

# UNITED KINGDOM 2016 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

## Executive Summary

In the absence of a written constitution, the law establishes the Church of England as England's state church and the Church of Scotland as Scotland's national church. The law prohibits "incitement to religious hatred" as well as discrimination on the grounds of religion. A judge sentenced two men, who he stated were influenced by a "bloodthirsty version of Islam," to life in prison for plotting to kill soldiers, police officers, and civilians in an attack in London inspired by ISIS. The government introduced a national database of individuals governing schools after parents and teachers complained about Muslim infiltration of school boards in Birmingham. Politicians and political parties made anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim statements. The Labour Party completed an internal investigation and public report on anti-Semitism following reports that members were suspended by their party for anti-Semitic or racist remarks. On October 16, parliament's Home Affairs Select Committee released a cross-party report on anti-Semitism in the United Kingdom (UK), calling on political leaders to combat anti-Semitism. In April police forces in England and Wales began recording "Islamophobia" as a separate category of crime, as it did with anti-Semitic incidents. Following the June 23 vote to exit the European Union (Brexit), Prime Minister David Cameron condemned the "despicable" rise of hate crime incidents throughout the country. The Labour party's Sadiq Khan became London's first Muslim mayor.

Governmental organizations reported an increase in religious hate crimes and incidents in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. In March a Sunni Muslim killed an Ahmadi Muslim shopkeeper outside the latter's store in Glasgow. There were reports of numerous physical and verbal attacks against Muslim and Jewish community members. A university expelled a Christian graduate student after he expressed his opposition to gay marriage on social media because of his Christian beliefs. There were anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim protests, and vandalism of Jewish graves, mosques, and other religious sites.

In support of religious freedom objectives, embassy officials and the U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom discussed religious intolerance and protection of minorities with members of parliament, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, including the minister for human rights, religious leaders, and representatives of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Embassy

officials held an ongoing dialogue with representatives of the Church of England, and other religious groups about avenues to combat religious intolerance.

### **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the population at 64.4 million (July 2016 estimate). Census figures from 2011, the most recent, indicate 59.3 percent of the population in England and Wales is Christian, comprising the Church of England (Anglican), the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian), other Protestant churches, the Roman Catholic Church, and unaffiliated Christian groups. Of the remaining population, 4.8 percent identified themselves as Muslim; 1.5 percent as Hindu, 0.8 percent as Sikh, 0.5 percent as Jewish and 0.4 as Buddhist. Roughly 25 percent of the population consists of nonbelievers. There are approximately 137,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in England and Wales.

The Muslim community in England and Wales is predominantly of South Asian origin, but also includes individuals from the Arabian Peninsula, the Levant, Africa, and Southeast Asia, as well as a growing number of converts of European descent. Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, and Buddhists are concentrated in London and other large urban areas, primarily in England.

Census figures from Scotland in 2011 indicate 54 percent of the population is Christian, comprising the Church of Scotland (32 percent), Roman Catholic Church (16 percent), and unaffiliated Christian groups (6 percent). The Muslim community comprises 1.4 percent of the population. Other religious groups, which make up less than 1 percent of the population, include Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, and Buddhists. More than 36 percent of the population consists of nonbelievers, with the remainder not providing any information.

Census figures from Northern Ireland in 2011 indicate 41.5 percent of the population is Protestant, 41 percent Catholic, and less than 1 percent various non-Christian religious groups. Approximately 17 percent of respondents did not indicate a religious affiliation.

Census figures from Bermuda in 2010 indicate that out of 22 religious groups, 78 percent of the population identifies with Christianity including 10,100 Anglicans, 9,300 Roman Catholics, 5,500 African Methodist Episcopalians, and 4,300 Seventh-day Adventists. Approximately 2 percent of the population identifies with other religious groups including 600 Muslims, 200 Rastafarians and approximately

100 Jews. Approximately 20 percent did not identify with or state a religious affiliation.

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

### **Legal Framework**

In the absence of a written constitution, the law establishes the Church of England as England's state church. Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland do not have state religions. Legislation establishes the Church of Scotland as Scotland's national church, but it is not dependent on any government body or the queen for spiritual matters or leadership.

