and promoting intolerance towards others, the government issued a policy paper in October citing its commitment to religious freedom for the wide variety of religious communities in the country. The policy paper stated Dutch society had room for “a huge diversity of [religious] doctrines, opinions, and value systems,” but that within the Salafist movement there were those who promoted intolerance, incited hatred, and rejected government authority. The paper added that religious freedom had limits, and that, while the government did not interfere with religious aspirations, “it must act against those who aim to limit the freedom of people with different views.”

On February 8, Prime Minister Rutte, three deputy prime ministers, Minister of Justice Grapperhaus, and security officials met with the Jewish community to discuss matters of concern, such as security, anti-Semitism, and ritual slaughter. The CJO, Netherlands-Jewish Congregation, Netherlands Alliance of Progressive Judaism, Contact Body for Jews, Christians and Muslims, and CIDI attended the meeting. The mayors and responsible aldermen in the larger cities, such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague, also met with the Jewish community to discuss security issues and other topics of interest to the Jewish community. These city governments supported a range of projects, such as educational projects to teach primary schoolchildren about the Holocaust and to counter prejudice about Jews. Amsterdam, with the largest Jewish population in the country, was particularly active in such programming and sponsored visits of school children to the Westerbork Holocaust commemoration center.

On April 26, the government presented the annual update of its National Action Plan against Discrimination, which included specific measures to counter anti-Semitism and anti-Islamic sentiment. Among the government-funded projects the report cited were several to train teachers to deal with such issues. The University of Amsterdam developed teaching material to address current and historical relations between Jews and Muslims. Other programs trained leading figures from the Jewish and Muslim communities to serve as constructive societal leaders and encouraged interfaith dialogue through a project titled Building Bridges, which established local networks of persons from different religious communities. In April the government presented a comprehensive manual for local governments on developing a local antidiscrimination policy, including religiously motivated discrimination.

In May the government appropriated two million euros (\$2.29 million) of additional funding to expand two sites located at former concentration camps in Amersfoort and Vught currently used for Holocaust education programs for schoolchildren. The camps received growing numbers of visitors, including many school classes. “It is good that these sites keep the memories alive and that stories are not forgotten,” State Secretary for Health, Welfare, and Sport Paul Blokhuis said regarding Holocaust remembrance.

Also as part of the action plan, the government continued to work with the Royal Netherlands Soccer Association, local authorities, police officials, the prosecutor’s office, soccer clubs, and the Anne Frank Foundation NGO on ways to counter anti-Semitic chanting, salutes, and other behavior directed against religious groups during soccer matches. According to the plan, as soon as anti-Semitic chanting occurred, soccer clubs asked supporters to stop immediately. If they did not, the clubs suspended the match. Participants agreed on measures to prosecute offenders or ban them from stadiums. With government funding, the Anne Frank Foundation organized government-sponsored 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 Anne Frank Foundation initiative, the “Fair Play” project, promoted discussion about countering discrimination, including religious discrimination.

Among the elements of the action plan designed to counter discrimination against Muslims were projects examining how to better enable reporting of discrimination complaints against Muslims, and improve security at mosques. As part of this effort, authorities conducted regional meetings in which representatives of local governments, police, antidiscrimination bureaus, and Muslim communities discussed ways to improve collaboration. Representatives of the Muslim community, National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security, national government, local authorities, and police together drafted the Safe Mosque Manual, containing information, recommendations, and best practices for mosques, local authorities, and the police on how to deal together with concrete tension and incidents around mosques.

In the run-up to the March local elections, all major political parties except the DENK and Bij1 Parties, which had a significant number of migrant members, signed an accord in which they pledged to protect the Jewish community in Amsterdam. The signatories to the accord offered support and guidance to schools and teachers that had trouble discussing the Holocaust in the classroom. As a part

of the accord, the city of Amsterdam added programs to its existing Holocaust education curriculum for schoolchildren.

