

SPAIN 2017 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution protects freedom of religion and states the government shall consider the religious beliefs of society and form cooperative relations with the Roman Catholic Church and other religious faiths. The government has a bilateral agreement with the Holy See that grants the Roman Catholic Church special benefits not available to other groups. Organizations representing Protestants, Muslims, and Jews also have agreements with the state, providing them with benefits. Other groups lack agreements but receive some benefits if registered with the government. Registration is not required. In November the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) issued its 2016 annual report on religious freedom, which cited concerns of religious groups over such issues with the government as equal treatment and access to state institutions, access to religious education in schools, and responses to attacks on religious sentiment and incitement to hatred. As of July the government had granted citizenship to approximately 1,091 descendants of Jews the country expelled in 1492. A court upheld a ban on the wearing of the hijab by prisoners. Protestant religious leaders said regional and local governments applied unfair regulations, which could potentially close some churches or prevent the opening of others. The Muslim community in Getafe had to repurpose its mosque for non-worship activities after the city threatened to close it for building code violations. The Muslim and Jewish communities reported progress with municipalities over cemetery access; several cities signed agreements to expand or establish new cemeteries for these communities, although none had implemented the agreements by year's end. Leaders of other religious groups said the state favored Catholicism, allowing citizens to allocate part of their taxes to the Catholic Church or charities, but not other religions, and paying pensions to retired Catholic priests. In November the Supreme Court ruled the state should relax government pension eligibility requirements for Protestant pastors. The decision applied to Protestants only, not other religious groups. The MOJ began to compile a list of recognized religious clergy authorized to perform legal ceremonies such as marriages. The government began outreach to Muslim leaders and youth to combat radicalization and religious discrimination and promote religious freedom and integration. The Barcelona city government initiated a program to combat anti-Islamic sentiment, the first such program in the country.

There were incidents of assaults, threats, and incitement to violence against Muslims and Jews during the year, including attacks on four Moroccan children in two separate incidents, which resulted in injuries. According to the

nongovernmental organization (NGO) Observatory for Religious Freedom and Conscience (OLRC), there were 100 religiously motivated hate crimes during the year, eight fewer than in 2016, 74 percent of which were against Christians. Crimes included three incidents of violence, threats, and vandalism. The Ministry of Interior (MOI) documented 47 incidents of hate crimes with religious motivations in 2016, compared with 70 in 2015. Citizens' Platform against Islamophobia, an NGO, reported 573 anti-Muslim incidents in 2016, compared with 278 the previous year. There were reports of anti-Semitic discrimination at universities, and anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim statements in social media and public speech continued. There were reports of vandalism of Christian, Jewish, and Islamic facilities; Islamic facilities were particular targets after August 17-18 terrorist attacks in Catalonia. The government prosecuted several cases of religiously motivated hate crimes that occurred in the previous year.

U.S. embassy and consulate officials met regularly with the MOJ's Office of Religious Affairs and the governmental Pluralism and Coexistence Foundation (the Foundation). Topics discussed included anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim sentiment, anticlerical sentiment, the failure of some regional governments to comply with legal requirements pertaining to equal treatment of religious groups, concerns about societal discrimination against religious minorities, access to religious education and cemeteries for religious groups, and pensions for clergy. The consulate general in Barcelona supported the creation of a national network of young Muslim leaders that discussed problems of identity, relations with security forces, prevention of radicalization, Islamic education, and other issues important to Muslim youth. In June the embassy hosted an iftar at which the Charge d'Affaires introduced the new network to national government officials. The embassy supported the formation of a group of former participants of U.S. exchange programs, which included Muslims, members of the security forces, and academics, and helped the group win a Department of State grant in July to improve government-Muslim community relations, including promoting respect for religious freedom and reducing religious discrimination. As part of the initiative, the group held the first of seven planned sessions around the country on October 20-21 in Madrid, and held roundtable discussions at a conference on December 18 at the Rey Juan Carlos University in Madrid.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the population at 49.0 million (July 2017 estimate). According to a survey conducted in July by the governmental Center for Sociological Research, 68.8 percent of respondents identified themselves as

Catholic, and 2.2 percent as followers of other religious groups. In addition, 15.7 percent described themselves as “nonbelievers,” 10.2 percent as atheists, and the remaining 3.1 percent did not answer the question.

The (Catholic) Episcopal Conference of Spain estimates there are 32.6 million Catholics. The Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities (FEREDE) estimates there are 1.7 million Protestants, 900,000 of whom are immigrants. The Union of Islamic Communities of Spain (UCIDE), the largest member organization of the Islamic Commission of Spain (CIE), estimates there are 1.9 million Muslims, while other Islamic groups estimate a population of up to two million. The Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain (FCJE) estimates there are 40,000 Jews. According to the Episcopal Orthodox Assembly, there are 900,000 Orthodox Christians; the Jehovah’s Witnesses report 113,000 members; the Federation of Buddhist Communities estimates there are 85,000 Buddhists; and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) cites 54,000 members. Other religious groups include Christian Scientists, other Christian groups, Bahais (approximately 12,000), Scientologists (11,000 members), and Hindus. The regions of Catalonia, Andalusia, and Madrid, and the exclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in North Africa contain the highest percentage of non-Christians, nearly 50 percent in each of those two cities.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on religion and guarantees freedom of religion and worship for individuals and communities, but allows limits on expression if “necessary to maintain public order.” According to the Foundation, reasons would include overcrowding in small facilities or public spaces. A law restricts public protest, but authorities have not used it or the constitutional limits on expression against religious groups.

The constitution states no one may be compelled to testify about his or her religion or beliefs. The constitution also states, “No religion shall have a state character;” but “public authorities shall take into account the religious beliefs of Spanish society and consequently maintain appropriate cooperative relations with the Catholic Church and other denominations.” The Catholic Church is the only religious group explicitly mentioned in the constitution.

The government does not require religious groups to register, but registering confers religious groups with certain legal benefits. Groups registered in the MOJ's Registry of Religious Entities have the right to autonomy; may buy, rent, and sell property; and may act as a legal entity in civil proceedings. Registration entails completing forms available on the MOJ's website and providing notarized documentation of the foundational and operational statutes of the religious group, its legal representatives, territorial scope, religious purposes, and address. Any persons or groups have the right to practice their religion whether or not registered as a religious entity.