As the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, the monarch must always be a member of, and promise to uphold, that Church. The monarch appoints Church of England officials, including lay and clergy representatives, on the advice of the prime minister and the Crown Appointments Commission. Aside from these appointments, the state is not involved in the church's administration. The Church of Scotland is governed by its General Assembly, which has the authority to make the laws determining how it operates. The General Assembly consists of 850 ministers and clergy members and meets once a year for a week in May.

In England and Wales the law prohibits inciting hatred against a person on the grounds of his or her religion. The law prohibits religiously motivated hate language, and any acts intended to incite religious hatred through the use of words or the publication or distribution of written material. The law defines religious hatred as hatred of a group because of its religious belief or lack thereof. The police are responsible for investigating criminal offenses and for gathering evidence; the Crown Prosecution Service, which is an independent body and the main public prosecution service for England and Wales, is responsible for deciding whether a suspect should be charged with a criminal offense. The maximum penalty for inciting religious hatred is seven years in prison. If there is evidence of religious hostility in connection with any crime, it is a "religiously aggravated offense" and carries a higher maximum penalty than the underlying crime alone. In Scotland the law requires courts consider the impact of religious bias when sentencing.

By law, the General Register Office for England and Wales governs the registration and legal recognition of places of worship in England and Wales. By law, buildings, rooms or other premises can be registered as meeting places for

religious worship upon payment of a fee; a record of the registration is then kept by the General Register Office for England and Wales, and the place of worship is assigned a “Worship Number.” Registration is not compulsory, but it gives certain financial advantages and is also required before a place of worship can be registered as a venue for marriages. Registered places of worship are exempt from paying taxes and can claim back 25 percent in donations from the country’s Gift Aid program.

Throughout the country the law requires religious education (RE) and worship for children between the ages of three and 13 in state-run schools, with the content decided at the local level. At age 13, students may choose to stop RE or continue and study two religions rather than one. Nonreligious state schools require the curriculum to reflect “Christian values,” be nondenominational, and refrain from attempts to convert students. The curriculum must also teach the practices of other principal religions in the country. Teachers have the right to decline participation in collective worship, without prejudice, unless they are employed by faith-based schools.

Nonreligious state schools in England and Wales are required to practice daily collective prayer or worship of “a wholly or mainly...Christian character.” All parents have the legal right to request their children not participate in RE and/or collective prayer or worship. Nonreligious state schools are free to hold religious ceremonies as they choose. The law permits sixth form students (generally 16- to 19-year-olds in the final two years of secondary school) to withdraw from worship without parental permission or action.

Only denominational (faith-based) schools in Scotland practice daily collective prayer or worship.

In Bermuda, the law requires students attending public (state) schools to participate in collective worship, characterized by educational officials reciting the Lord’s Prayer, but prohibits worship “distinctive of any particular religious group.” The law allows parents to withdraw their children from participation and allows homeschooling as an approved educational alternative for religious or other reasons. At the high school level, students are offered a course that explores various religions.

The government funded 6,848 “faith schools” in England (34.1 percent of all schools) in 2015. Of these, 4,609 (23 percent) were Church of England, 1,985 (9.9 percent) Catholic, 26 Methodist, 145 “other” Christian, 48 Jewish, 18 Muslim,

eight Sikh, four Hindu, two Greek Orthodox, one Quaker, one Seventh-day Adventist, and one United Reformed Church. There were 370 denominational schools in Scotland: 366 Catholic, three Episcopalian, and one Jewish, all of which were government-funded. If a school is not oversubscribed, then the school must offer a place to any child, but if the school is oversubscribed it may use faith as a criterion for acceptance. The government determines whether to establish a faith-based school when there is evidence of demand such as petitions from parents, religious groups, teachers, or other entities. Nonstate faith-based schools are eligible to claim “charitable status,” which allows for tax exemptions.