In March CIDI called on the government to pay specific attention to anti-Semitism in efforts to combat discrimination; adopt the working definition on anti-Semitism of the IHRA; monitor anti-Semitism on social media; issue heavier penalties for anti-Semitic crimes of violence; make anti-Semitism part of the government's integration and radicalization policy; bar foreign terrorist fighters from the country; and improve Holocaust education at all schools.

In late November a majority of parliamentarians supported a nonbinding motion to adopt the IHRA's definition of anti-Semitism, per the European Parliament's 2017 call to EU member states. Foreign Minister Stef Blok stated the government accepted the IHRA definition, although it was not legally bound by it. On December 12, parliamentarians expressed concern over the findings of a survey by the EU's Agency for Fundamental Rights (EU-FRA) that Jews perceived anti-Semitism to be on the rise in Europe and the Netherlands. GreenLeft Party Parliamentarian Kathalijne Buitenweg said she would call Minister of Justice and Security Grapperhaus to parliament to inquire what was being done to counter anti-Semitism.

The government continued to require asylum seekers seeking to obtain 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.

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, or to approximately 140 Turkish imams appointed by Turkey's Religious Affairs Directorate. The government also sponsored leadership courses intended to facilitate imam training in Dutch, free of foreign influence.

The government is a member of the IHRA.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were reports of violence, threats, discrimination, verbal abuse, and vandalism against Muslims and Jews. Agencies collecting data on such incidents stated many occurrences went unreported. Because religion and ethnicity are often

closely linked, it was difficult to categorize many incidents as being solely based on religious identity.

On August 31, an Afghan man stabbed two persons at Amsterdam Central Station. The suspect told police he believed the Dutch had insulted the Prophet Muhammad, Islam, and the Quran. He cited PVV leader and opposition parliamentarian Geert Wilders as a motivating factor.

CIDI reported 113 anti-Semitic incidents in 2017, the most recent year for which data were available, compared with 109 in the previous year. These included four physical assaults, 28 incidents of vandalism, 24 incidents of hate speech on the internet, four violent incidents, and 18 incidents of cursing. In one incident, two Israeli tourists who, according to CIDI, were recognizably Jewish, were beaten up and stabbed. In another incident, a Jewish Syrian refugee was physically assaulted several times. Police did not make any arrests in either incident.

CIDI stated the large number of anti-Semitic incidents demonstrated that Jews were disproportionately targeted for discrimination, given the small number of Jews in the country. CIDI also continued to maintain that persons who were recognizable as Jewish because of dress or outward appearance, for instance wearing a yarmulke, were sometimes targets of confrontations. CIDI concluded in its annual report on anti-Semitism that, compared with neighboring countries such as Belgium, France, and the UK, the country was doing well, but concerns about anti-Semitism remained.

Police registered 192 incidents, including harassment, verbal abuse, and vandalism, against Muslims in 2017, the most recent year for which data were available, a decrease of 45 percent compared with 352 reports in 2016. Antidiscrimination boards registered 190 anti-Muslim incidents in 2017, compared to 250 in 2016.

The police reported 284 incidents of anti-Semitic discrimination in 2017, a decline of 15 percent compared with the 335 recorded in 2016. Many incidents occurred in the immediate living environment of those targeted, often involving neighbors using insults and drawing swastikas or writing anti-Semitic graffiti and threats on walls, mailboxes, or personal property. Approximately 75 percent of anti-Semitic incidents involved shouted slurs. Persons frequently shouted at police officers, in particular by calling them “Jew.”

According to the National Expertise Center for Discrimination, a part of the prosecutor’s office dealing exclusively with cases of discrimination, the bulk of

anti-Semitic speech in 2017 was soccer-related, consisting of soccer fans making anti-Semitic statements, mostly directed at Amsterdam soccer team Ajax, which has been identified throughout its history as a “Jewish” club. CIDI called for more specific measures to stop discrimination and anti-Semitic chanting during soccer matches.

“We are not afraid but we are worried,” said CJO President van der Wieken in a May interview on anti-Semitism in the country. “The Netherlands is still in the top three countries with a favorable climate, but we have the impression that anti-Semitism is on the rise, and we are concerned where this may end.”