Registration with the MOJ and *notorio arraigo* ("deeply rooted" or permanent) status allows groups to establish bilateral cooperation agreements with the state. The government has a bilateral agreement with the Holy See, which is executed in part by the Episcopal Conference. The government also has cooperation agreements with FEREDE, which represents Protestants, CIE, which represents Muslims, and FCJE, which represents Jews. These agreements are legally binding and provide the religious groups with certain tax exemptions, the ability to buy and sell property, open a house of worship, and conduct other legal business; grant civil validity to the weddings they perform; and permit them to place teachers in schools and chaplains in hospitals, the military, and prisons. Groups with cooperation agreements are also eligible for independently administered government grants.

The agreement with the Holy See covers legal, educational, cultural, and economic affairs; religious observance by members of the armed forces; and the military service of clergy and members of religious orders. The later cooperative agreements with FEREDE, CIE, and FCJE cover the same issues.

Registered groups who wish to sign cooperative agreements with the state must acquire *notorio arraigo* status through the MOJ. To achieve this status, groups must have an unspecified "relevant" number of followers; a presence in the country for at least 30 years; and a "level of diffusion" that the MOJ considers demonstrates a "social presence," not further defined. Groups must also submit documentation demonstrating the group is religious in nature to the MOJ's Office of Religious Affairs, which maintains the Register of Religious Entities.

The Episcopal Conference deals with the government on behalf of the entire Catholic community. Per the state's 1979 agreement with the Holy See, individual Catholic dioceses and parishes are not required to register with the government. In addition to FEREDE, CIE, and FCJE, the Jehovah's Witnesses, Federation of Buddhist Communities (FCBE), Mormons, and the Orthodox Church are registered

religions with *notorio arraigo* status. New religious communities may register directly with the MOJ, or religious associations may register on their behalf.

If the MOJ considers an applicant for registration not to be a religious group, the group may be included in the Register of Associations maintained by the MOI. Inclusion in the Register of Associations grants legal status, but offers no other benefits. Registration itself simply lists the association and its history in the government's database. Registration as an association is a precursor to requesting that the government deem the association to be of public benefit, which affords the same tax benefits as charities, including exemption from income tax and taxes on contributions. For such a classification, the association must be registered for two years and maintain a net positive fiscal balance.

The government funds religious services within the prison system for Catholic and Muslim groups. Examples of religious services include Sunday Catholic Mass, Catholic confession, and Friday Muslim prayer. The cooperation agreements of FCJE and FEREDDE with the government do not include this provision; these groups provide religious services in prisons but at their own expense. Other religious groups registered as religious entities with the MOJ may provide services at their own expense during visiting hours upon the request of prisoners.

The regions of Madrid and Catalonia have agreements with several religious groups which have accords with the national government that permit activities such as providing religious assistance in hospitals and prisons under regional jurisdiction. According to the MOJ, these subnational agreements may not contradict the principles of the federal agreements, which take precedence. The Catalan government has agreements with Catholics, FEREDDE, and CIE. The Madrid region has agreements with Catholics, FEREDDE, FCJE, and CIE.

The government guarantees religious workers of groups with cooperative agreements with the state access to refugee centers, known as Foreign Internment Centers, so that these groups may provide direct assistance to their followers in the centers. According to the MOJ, other religious practitioners may enter the internment centers upon request.

Military rules and prior signed agreements allow religious military funerals for Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and Muslims, should the family of the deceased request it. Other religious groups may conduct religious funerals upon request.

The government recognizes religious marriages for all religious communities that have *notorio arraigo* status, not only those that have a specific agreement with the state.

Religious groups must apply to local governments for a license to open a place of worship, as with other establishments intended for public use. Requirements for licenses vary from municipality to municipality. The MOJ states documentation required is usually the same as other business establishments seeking to open a venue for public use and includes information such as architectural plans and maximum capacity. Religious groups must also inform the MOJ after opening new places of worship.

Local governments are obligated to consider requests for use of public land to open a place of worship. If a municipality decides to deny such a request after weighing factors such as availability and value added to the community, the city council must explain its decision to the requesting party.

As outlined in agreements with religious groups, the government provides funding for salaries for teachers for Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic instruction in public schools when at least 10 students request it. The Jewish community is also eligible for government funding for Jewish instructors but has declined public school Judaism education. The courses are not mandatory. Those students who elect not to take religious education courses are required to take an alternative course covering general social, cultural, and religious themes. The development of curricula and the financing of teachers for religious education is the responsibility of the regional governments, with the exception of Andalusia, Aragon, the Canary Islands, Cantabria, and the two autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, which leave the curricula and financing of education to the national government in accordance with their individual regional statutes. Religious groups that have an agreement with the state are responsible for providing a list of approved teachers for their particular religion. Either the national Ministry of Education (MOE) or the regional entity responsible for education certifies teachers' credentials.

Autonomous regions develop the requirements for religious education instructors. For example, prospective instructors must provide personal data, proof that the educational authority of the region where they are applying to work has never dismissed them, a degree as required by the region, and any other requirement as stipulated by the religious association to which they correspond. The associations are required to provide a list of approved instructors to the government. MOE-approved guidelines, prepared by the CIE, stress "moderate Islam" in worship

practices, with emphasis on plurality, understanding, religious tolerance, conflict resolution, and coexistence. Instructors are also required to have a certificate of training in Islamic education.

Catholic clergy may include time spent on missions abroad in calculations for social security, and to claim retirement pension credit for a maximum of 38.5 years of service. Protestant clergy are eligible to receive social security benefits, including health insurance and a government-provided retirement pension with a maximum credit of 15 years of service, but pension eligibility requirements for these clergy are stricter than for Catholic clergy. The law allows Protestant ministers to count towards retirement time worked prior to 1999, the date of a prior decree, only if these pastors adjusted their status in 1999 and does not allow Protestant pastors to claim retirement credit for time worked abroad. Protestant pastors must also pay back pension contributions in one lump sum rather than via monthly salary deductions as Catholic clergy do. Clergy from the Russian Orthodox Church, CIE, and Jehovah's Witnesses are also eligible for social security benefits. The benefits for clergy from these groups depend on the specific terms of separate social security agreements that each of these groups negotiated with the state.