Almost all schools in Northern Ireland receive state support, with approximately 90 percent of the students attending predominantly Protestant or Catholic schools. Approximately 7 percent of school-age children attend religiously integrated schools with admissions criteria designed to enroll equal numbers of Catholic and Protestant children without the intervention of the state, as well as children from other religious and cultural backgrounds. These integrated schools are not secular, but are “essentially Christian in character and welcome all faiths and none.” RE – a core syllabus designed by the Department of Education, the Church of Ireland, and the Catholic, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches – is compulsory in all government-funded schools, and “the school day shall include collective worship whether in one or more than one assembly.” All schools receiving government funding require RE; however, Catholic-managed schools draw uniquely on the Roman Catholic tradition for their RE while other schools may draw on world religions for their RE.

An estimated 30 sharia councils operate parallel to the national legal system. They adjudicate religious matters. They do not have the legal status of courts, although they have legal status as mediation and arbitration bodies.

The law prohibits discrimination on the grounds of “religion or belief” or the “lack of religion or belief.” The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is responsible for enforcing legislation preventing religious discrimination. The EHRC researches and conducts inquiries into religious and other discrimination in England, Scotland, and Wales. Members are appointed by the minister for women and equalities. If the commission finds a violation of the law on discrimination it can issue a notice to the violator and seek a court order to enforce the notice. The EHRC receives public funds, but operates independently of the government. The Northern Ireland equivalent to the EHRC is the Equality Commission.

In Northern Ireland the law bans employment discrimination on the grounds of religious belief. In the rest of the UK, the law prohibits any discrimination, including employment discrimination, based on religious belief, unless the employer can show a genuine requirement for a particular religion.

Citing a limited broadcast spectrum, the law prohibits religious groups from holding national radio licenses, public teletext licenses, more than one television service license, and/or radio and television multiplex licenses.

Twenty-six senior bishops of the Anglican Church sit in the House of Lords as representatives of the state Church. Known as the Lords Spiritual, they read prayers at the start of each daily meeting and play a full and active role in the life and work of the upper house.

The law requires visa applicants wishing to enter the country as “ministers of religion” to have worked for at least one out of the previous five years as a minister and to have at least one year of full-time experience or, if their religion requires ordination, at least two years of part-time training following their ordination. A missionary must also be trained as such or have worked previously in this role.

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

### **Government Practices**

In April a judge sentenced two university students, Tarik Hassane and Suhaib Majeed, to life in prison for plotting to kill soldiers, police officers, and civilians in a drive-by attack in London inspired by ISIS. The judge stated it was deplorable for two British men to be so influenced by the “bloodthirsty version of Islam” presented by ISIS that they would carry out attacks against their fellow citizens. The two were found guilty of conspiracy to murder and preparation of terrorist acts.

In May the government again announced plans to introduce a counter-extremism bill. The bill would include a wide range of measures that would restrict what sponsors called religious extremist actions and behavior. By year’s end, the government had not provided any further detail, or laid out a timetable for implementation. In July parliament’s joint Select Committee on Human Rights published a report advising the government to rethink its counter-extremism strategy; use the existing extensive legal framework against those who promote religious extremism and violence; and introduce new legislation only if it could

demonstrate a significant gap in the law. Several organizations, including the Christian Institute and the National Secular Society, expressed concerns that the government's plans to introduce new orders under the counter-extremism law could target activist groups, including nonviolent figures from the political fringe.

In September as part of its counter-extremism strategy, the Scottish government's Independent Advisory Group on Hate Crimes published a report on religiously motivated crimes in Scotland. The organization found "facing prejudice and fear remained part of the everyday life of too many people in Scotland, escalating into direct personal violence and threat" particularly during high profile international events such as terrorist attacks committed by ISIS and violence involving Israelis and Palestinians. The report called on the Scottish government to consider whether existing criminal law provided sufficient protections for those at risk of hate crimes, and recommended a public education initiative be undertaken to improve understanding of the nature and extent of hate crimes

The Home Office examined the role of sharia courts operating in the UK, and whether they discriminated against women by legitimizing forced marriages and issuing unfair divorce settlements. It looked at best practices among sharia councils. The Home Office was scheduled to report its findings in 2017.

The House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee also conducted an inquiry into sharia councils, examining how they operated, how they resolved family and divorce disputes, and how they operated within the British legal system.