In December EU-FRA released its second survey of Jewish experiences and perceptions of anti-Semitism. EU-FRA targeted Jewish populations through community organizations, Jewish media, and social networks; 1,202 individuals who identified themselves as Jewish residents of the Netherlands responded to the online survey. Twenty-two percent of respondents said they had witnessed other Jews being physically attacked, insulted, or harassed in the previous 12 months, and 35 percent reported being harassed over the same period. Twenty-seven percent said they had felt discriminated against because of their religion or belief; 90 percent thought anti-Semitism had increased over the previous five years.

CIDI Director Hanna Luden expressed skepticism about the results of the FRA report, stating the results did not match her own experience. She also criticized the survey for not querying a random sample of Jews.

On April 23, two Dutch historians presented the results of a study they conducted in 2016-17 on anti-Semitism and immigration in the country. They found the number and intensity of anti-Semitic incidents tended to vary directly with Israeli military operations and that most incidents consisted of verbal or written statements, often on the internet; assaults, arson, vandalism, and graffiti against Jews were rare. While the majority of those who carried out anti-Semitic incidents did not belong to any single ethnic or religious minority, Dutch Moroccans and, to a lesser extent, Dutch Turks were significantly represented among the perpetrators. Extreme right-wing activists were responsible for a few cases of anti-Semitism. The report did not find evidence that refugees or recent immigrants were responsible for anti-Semitic incidents or held anti-Jewish attitudes. Nevertheless, according to the report, a number of representatives of Jewish communities expressed concern about the immigration of large numbers of persons who might harbor anti-Semitic or “jihadist” opinions or intentions.

While the report focused on anti-Semitism, it found anti-Muslim sentiment was prevalent in schools. According to research from 2014, nearly two-thirds of teachers said they had witnessed incidents in class they regarded as discriminatory against Muslims, and 61 percent stated students harassed or made hostile comments towards Muslims. It said in secondary schools discrimination against Muslims was more prevalent than anti-Semitism (36 percent, according to a 2015 study) or discrimination against Christians (30 percent, according to the same study). It also cited another 2015 study that found young non-Muslims were “much more Islamophobic” than young Muslims were anti-Semitic.

The NIHR reported receiving 13 requests for rulings on religious discrimination in the workplace in 2017, compared to 24 requests in 2016, and ruled in eight cases. The NIHR had not yet published its report on 2018 at year’s end. Among the NIHR rulings the 2017 report cited were that a Christian school did not discriminate when it refused to hire a female teacher who did not subscribe to the school’s religious views; a Christian clothing shop did discriminate when it refused to hire a non-Christian shop assistant; and a public school did not discriminate when it denied an internship to a Muslim woman who would not shake hands with men.

Mohamed Ajouaou, theologian and teacher of Islamic studies at the Free University of Amsterdam, said on September 7, “As [a] Muslim in Europe, you are probably best off in the Netherlands. There is freedom of religion, respect for Islamic rituals, and mosques may be built. But the same as in the rest of Europe there is plenty of prejudice about Islam...”

On June 7, the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) published a major study on Muslims living in the country, particularly the two largest Muslim groups, those with a Turkish and Moroccan background. It found religiosity among both these groups of Muslims was increasing. For many Muslims, including youth, religion was an important part of their lives, and approximately 40 percent of both groups visited a mosque at least once a week. Women of Moroccan origin increasingly wore a headscarf (78 percent), and 87 percent of Muslims with a Moroccan background fasted every day during Ramadan. A large segment of Muslims usually ate halal food. According to the study, 84 percent of Muslims with a Moroccan background and 45 percent of those with a Turkish background were strictly practicing Muslims. Except for the small group of secular Muslims, all Muslim groups believed the social climate in the country was not always welcoming and sometimes hostile towards Muslims. None of the Muslim groups strongly endorsed the use of force for their faith.

The PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West) movement regularly staged protests against Islamic institutions. On March 10, PEGIDA members placed crosses at a mosque construction site in Enschede and said the crosses stood for victims killed in attacks by Muslim terrorists. In May during Ramadan, PEGIDA planned a series of pork barbecues near mosques in a number of cities during Friday prayers.

The government-sponsored, editorially independent Registration Center for Discrimination on the Internet (MIND) registered 101 inflammatory statements made against Muslims in 2017, compared with 251 in 2016. Some Muslims said that, increasingly, members of their community would not bother to file reports of such incidents, even though they continued to occur.

MIND reported 236 instances of anti-Semitic rhetoric on the internet in 2017, compared to 162 in 2016. The center said criticism of Israel's policies and appeals to boycott the country readily turned into anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial, and expressions of wishing Jews dead.

Although MIND did not cite specific examples, CIDI described numerous instances of anti-Semitic rhetoric and other content on the internet. For example, CIDI stated that Rachid el Hajoui of Tilburg tweeted anti-Semitic language and was fined 250 euros (\$290). According to CIDI, Dutch speakers posted a number of YouTube videos with anti-Semitic themes, including Holocaust denial.

On September 12, The Hague District Court convicted a man for inciting hatred and violence against Jews by shouting anti-Semitic chants at a pro-ISIS rally in The Hague in 2014. The court sentenced him to two weeks in prison.

CIDI registered 28 incidents of anti-Semitic vandalism in 2017, the highest number since 2007. On August 23, The Hague District Court convicted a man for vandalizing a Jewish monument in The Hague and sentenced him to 20 hours of community service.

On January 17, a decapitated puppet was attached to the gate of the Emir Sultan mosque in Amsterdam with the text "Islam is inextricably linked to brutal decapitations. The Islamization must stop. No Diyanet mega mosque in Amsterdam-north tied to dictator Erdogan." A few weeks later, the police arrested a man who confessed and said he was "driven by ideological motives." At year's end his case had not come to trial.

In May vandals repeatedly smashed the windows of the Ram Mandir Hindu temple in The Hague. Temple President Attry Ramdhani stated he believed Muslim youth had carried out the attack during Ramadan because they wanted to drive the temple away from the predominantly Muslim Schilderswijk neighborhood. Police initiated an investigation, which was ongoing at year's end.

Throughout the year, the Security Pact Against Discrimination, a movement established by Muslim, Jewish, and Christian organizations to combat anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and other forms of discrimination, organized events to promote mutual solidarity. The group's membership included the Council of Churches and a number of NGOs such as the Turkish Islamic Cultural Federation and the Humanist Alliance. The group's events included a gathering after the attack on the Emir Sultan Mosque, another meeting after an attack on the HaCarmel Jewish restaurant in Amsterdam in December 2017, and a program in response to PEGIDA's pork barbecues.

CIDI continued to conduct programs to counter prejudice against Jews and other minorities in schools, working with a network of teachers to improve education on the Holocaust. CIDI invited 25 teachers for an annual visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem for a seminar on how to teach students about the Holocaust, and it continued to lead anti-Semitism workshops for police and prosecutors at the police academy.

Jewish community leaders, such as CJO's Ron van der Wieken and Albert Ringer of the Netherlands Alliance of Progressive Judaism, emphasized the need to develop a more robust education curriculum to teach about the Holocaust and World War II. They also advocated more interfaith dialogue to increase tolerance and suggested greater oversight to ensure a uniform curriculum, including antidiscrimination content, in schools.

The Liberal Jewish Community of Amsterdam continued with its youth outreach "Get to Know Your Neighbors" project, which invited students into a synagogue to explain Jewish practices. The project received two awards from local NGOs for its work.

Multiple groups continued with existing initiatives to foster Muslim and Jewish dialogue. These included the Mo&Moos (Mohammed and Moshe) program of the Amsterdam-based Salaam-Shalom NGO and SPIOR that again brought together young Muslim and Jewish professionals; a website by the NGO INS Platform,

where citizens could meet “ordinary” Muslims; and ongoing meetings in Amstelveen between Jewish and Muslim groups, local authorities, and political parties to discuss issues of safety, religion, education, and discrimination involving Jews and Muslims.