The penal code definition of hate crimes includes acts of "humiliation or disrespect" against victims because of their religion, with penalties of one to four years in jail. By law authorities may also investigate and prosecute criminal offenses committed by neo-Nazi groups as "terrorist crimes." Genocide denial is a crime if it incites violent attitudes, such as aggressive, threatening behavior or language.

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

Government Practices

Summary paragraph: In November the MOJ issued its 2016 annual report on religious freedom in the country, which had the stated objective of gathering data on problems as a starting point to resolving them. The report cited concerns of religious groups, including seeking authorization to provide services in hospitals, prisons, refugee centers, and the military and equal treatment in establishing and retaining places of worship. Several groups complained about obstacles to providing religious education in schools. Groups said they received unequal benefits and treatment from the government. Multiple groups asked the government to be more responsive to offenses against religious sentiment and

incitement to hatred. FEREDE criticized the report because it lacked a plan of action. The Foundation worked to educate local governments on their responsibilities towards minority religious groups. Between January and July the government granted citizenship to 1,091 descendants of Sephardic Jews expelled from the country in 1492. A court upheld a regulation banning prisoners from wearing the hijab. Protestant leaders expressed concerns about difficulties in obtaining permits to operate or build places of worship. Jews and Muslims had still not obtained access to additional land for cemeteries, although they said they had made some progress. Muslims stated there were not enough Muslim religious teachers in public schools and cited discrimination against women wearing hijabs. Religious minorities called for the government to allow their members to allocate a portion of their taxes to their churches in the same way that Catholics could. The MOJ began compiling a list of recognized religious clergy who could perform religious acts with civic impact, such as marriages. The MOI launched an outreach effort to Muslims to seek their collaboration in combating religious discrimination and integrating the Muslim community.

The interagency Religious Freedom Advisory Committee, led by the minister of justice, continued to hold plenary and standing committee sessions to review issues pertaining to religious freedom in the country. The committee comprised representatives from the Office of the Presidency; the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Interior, Education, Employment, and Health; academics; and religious leaders from the Catholic Church, FEREDE, FCJE, CIE, the Mormon Church, the Federation of Buddhist Communities, and the Orthodox Church. It had working groups to address the following issues: the annual report on the status of religious freedom in the country, issued by the MOJ and approved by the committee; the establishment of places of worship; the scheduling of school exams on religious holidays and establishment of dress codes in public administration employment; cemeteries for minority faiths; and religious dietary requirements.

FEREDE executive secretary Mariano Blazquez said he was the only committee member to withhold his signature on the 2015 and 2016 reports by the MOJ on the state of religious freedom in the country. Blazquez said he had withheld his signature because the reports lacked a plan of action. Citing Article 9 of the constitution, he stated that the state failed to protect the liberty and equality of the individual by not acting on the problems described in the report. FEREDE, according to the religious freedom report, recommended the committee undertake its own analysis of the state of religious freedom in the country and make its own proposals for advancing religious freedom. Commenting on the 2015 report, the director of the NGO Movement Against Intolerance, Esteban Ibarra, said the

government attributed little importance to the commission due to internal strife within the group. A Foundation representative, however, stated the government valued the contributions of the commission.

The Barcelona Prosecutor Against Hate Crimes and Discrimination, Miguel Angel Aguilar, distributed a manual on investigating and prosecuting hate crimes, including religiously motivated crimes, for the Catalan region's penal judges and prosecutors and to all the hate crimes prosecutors in the country. The manual defined hate crimes and the obstacles to prosecuting such crimes and cited best practices. It called for more training, greater institutional coordination, the updating of protocols, and the tracking of statistics. Officials used the manual in administering training for judges, legal aides, law enforcement, academics, and others.

Movement Against Intolerance Director Ibarra stated authorities should apply the criminal code pertaining to hate crimes, including religiously motivated crimes, more widely. He criticized public prosecutors and police, saying they were not prepared to combat intolerance.

On November 7, the Madrid Municipal Police Diversity Management Unit opened a headquarters office, staffed by 32 agents, to respond to victims and pursue criminal complaints related to hate crimes, including religiously motivated crimes. The launch was accompanied by an awareness campaign to fight hate crimes in the capital and encourage victims to report them.

The Foundation informed local governments of the rights of minority religious groups and the governments' responsibilities toward those groups, especially in cases of local regulations or restrictions interfering with the right to worship. It also provided local governments with research about religious communities, met with religious leaders, fostered dialogue between municipalities and local religious leaders, and provided lists of local places of worship and religious cemeteries for Jewish and Islamic burial. The Foundation completed rounds of legal assistance with eight municipalities during the year, including the cities of Santander, Logrono, Albacete, Guadalajara, and Toledo. Movement Against Intolerance Director Ibarra described the Foundation's role as "weak," suggesting it could do more to combat anti-Islamic sentiment with public information campaigns.

FCJE Director Carolina Aisen reported implementation of the law allowing descendants of Sephardic Jews expelled from the country in 1492 the right to gain citizenship ran more smoothly during the year, following prior technical problems

with the online application. According to Aisen, who said she met monthly with the MOJ to discuss progress, 1,091 Sephardi descendants had obtained citizenship between January and July, compared with only one in all of 2016. Approximately 5,000 Sephardis had started the application process. Applicants were from more than 100 countries, with the bulk of recent applicants coming from Venezuela. Other applicants were from Israel, other countries in Latin America, and the United States. The Jewish community said burdensome financial and administrative requirements, such as a requirement to self-fund a trip to the country for the personal interview, reduced the response to the law. Aisen said MOJ officials had assured her the law would be extended beyond its scheduled 2019 expiration date.

The Office of Religious Affairs continued to maintain an online portal for information about registered minority religious groups to aid new immigrants or citizens moving into a community to find his or her locally registered religious community and place of worship. The MOJ reported the tool provided no personally identifiable information and abided by the information protection law.

Religious groups reported progress with state and local governments to accommodate the needs of religious minorities in hospitals, the military, and public cemeteries, according to representatives of FCJE, CIE and UCIDE's Andalusian Observatory, and FEREDÉ. According to the MOJ's 2016 report on religious freedom, however, FEREDÉ, FCJE, and the Romanian Orthodox Church all called on the government to guarantee or facilitate access for all religious groups so they could provide religious services in such locations as hospitals, penitentiaries, refugee centers, and in the armed forces.