The government continued to provide religious accommodations for public servants when possible. Muslim employees of the prison service regularly took time off during their shifts to pray. The military generally provided adherents of minority religious groups with chaplains of their faith. The Chaplaincy Council monitored policy and practice relating to such matters.

In September the government introduced a national database, to which all school governors were required to subscribe, to increase transparency about who governed schools, following criticism and an official independent inquiry of the Department of Education for failing to keep any register of who governed its schools. The government had commissioned the inquiry following allegations from parents and teachers that some Birmingham schools were being infiltrated by fundamentalist Muslims through school board elections, who had replaced moderate staff, driven out staff, undermined head teachers, and interfered in the running of the schools. The official inquiry concluded there had been "coordinated, deliberate and

sustained action” by a number of individuals to introduce an “intolerant and aggressive Islamic ethos” into a few schools in the city, and that “there were those who either espoused, sympathized with, or failed to challenge extremist views.”

In November the Scottish government announced a consultation would be held on whether students aged 16 and above could opt out of religious observance in schools. The move followed criticism by the NGO Humanist Society Scotland, which pledged to seek a judicial review of the policy that required all students to attend religious observances unless they had the consent of their parents.

The government required schools to consider the needs of different cultures, races, and religions when setting dress code policy – recognizing and accommodating students who conformed to a particular dress code to manifest their beliefs. This included wearing or carrying specific religious artifacts, not cutting their hair, dressing modestly, or covering their head. Schools were required to balance the rights of individual students against the best interests of the school community as a whole.

On January 5, a Belfast judge acquitted evangelical Pastor James McConnell of charges – improper use of a public electronic communications network and causing a grossly offensive message to be sent by means of a public electronic communications network – for an anti-Islamic sermon he gave in 2014. During his sermon, he described Islam as “heathen,” “satanic,” and “a doctrine spawned in hell.” The Public Prosecution Service brought the case to trial because of the “characterization by McConnell of all Muslims as potential terrorists by virtue of their faith.” The court determined that while the comment was offensive, it did not reach the grossly offensive threshold required by the law for a criminal conviction. Following his acquittal, McConnell stated he was not “out to hurt [Muslims]...but [that he] is against their theology and what they believe in.”

On January 23, political party Britain First recorded and released on social media a video of approximately 20 party members on what they called “a Christian patrol,” walking through what they labelled as an “Islamist hotspot” in Luton. In the video, they handed out newspapers and confronted local Muslims in what Tell MAMA, an NGO countering anti-Muslim hate and bigotry, said was an “intimidating” fashion aimed at “inflaming” tensions. The next day, local Christian leaders handed out roses to Muslims in Luton and denounced the party’s actions. Then-Britain First leader Paul Golding was fined for “wearing a uniform with political objectives.” In May Britain First announced it was to launch a “direct action campaign against Muslim elected officials” targeting “where they live, work,



pray.” In the press release, the party stated Muslim politicians were “occupiers” intending to take over the country.

In response to the January confrontation between Britain First and the Muslim community in Luton, Bedfordshire Police applied for an injunction aiming to ban Britain First from every mosque in England and Wales, and which was granted in August. The party’s leaders and supporters were also banned from the town of Luton for “causing community tensions.” Nine days later, Britain First leader Paul Golding and four other party members confronted Muslims outside of a mosque in Cardiff. In November Golding stepped down from his position and was sentenced to eight weeks in jail for actions breaching the injunction.

During the year the Labour Party faced criticism for its members’ anti-Semitic acts and comments. In March the party suspended the membership of Vice-chairman Vicki Kirby in Woking, Surrey, for anti-Semitic tweets suggesting Adolf Hitler was a “Zionist God” and that Jews had “big noses.” Labour Member of Parliament (MP) Naz Shah was temporarily suspended in April from the party for comments made on her Facebook page before she became a MP in 2015. Under an outline of Israel which was superimposed on a map of the United States with the headline “Solution for Israel-Palestine conflict – relocate Israel into United States,” Shah commented “Problem solved.” In parliament, Shah “wholeheartedly” apologized for her actions and said she “deeply regretted them.” She wrote separately to the *Jewish Chronicle* newspaper, “The manner and tone of what I wrote in haste is not excusable. With the understanding of the issues I have now I would never have posted them. I have to own up to the fact that ignorance is not a defence.”