Bertien Minco, who created Salaam-Shalom, said that, despite these efforts, “The fact is that the Jewish community is very small. That makes it hard to reverse the picture among a million Muslims because we barely meet each other.”

In a September 14 newspaper interview, Catholic Archbishop of Utrecht Wim Eijk stated the Catholic Church was disappearing rapidly from the country. Eijk referred to a total population of 3.5 million Catholics, but said the vast majority of them never went to church. On average, 173,500 persons attend Mass on any given weekend, according to figures from the Nijmegen Kaski Institute, a think tank specializing in religion and society at the Catholic Radboud University of Nijmegen. Eijk said he expected that in the Archdiocese of Utrecht, which covers a third of the country and currently oversees 280 Catholic churches, there would only be 10 to 15 churches left in another 10 years. Eijk also expressed concern about calls by secular political parties such as D66 and the Animal Rights Party to remove religion from the public square: “If we are a truly tolerant society, we should give people the opportunity to express what they believe,” Eijk said, adding, “Don’t force anyone to profess his belief only behind his front door.”

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

In conversations with government officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Security, Social Affairs and Employment, Education, Culture, and Science, and with parliamentarians, the U.S. embassy and consulate general in Amsterdam emphasized the importance of religious freedom and tolerance, and discussed how the country safeguarded religious freedom. The embassy and consulate general also raised these issues with local police forces in The Hague and Amsterdam, including Amsterdam’s Moroccan Police Network, municipal leaders, and local political leaders such as the Mayor of Rotterdam and members of the Amsterdam City Council.

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 the Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Baha’i, and Christian faiths, as well as community organizations such as CIDI, SPIOR, Humanity in Action, Hague Peace Projects,

the Hope and Peace Foundation, The Connectors, and the Anne Frank Foundation. Embassy and consulate general representatives also met with the NIHR and with NGOs such as Human Rights Watch to discuss religious freedom issues and related factors and equal treatment from law enforcement and housing authorities.

For National Religious Freedom Day on January 16, the embassy and consulate general organized an interfaith dinner with 16 guests from the Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Protestant, and Baha'i communities to discuss religious freedom in the country.

In November the embassy organized a panel discussion on religious freedom, Islam and civil society, and strength through diversity, which brought together approximately 20 leaders from the religious and NGO communities to discuss interfaith issues and ways of promoting tolerance.

In November embassy officials toured two Islamic schools, Ikra (kindergarten-sixth grade), located in Dordrecht, and Avicenna Rotterdam (high school). The embassy representatives met with the schools' administration and leadership to discuss their perceptions of religious freedom, curriculum requirements, discrimination, the government's funding of religious schools, and the experience of Muslims in the United States.

On November 2, the Ambassador toured the Blue Mosque in Amsterdam as a part of the embassy's outreach to the Dutch Moroccan community. He met with the mosque's board and prominent members of the Dutch Moroccan community, including members of the Moroccan police network, and former Dutch Moroccan Deputy Mayor of Amsterdam Ahmed Baadoud. The mosque visit occurred in conjunction with an embassy-sponsored visit by an imam from the United States, who led the Friday sermon at the mosque. During the visit, the imam and the Ambassador engaged in wide-ranging discussions on religious freedom, ways of countering violent extremism, and Islam in the United States.

On November 3, as part of the embassy's engagement with the Muslim community, the embassy sponsored the Diwan Awards, dedicated to recognizing the accomplishments of Dutch Moroccan youth. The embassy livestreamed the awards ceremony on Facebook to a large audience.

The embassy met with Syrian refugees, who were primarily Muslim, to discuss the challenges, including anti-Islamic sentiment, they faced in integrating into society. In October the embassy hosted a symposium and panel discussion on religious and

racial intolerance and the need to respect diversity and inclusion; guests included experts on religious freedom, tolerance, and discrimination. The Ambassador delivered remarks highlighting the importance of religious freedom and U.S.-Netherlands cooperation in promoting it.