In July the National Court prohibited a Muslim prisoner, Soukaina Abouddrar, from wearing the hijab in jail. The court stated the prohibition did not violate her right to religious freedom. Citing security concerns at penitentiaries, the court said the hijab "...only leaves visible a reduced part of the face, which makes identification difficult, going against security protocols, and the possibility of hiding prohibited objects." The court also based the prohibition in part on "the use made by the prisoner of such garment as a jihadist claim in the work of radicalization of other inmates of her own religion, as appears from the reports." The court left the door open to wearing a veil smaller than a hijab. The case set a precedent for similar cases that might arise in the future, according to media reports. In an agreement with prosecutors in July, Abouddrar pled guilty to being a member of ISIS and received a three-year prison sentence.

According to the MOJ's report on religious freedom, several groups cited local government restrictions on their ability to proselytize or manifest their faith in public spaces. FEREDE said religious group members had received fines and penalties for carrying out religious activities in public or distributing leaflets with religious content. According to FEREDE, city councils were increasingly willing to restrict these actions through their municipal bylaws. As an example, it cited the Huelva City Council, which in 2016 excluded religious bodies from using public municipal spaces. In addition, according to the report, Mormons said their missionaries faced obstacles in disseminating their ideas through banners or stalls at book fairs. Jehovah's Witnesses cited some problems in preaching in public spaces, although they said the number of city councils placing obstacles had decreased.

Protestants stated again that city governments imposed burdensome and unequal regulations on religious groups seeking licenses or permits for places of worship. FEREDE Executive Secretary Blazquez said obtaining city permits to construct new churches or keep current churches open, especially in Madrid, remained a challenge. FEREDE estimated that about half its places of worship did not have a permit because the process of obtaining one was so difficult. For example, FEREDE stated its churches must meet the same soundproofing building codes as nightclubs. Blazquez said this requirement was too burdensome for new churches and put existing ones at risk of closure.

The government's report on religious freedom cited a call by FEREDE for the government to take into account the needs of religious groups when engaging in urban planning to ensure all religious groups received equal treatment in the establishment of places of worship. According to the report, FCJE asked for clear norms to guarantee religious groups the right to open places of worship, while CIE called for the government to take steps to overcome obstacles to the opening of mosques. The report also stated FCBE outlined a need for legislative action to protect minority religious groups from forced expulsion from, or expropriation of, places of worship.

Muslim and Jewish communities reported improved collaboration with municipalities over cemetery access and establishment, although no new cemeteries were opened or expanded to include access during the year. CIE negotiated a 108,000 square-foot parcel of the Carabanchel Cemetery in Madrid for Islamic burials, and was in final negotiations at year's end regarding maintenance costs before interment could begin. CIE reported Muslims could already receive a religious burial at Grinon Cemetery in Madrid. CIE reported

there still were no Islamic cemeteries in the regions of Galicia and Extremadura. FCJE reached agreement with the cities of Valencia and Alicante under which the cities would provide Jewish cemeteries. FCBE President Luis Morente said an agreement reached with the government in 2016 for refrigerating bodies prior to Tibetan burials in order to abide by health regulations was functioning well.

According to the MOJ's report on religious freedom, FCJE said there was still room for improvement in its access to parcels of land for use as burial plots, and the CIE called for regulations governing burials without coffins and the granting of land parcels for Islamic burials in municipal cemeteries.

In July the city of Getafe threatened to close the local mosque for building code violations, citing overcrowding on prayer days because of the growth of the Muslim community. After negotiations with CIE and the Foundation, the city and local Muslim community agreed to repurpose the building for activities other than worship, such as religious education, where participants would not exceed the maximum building capacity. Muslims were reportedly worshipping at another location in the city.

The Catalan Muslim community stated the Barcelona city government supported the building of a mosque, unlike in previous years, when there was both local and neighborhood opposition to a mosque. The Muslim community, however, lacked the necessary funding. Both city and regional government officials said that, as with other religious groups, the Muslim community was responsible for raising the necessary funding to buy land and build the mosque and submitting a request to the city.

Regional commitments to provide religious education to minorities, as prescribed in 1992 agreements, remained problematic, according to Gabriel Jairodin Riaza, the author of the annual report on Islamophobia in Spain by the Andalusian Observatory, an NGO under UCIDE auspices. He said that whether a region fulfilled its obligation to provide religious education to children depended on the will of local politicians. Riaza also stated that some politicians deliberately stalled Muslim initiatives by, for example, failing to contract Islamic education instructors.

Jairodin stated the fundamental problem with the regional governments' failure to provide Islamic education instructors was difficulty in implementing the national protocol for collecting the minimum of 10 requests from parents for religious education. The NGO Al Ihsan Women's Association in Melilla reportedly met

with the provincial education director in the city in 2016 to discuss religious education. It then educated Muslim parents of their rights under the law to request religious education in secondary schools. The NGO's director, Mimuntz Mohamed Hammu, said more than 10 requests were submitted in each of the city's seven secondary schools; in every case, the school refused to receive the letters, stating it did not have necessary authorization from the provincial education office of the MOE. Mohamed said the provincial education director had not yet responded to a formal letter of complaint.

Federal and regional governments employed 56 Islamic education instructors nationwide, according to CIE, which certified teachers. CIE stated this number only allowed for religious education for 20 percent of the Muslim students whose parents desired such education for their children. CIE again emphasized the need to extend Islamic education to secondary schools, targeting adolescent Muslims, who it said otherwise sought answers about Islam on the internet and might become susceptible to radical influences. CIE Secretary Mohamed Ajana commended the region of Castille and Leon for adding five Islamic education instructors during the year. The MOJ said it worked with CIE to intercede with regional governments that were not providing Islamic education instructors, helping to forge agreements that avoided costly and lengthy court battles.

On November 3, a Muslim family won an appeal of a suit filed in 2016 on behalf of a group of Muslim students against the region of La Rioja for not providing Islamic education in public schools. The La Rioja High Court ruled the regional education authority was required to provide religious education to the students, overturning a lower court decision in April in favor of the local government, which stated the CIE had failed to provide a list of instructors. Muslim leaders stated the region of La Rioja had long opposed providing Islamic education in public schools. Before the higher court decision in November, the MOJ said it had mediated between the CIE and the La Rioja education counselor after the April ruling. It stated the region had expressed willingness to incorporate Islamic religious instruction in schools. The region would pay for the instructors and use the national government's Islamic education curriculum.