In April former London Mayor Ken Livingstone was suspended from the Labour Party after saying in a radio interview that Hitler supported Zionism. He said, “When Hitler won his election in 1932, his policy then was that Jews should be moved to Israel. He was supporting Zionism – this before he went mad and ended up killing six million Jews.” Livingstone refused to apologize and insisted he was right to say Hitler had, at one point, supported Zionism as a way of “getting rid” of Jewish people from Germany.

Labour Party member Jackie Walker was removed from her post as vice-chairman of campaigning group Momentum on October 3, following remarks in which she criticized Holocaust Memorial Day and counterterrorism security at Jewish schools, although Momentum stated she had not said anything anti-Semitic. Walker was previously suspended from the Labour Party and readmitted in May after saying Jews were the “chief financiers” of the African slave trade.

The Labour Party conducted two inquiries on anti-Semitism during the year following reports of the Labour Party secretly suspending up to 50 members for anti-Semitic remarks or actions during the year and a growing criticism that leader Jeremy Corbyn tolerated anti-Semitism among some supporters within the party.

In April former Director of the human rights NGO Liberty, Shami Chakrabarti, chaired an inquiry into anti-Semitism within the Labour Party. President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews Jonathan Arkush told the Chakrabarti inquiry that the Labour Party's shift to the left under Corbyn had "emboldened" anti-Semites on the far left to voice their prejudices.

Chakrabarti's report, issued in June, concluded the Labour Party was not "overrun by anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, or other forms of racism" but said there was an "occasionally toxic atmosphere" and "too much clear evidence of ignorant attitudes" and found evidence of "minority hateful or ignorant attitudes and behaviors festering within a sometimes bitter incivility of discourse." Chakrabarti made 20 recommendations for the Labour Party to follow, including: banning abusive references to any particular person or group based on actual or perceived physical characteristics and racial or religious tropes and stereotypes; resisting the use of Hitler, Nazi, and Holocaust metaphors, distortions and comparisons in debates about Israeli-Palestinian issues; procedural rule changes to improve the party's disciplinary process and the adoption and publication of a complaints procedure; the appointment of a general counsel to the Labour Party to give advice on issues including disciplinary matters and to take responsibility for instructing external lawyers. The Chakrabarti report received a largely negative reception from Jewish communities, with many Jewish civil society groups calling it a "whitewash" about anti-Semitism, although some Jewish leaders welcomed the recommendations for Labour Party members to curb anti-Semitic language.

Jewish Labour MP Ruth Smeeth walked out of the press launch of the Labour Party's report into allegations of anti-Semitism after Corbyn remained silent when one of his supporters accused Smeeth of colluding with the right-wing media. A chief rabbi called Corbyn "offensive" for appearing to compare Israel to ISIS at the same event when Corbyn said, "Our Jewish friends are no more responsible for the actions of Israel or the Netanyahu government than our Muslim friends are for those various self-styled Islamic states or organizations."

On October 16, the Parliamentary Home Affairs Select Committee published a cross-party report on anti-Semitism, which called on political parties to tackle this

“pernicious form of hate,” and focused its criticism on the Labour party and its leader, Jeremy Corbyn. The report stated Corbyn’s “lack of consistent leadership” on anti-Semitism created a “safe space” for those with “vile attitudes towards Jewish people.” “The failure of the Labour party consistently and effectively to deal with anti-Semitic incidents in recent years risks lending force to allegations that elements of the Labour movement are institutionally anti-Semitic,” the report concluded.