The MOJ's report on religious freedom also cited complaints by several religious groups, including the Catholic Church, FERED, FCJE, and CIE, about the inability to provide religious education and the integration of religious teachers in schools.

Holocaust education in secondary school curricula continued to expand in accordance with an MOE mandate contained in two existing royal decrees. The subject was included in fourth-year compulsory geography and history class and first-year contemporary history of the world class. Jewish community members, however, described the Holocaust education provided in public schools as inadequate, especially in regions outside Madrid. Regional governments compiled Holocaust and Sephardi history curricula with input from the FCJE and the MOE.

Approximately 40 teachers from across Spain whose responsibilities included Holocaust and Sephardi education traveled to Jerusalem in July using funds from the state-supported cultural center “Centro Sefarad-Israel”, the MOE, and the Madrid regional government. They completed coursework at the study center of the Israel Museum of the Holocaust to enhance their classroom instruction. Centro Sefarad-Israel said more than 600 instructors had taken part in the program.

FEREDE said that because of the stricter pension eligibility requirements for Protestant ministers, no retired Protestant clergy member had yet been able to access a government pension. In November the Supreme Court ruled in favor of FEREDE in a suit the group had filed in 2015, protesting the unequal pension eligibility requirements. The court decreed FEREDE clergy should be eligible for pensions under the same terms as Catholic priests. The ruling was not retroactive to clergy who were already retired and applied only to Protestant ministers. FEREDE said it hoped government promises to modify the law in the wake of the Supreme Court decision would rectify the pension problem for both its retired and active clergy.

Representatives of FEREDE, CIE, and FCJE stated they did not receive all of the benefits to which they were entitled under their cooperative agreements with the government. Mormons, according to the MOJ report on religious freedom, said groups with *notorio arraigo* status, but which had no cooperative agreement with the government, did not receive the same benefits, such as tax exemptions and the right to provide religious assistance and instruction in public institutions, as religious groups that had concluded such agreements. FCBE and the Romanian Orthodox Church also noted the disparate treatment in tax exemptions, according to the report.

Protestant representatives stated the government favored Catholicism over other religious groups in various practices, including by permitting citizens to allocate 0.7 percent of their taxes due to the Church. The tax designation yielded an

estimated 250 million euros (\$300 million) in annual donations to the Catholic Church, according to news reports.

Equal opportunity to allocate a portion of an individual's taxes to a chosen religious group remained an issue of debate; several religious groups, including Protestants, Muslims, Buddhists, and Mormons, continued to express their desire to have their groups included on the tax form so they could be eligible to receive the 0.7 percent allocation from taxpayers. In June during the Second University Conference of the Association of Young Researchers on Religious Sciences, representatives of FEREDE and FCJE stated they did not oppose the voluntary income tax payments to the Catholic Church, but would like to see the same benefit provided to minority religious groups. FEREDE Executive Secretary Blazquez said, "It is better to collect through the income taxes box than through a direct assignment. Evangelicals [i.e., Protestants] do not want that money to be used to pay pastors' salaries, but for solidarity activities." FEREDE said possible uses of such revenue could include support for a food bank, residences for victims of violence or refugees, worker training programs, and social reinsertion programs for ex-convicts. Isaac Querub, president of FCJE, said, "I do not mind the tax allocation to the [Catholic] Church, since 90 percent of Spaniards are Catholics, but the same allocation should be studied for Jews."

Religious groups said government support for social programs through the Foundation was inadequate. Religious representative bodies, including FEREDE, CIE, and FCJE, indicated that they depended on governmental support through the Foundation (70 percent of their operating budget or more) to cover administrative and infrastructure costs. The Foundation had a budget of 1.4 million euros (\$1.7 million) to support religious groups. Of the total budget, 900,000 euros (\$1.1 million) went to religious communities for social projects, down from 992,000 euros (\$1.2 million) in 2016. Most of the grants (780,000 euros, or \$936,000) went to the federations representing religious groups with agreements with the state (Jews, Muslims, and Protestants). Another 120,000 euros (\$144,000), down from 200,000 euros (\$240,000) in 2016, was divided into small grants of less than 5,000 euros (\$6,000) awarded to dozens of local religious associations. According to the Foundation director, the 2016 grants were unusually large because they included carryover funds from winning projects not executed in 2015. Foundation grants to minority religious groups also funded projects promoting tolerance and dialogue, conferences on religious diversity, research about religious minorities, and cultural projects to increase knowledge of minority religious groups.

In June the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled that certain tax exemptions to the Catholic Church might constitute unlawful state aid. The case involved a municipal tax refund a Catholic school was seeking in connection with the construction of a school building. The congregation filed a legal suit after local tax authorities denied the refund, and the courts referred the case to the ECJ. The ECJ declared that the tax exemption would use state resources to give a selective economic advantage to the congregation running the school. It referred the case back to Spanish courts to determine whether the exemption would meet the minimum threshold for unlawful state aid.

According to the MOJ's report on religious freedom, the CIE asked the government to take steps to prevent discrimination against some Muslim women, particularly in schools and in the workplace, for wearing the hijab.

Members of the large Muslim community in the North African exclave of Ceuta reported widespread discrimination. A Muslim merchant in the Muslim-majority neighborhood of Principe opined that Catholics had limited the opportunities and influence of minorities so they could "take back Spain for Spaniards." Representatives from the federal and city governments denied there was discrimination against Muslims. One government official said the two Muslim-majority political parties in Ceuta used a message of exclusion and victimization to rally supporters and extract political concessions.

In August the MOJ began working with religious entities to compile a list of clergy, including imams, to be included within a Register of Religious Entities. This would identify religious officials from all groups empowered to perform religious acts with civil effects, such as marriages. The new registry, completed in November, was a voluntary, comprehensive, and private list of all clergy belonging to religions with *notorio arraigo* status, according to the MOJ. The MOJ added that while contribution to the list was voluntary, groups were required to submit the names of clergy authorized to perform religious weddings with civil effects. CIE secretary Ajana said the list would protect believers by ensuring that imams were registered and the marriages they officiated were legal.

On September 6, the MOJ again denied the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, or Pastafarianism, recognition as a religious group. The group took its case against the MOJ to the national court, which has national jurisdiction and hears cases affecting more than one region. At year's end the case was pending. The Office of Religious Affairs and the Foundation said the Church had never requested a meeting.

The Attorney General for Hate Crimes launched an investigation in January and initiated a legal process in October to determine the criminal responsibility of municipalities that supported the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel, considered by FCJE as an Anti-Semitic movement. In November a district court in Seville issued a writ of interim injunction against the City Council of La Roda de Andalucia, suspending its participation in BDS, which it had joined in 2014. The court's injunction was the result of a suit brought by the NGO The Lawfare Project in Spain.

On January 26, politicians on the city council of Valencia voted down a BDS motion introduced by the Valencia en Comu coalition. The anti-BDS NGO Action and Communication about the Middle East had told the council that participating in BDS proposals was illegal, based on convictions against those participating in similar actions in several other municipalities. Xeraco, a town of 6,000 inhabitants near Valencia, was under investigation by local prosecutors for BDS support. On January 26, Judicial Court 10 of Valencia halted Xeraco's Israel boycott.

The Parliament of Catalonia approved a motion July 27 requesting the regional government to submit within 90 days an action plan to combat anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Semitism. The government had not presented the plan by year's end. Based on a 2016 report on the religious practices of Muslim communities in Barcelona, Mayor Ada Colau and the city administration announced a "Plan of Action against Islamophobia" on January 17 to address rising anti-Muslim sentiment. As part of the plan, the first of its kind in the country, municipal authorities conducted seminars and training and published educational materials to sensitize the population to anti-Muslim sentiment and its impact. The plan also outlined a communications campaign, in partnership with Muslim communities, to highlight anti-Islamic sentiment as a form of discrimination, but the city had not launched that campaign by year's end.

In July the MOJ, the Foundation, and the Center for Intelligence Against Terrorism and Organized Crime (CITCO) held their first meeting with CIE leadership to explain the government's National Plan Against Radicalization (PNCR). Although the central government announced the PNCR in 2015, it had implemented little programming under the plan since its passage, relying instead on local municipalities to implement their own counter-radicalization and community engagement measures with guidance from CITCO. The CIE offered to collaborate on radicalization detection and on the plan's implementation, specifically offering religious sensitivity training to help rectify what it described as racial profiling by

police at the local level. CIE Secretary Ajana said security forces often relied erroneously on aspects of physical appearance such as a beard, or the wearing of a hijab, as indicators of radicalization. By year's end, the government had not responded to CIE's offer to provide sensitivity training related to the PNCR. CIE confirmed it had longstanding programs to conduct such training for new Civil Guard cadets and UN Peacekeepers before their deployment.

On September 9, representatives from MOJ, the Foundation, and CITCO met with approximately 30 young Muslims in Madrid to discuss problems in the Muslim community and to explain the PNCR to Muslim youth. An MOJ official and the Foundation's director said Muslim youth were able to share their opinions about the PNCR and discuss problems related to anti-Islamic sentiment, religious freedom, and preventing radicalization in their communities. The group included men and women ages 18-30 and converts to Islam. The CIE president later said he believed such meetings would be more effective if they targeted all youth, not just Muslim youth.

According to the MOJ's report on religious freedom, FEREDE and FCJE called for greater neutrality on the part of the national and local governments in conducting certain official activities, for example by not organizing Catholic state funerals. FCBE called for better training of civil servants pertaining to the treatment of religious minorities under the law, for example in the registration of religious marriages. The report cited concerns by the Catholic Church of acts by local governments the Church considered to be anti-Catholic, for example, a prohibition against the celebration by police of a local patron saint's feast day or the cancellation of religious festivities or limitations on Catholic liturgical acts.

On October 2, the national government, in collaboration with Menendez Pelayo International University, held a celebration in Cuenca to mark the 25th anniversary of the signing of a 1992 state pact with leaders of the three principal minority religions: Judaism, Islam, and Protestantism. The all-day ceremony and workshops included participation by the government and religious leaders, including a roundtable discussing how to fully execute the 1992 accords and best practices in ensuring religious freedom.

In April Criminal Court 16 of Barcelona convicted Barcelona bookstore owner Pedro Varela of intellectual property crimes for selling *Mein Kampf* without authorization from the state of Bavaria, Germany. The court sentenced Varela to six months in prison and ordered him to pay Bavaria 67,637 euros (\$81,200), the total profit obtained from the sale of the book. Varela had edited and sold more

than 4,300 copies of the book between 1997 and 2010 through his bookstore in Barcelona and other establishments in the country and abroad. Authorities continued to investigate Varela on criminal charges that he sold books promoting religious hatred and discrimination. Authorities had arrested Varela and closed down his bookshop and websites in 2016, the first time the government had acted against a business in connection with religious hate crime charges. The judge and Barcelona Prosecutor Against Hate Crimes and Discrimination Miguel Angel Aguilar called Varela an active neo-Nazi. Varela remained free pending an appeal of his intellectual property violation conviction.

According to FCJE Director Aisen, while membership in ultra-right parties had not increased, the parties had gradually expanded their online and public presence, including through public meetings, marches, and statements in the press. She said that even though they had gradually increased incidents of hate speech – which included propagating anti-Semitic hate speech, writing, and cartoons through social media – her organization still viewed the parties as marginal. She said far-left parties were generally intolerant of the role of religion in any aspect of public life. Aisen emphasized the connection between anti-Israel sentiment and anti-Semitism. She stated, however, that politicians had reduced their casual use of historical Spanish phrases that were critical of Jews. She added that police generally pursued violators of laws against religiously motivated hate speech.

According to the MOJ's report on religious freedom, the Catholic Church stated the government was not responding to a growing number of attacks on Catholic religious sentiments as called for by law, while CIE recommended the government take measures to combat an increase in offenses against religious sentiment and hate crimes. The report also cited FEREDE's call on the government to pay greater attention to a growing number of cases of offenses and incitement to hatred against Christianity, many of which involved vandalism, but that the government did not classify as religiously motivated, according to FEREDE.

The government is a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Summary paragraph: OLRC reported 100 hate crimes against Christians, Jews, and Muslims during the year, including three incidents of violence and 41 of vandalism, compared with 107 hate crimes in 2016, of which three involved violence and 39 vandalism. The MOI reported 47 hate crimes with religious

motivation in 2016. NGO Citizens' Platform against Islamophobia recorded 573 anti-Muslim incidents in 2016, an increase from previous years. In June police detained a woman for encouraging attacks against Jews on social media, and in December a court convicted two men of beating a pregnant woman wearing a *niqab* in Barcelona in 2016. Anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic discourse was prevalent in social media and public speech. In August more than 2,000 persons participated in a demonstration organized by Catalan Muslims to condemn terrorism.

OLRC reported 100 religiously motivated hate crimes during the year (eight fewer than in 2016), of which 74 were against Christians, 14 against Muslims, 11 against Jews, and one against believers in general. The most common type of crime was vandalism, with 41 incidents, but there were also two attacks against Muslims and one against a Christian. Fourteen crimes involved "humiliating individuals for their faith," with 12 targeting Christians, one a Muslim, and one religious believers in general.

The MOI documented 47 incidents of hate crimes with religious motivations in 2016, the most recent year for which it had data, compared to 70 in 2015.

According to a report by Citizens' Platform against Islamophobia published on August 27, the NGO recorded 573 anti-Muslim incidents in 2016, up from 278 in 2015 and 59 in 2014. The platform said it reported more incidents in 2016 because it had more volunteers and hence greater capacity to record incidents than in previous years. In addition, it stated incidents had increased as a result of terrorist attacks in Europe, the European refugee crisis, anti-Muslim rhetoric, media reports connecting Muslims to ISIS, and discriminatory discourse on social media by some politicians. The most frequent type of incidents, according to the platform, were online hate speech, at 22 percent, and discrimination against women wearing hijabs, at 19 percent. According to the NGO, the targets of the incidents were Muslims and Islam in general (284), women (81), children (23), refugees (31) and mosques (72).

The Andalusian Observatory's yearly report on anti-Muslim sentiment in the country cited 27 anti-Muslim incidents in 2016. Incidents included verbal and physical abuse, graffiti, and hate speech via the internet.

In August a man attacked a 14-year-old Moroccan boy in Valencia. The aggressor kicked the boy in his left thigh and ribs, made death threats, and insisted that he return to his country. In the same month, two men assaulted three children of

Moroccan origin who were participating in a rally at Fitero Town Hall in Navarre. While the children were participating in a moment of silence for victims of the Barcelona terror attack, the aggressors insulted and threatened them before pushing and hitting them on the head with a stick. One of the victims suffered a traumatic brain injury, head wounds, and chest trauma, and lost consciousness. The Civil Guard arrested two persons; the judge was investigating them for injuries, but ruled out prosecution for a hate crime. The accused were currently free pending the completion of the investigation.

In separate incidents in Palencia in August, a man harassed and insulted a woman of Maghreb origin in front of her young daughter and tried to remove her veil, and a man insulted a woman of Maghreb origin on a city street, according to press reports. The Palencia City Refugee Platform, a local NGO, denounced the incidents.

In December a court sentenced two men accused of beating and insulting a pregnant Muslim woman wearing a *niqab* in Barcelona in 2016 to a one-year suspended prison sentence. The court ordered the men to attend a human rights course and pay the victim 6,500 euros (\$7,800) in compensation in lieu of serving their prison sentence.

In June the National Police in Zaragoza detained a woman for inciting attacks against Jews through social media, where she moderated an anti-Israel group with more than 2,000 subscribers. According to the authorities, the messages she sent encouraged killing Jews, with messages including, “stab the Jews,” and “Palestinian slaughter.”

In February the Civil Guard in the Region of Murcia detained two men who organized demonstrations in 2010 and 2011 that encouraged violence against Jews. The men’s social media profiles professed hatred towards the Jewish community and Israel.

According to FCJE director Aisen, some Jewish university students reported discrimination on campus, mainly with regard to conflict with pro-Palestinian student groups. She said that, as a result, some Jewish university students felt they had to conceal their religion.

Anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic discourse was prevalent in social media. In August following the Catalonia terrorist attacks, through the messaging tool WhatsApp, individuals urged a mobilization to ban mosques in the country, according to media

reports. The hashtag “#StopIslam” became a trending topic on Twitter and the most commented topic on the day of the Barcelona terrorist attack in August.

Citizens’ Platform against Islamophobia denounced a wave of anti-Muslim incidents in the days after the August terrorist attacks in Catalonia. The group cited an extensive campaign of hate speech via social media and the spread of false and damaging news targeting Muslims. Local media reported several incidents, including graffiti on mosques with such slogans as “Stop Islamization,” as well as damage to mosques in Seville, Tarragona, and Granada. The media also reported several incidents of verbal abuse and minor assaults against Muslims in the days after the attacks.

Immediately after the terrorist attacks, Chief Rabbi of Catalonia Meir Bar-Hen said Muslim communities harbored “radical fringes” and government authorities were failing to adequately address the threat of radical Islam. The rabbi said he told his congregants not to think they were in the country permanently and encouraged them to buy land in Israel. FCJE responded with a statement expressing full confidence in the security forces and their ability to prevent terrorist attacks.

A journalist who tracked Muslim issues in the country said politicians had not helped to reduce the anti-Muslim sentiment that followed the Catalonia terrorist attacks but that, overall, the media had provided fair coverage.

FCJE said it had received reports of 18 anti-Semitic incidents during the year, including anti-Semitic and anti-Israel hate speech via social media and anti-Semitic graffiti and vandalism of memorials and burial sites.

In October, according to press reports, during and after a march of hundreds of thousands of people against Catalan independence, dozens of demonstrators were observed performing the Nazi salute and chanting “Sieg Heil.”

In November organizers of an exhibition of artifacts from the Auschwitz extermination camp were targeted with social media attacks ahead of the exhibition’s opening in Madrid on December 1. According to press reports, organizers received more than 100 messages, including some denying the Holocaust.

On August 21, approximately 2,500 persons representing 150 civic and religious organizations joined a demonstration in Barcelona organized by Catalan Muslims to condemn terrorism. Muslims from throughout the region attended the event and

read a joint statement. Speakers stated that radicalization posed “a real problem that we should not hide.” The media reported that representatives of most leading political parties in Catalonia participated in the demonstration.

According to OLRC President Maria Garcia, there were 41 acts of vandalism against places of worship during the year, compared with 39 in 2016. There were 31 incidents against Christian churches, eight against mosques, and two against Jewish community buildings. She stated neither the Catholic nor Protestant Churches provided information about any attacks. Garcia also said attacks against Catholic churches had traditionally come from far-left groups, anarchists, and radical feminists.

According to OLRC, in February individuals painted the phrase “Against the Jews” and a noose with the Star of David at the entrance of the Jewish Community of Asturias. In March individuals defaced a wall at the Jewish Community of Madrid office. They painted a swastika, along with disparaging words.

In March a group wrote, “All Jews to the gas chamber,” on a wall at the University of Barcelona.

In April in the city of Vitoria, individuals painted a swastika around the Star of David on a Jewish cemetery monument. The City Council removed the graffiti, according to media reports.

In August individuals painted “Jewish murderers,” stars of David with the word “assassins,” and swastikas on tombs and monuments to Soviet soldiers, International Brigades, and other Civil War fighters at the Fuencarral Cemetery in Madrid, according to media reports.

In April a Barcelona judge sentenced a man to four months in jail for painting a swastika on a Barcelona synagogue’s door in 2016. The judge also ordered him to attend a human rights course and make periodic visits to a synagogue in order to “break prejudices and anti-Semitic stereotypes.”

Following the terrorist attacks in August in Cunit, Catalonia, individuals vandalized a mosque with what appeared to be motor oil. Local and regional police investigated the case and concluded the attack was a hate crime but closed the cases because they could not identify the perpetrators.

Jewish, Muslim, and Protestant representatives signed a “Coexistence Pact” September 16 designed to encourage joint work toward promoting coexistence; spreading the message of diversity; and fighting terrorism, radicalization, and hate crimes. The pact included participation by the Episcopal Conference, University Governing Council, and the Council of Psychologists. Another objective of the pact, that members said they intended to implement in 2018, was for members of the religious groups to conduct workshops for journalists to encourage use of less discriminatory or stereotypical language in the media. CIE Secretary Ajana said the pact was not yet open to the other *notorio arraigo* religions.

In September Director General of the European Office of the Church of Scientology Ivan Arjona Pelado presented religious freedom awards to academics involved with human rights. The main topic of discussion at the ceremony was the right to freedom of belief and respect for the beliefs of others. Pelado emphasized the need to combat intolerance among different religious groups and the responsibility of the international community to promote religious coexistence. Government representatives from the MOJ and Foundation attended.

CIE began naming a representative delegate for each of the country’s autonomous regions and cities to respond directly to the national organization and better coordinate national and local efforts to promote religious tolerance and equal treatment under the law. CIE had named 17 of 19 delegates by year’s end, with only the regions of Murcia and Castilla la Mancha remaining to name delegates.

In July FEREDE organized a public commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, which was attended by the Catholic Archbishop of Madrid, Cardinal Carlos Osoro, as well as representatives from the Jewish, Muslim, Orthodox, and Buddhist faiths and politicians. Minister of Justice Rafael Catala delivered remarks in which he spoke of Protestantism’s struggle for freedom and tolerance and affirmed the government’s “firm commitment” to implement articles 9 and 16 of the constitution “so that the right to religious freedom is made real and effective.”

In September the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization’s Association for Interreligious Dialogue (AUDIR) organized the second commemoration of its “Night of Religions” in Barcelona, in which 33 religious centers representing 14 different faiths shared their religious traditions with the public. During Ramadan, more than 50 Muslim prayer centers organized iftars open to members of other faiths and the general public. In January AUDIR launched the project “Building Bridges,” in which 40 youths from different faiths

attended courses on interfaith dialogue, among other subjects. As part of the program, the participants visited places of worship in their neighborhoods to promote tolerance.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

U.S. embassy and consulate representatives met regularly with MOJ officials to discuss anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim sentiment, anticlericalism, and concerns about societal discrimination against religious minorities. Issues discussed included access to religious education, cemeteries and burial, pensions, religiously motivated hate crimes and hate speech, and public statements and campaigns to promote tolerance. The MOJ and the Foundation underscored their effort to safeguard religious freedom and educate regional and municipal governments on the application of laws that protect religious freedom and the improved integration of minority religious communities.

Embassy officials met and communicated with leaders of CIE, FEREDE, FCJE, the Federation of Buddhist Communities, Scientologists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other community members, including imams of local mosques, Muslim youth leaders, NGOs, politicians, and business leaders in Madrid, Barcelona, and Melilla. Embassy and consulate officials heard the concerns of community members regarding discrimination and the free exercise of their religious rights, including anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim sentiment, lack of religious education, and access to permits for places of worship. Embassy officials discussed these concerns separately with appropriate government officials.

In March and April the consulate general in Barcelona funded a gathering of 50 young Muslim leaders from four cities (Barcelona, Madrid, Malaga, and Valencia), who created the country's first "Network of Young Muslim Leaders for Dialogue," managed by local NGO Xarxa de Convivencia, with U.S. government funding. This initiative brought together influential Muslim youth to facilitate dialogue about issues that included religious freedom and tolerance and to empower them as future leaders in their communities.

In June the Charge d'Affaires hosted an iftar in which he introduced the Network of Young Muslim Leaders to national government officials. He invited the leader of Xarxa de Convivencia to show a video and present examples of the group's work to promote diversity, religious tolerance, and freedom of worship through its nationwide meetings with municipal government officials and local activists. An MOJ official said the discussion at the iftar helped prompt the Foundation to

organize a September meeting to discuss radicalization with Muslim youth from across the country.

The embassy also formed a group that included Muslim individuals who had formerly taken part in U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs, as well as members of the security forces and academics, and helped the group win a U.S. government grant in July. The grant supported an initiative to promote government-Muslim community engagement and mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect, as well as address problems identified by Muslim communities across the country. Following initial meetings in October and December, the group planned to hold further meetings and community forums in seven cities to discuss issues including freedom of worship, religious tolerance, the role of the media, and prevention of radicalization in Muslim communities.

Participants and former participants of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs, including the Network of Young Muslim leaders, condemned the August 17-18 Catalonia terrorist attacks through broadcast media interviews, opinion pieces, social media messaging, and meetings with government leaders. They also helped to organize an August 21 Muslim antiterrorism march of approximately 2,500 persons in Barcelona that included participation by 150 predominantly Muslim organizations.