The Parliamentary Home Affairs Select Committee’s report also expressed concern at the volume and viciousness of anti-Semitism online, including countless examples directed at parliamentarians. The committee recommended government and political parties adopt an amended definition of anti-Semitism aimed at promoting a zero-tolerance approach while allowing free speech on Israeli and Palestinian issues to continue. The report criticized President of the National Union of Students Malia Bouattia for failing to take seriously the issue of anti-Semitism on university campuses. The report further noted recent surveys showed as many as one in 20 adults in the country could be characterized as “clearly anti-Semitic.” The report also noted a “worrying disparity in police-recorded anti-Semitic crime across the country, with virtually no cases recorded in some police force areas where thousands of Jewish people live.” The committee called on the National Police Chiefs’ Council to investigate what it considered under-reporting, and to provide more support to police forces to correct the disparity.

In October Baroness Jenny Tonge resigned from the Liberal Democrats Party following the party’s decision to suspend her after she chaired a parliamentary event for the Palestinian Return Center, at which one speaker compared Israel to ISIS, while another blamed Jews for the Holocaust. The Palestinian Return Center said the event inside parliament was part of its Balfour apology campaign – which called for the UK government to “officially apologize for its past colonial crimes in Palestine.”

In April police forces in England and Wales began recording anti-Muslim hate crimes as a separate category of crime, as it did with anti-Semitic incidents.

Following the Brexit referendum on June 23, Prime Minister David Cameron condemned the “despicable” rise of hate crime incidents throughout the country. Cameron said “we have a fundamental responsibility to bring our country together” after the vote and these hate crimes and attacks must be stamped out.

In January Trevor Phillips, the former head of the UK's equality commission, stated Muslims were unlike their non-Muslim neighbors and suggested the country might have to accept they may never integrate into British society, and accused those who promoted the idea that Muslims will eventually change and become more like other Britons of exhibiting the "deepest form of disrespect."

On May 7, the Labour Party's Sadiq Khan became London's first Muslim mayor, defeating his Conservative opponent, who – according to media – attempted to link Khan to religious extremism. "This election was not without controversy and I am so proud that London has today chosen hope over fear and unity over division," Khan stated in a speech following the election results.

In March Britain's then-Interior Minister Teresa May confirmed government funding of 13 million pounds (\$16 million) for the protection of the Jewish community during the following year. The funding would be put to such uses as providing guards at Jewish schools, synagogues, and other community sites. The government cited the increase in anti-Semitism in the country and in Europe as one factor in its decision to increase funding for the security of Jewish schools and synagogues.

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

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

There were numerous reports of religiously motivated hate crimes, including physical and verbal attacks against Muslim and Jewish community members, and vandalism against religious sites. Both governmental and civil society organizations reported an increase in religious hate crimes and incidents in England, Wales, and Scotland, and a decrease in Northern Ireland. In March a Sunni Muslim killed an Ahmadi Muslim shopkeeper outside the latter's store in Glasgow. The killer confessed a religious motivation and was sentenced to life in prison. A university expelled a Christian graduate student after he expressed opposition to gay marriage on social media because of his Christian beliefs.

According to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), based on data provided by the government, between April 2015 and March 2016 in England and Wales, there were 2,372 anti-Muslim crimes, 1,055 crimes against Christians and other religious groups such as Hindus and Sikhs; and 786 anti-Semitic crimes. In 2015, OSCE said civil society reported 96 violent attacks

against Muslims (45 in 2014) and 88 against Jews (83 in 2014), and 73 attacks against Muslim property (30 in 2014) and 152 against Jewish property (152 in 2014). The Home Office reported 4,400 religious hate crimes between March 2015 and March 2016, a 34 percent increase over the previous year (3,293). It reported a sharp rise in hate crimes in England and Wales following the Brexit referendum on June 23. According to figures from the National Police Chiefs' Council, there was a 41 percent increase in the number of religiously aggravated offenses in the month of July 2016 over the month of July 2015.

From April 2015 to March 2016, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service reported 581 charges of crimes with "religious aggravation" in Scotland (569 in the previous year). From March 2015 to April 2016, the Scottish government cited 134 anti-Muslim hate crimes (71 in the previous year), 299 charges of anti-Catholic crimes (328 in the previous year), and 141 anti-Protestant offenses (145 in the previous year). There were 50 religiously motivated incidents at Scottish soccer matches from April 2015 to April 2016 (48 in the previous year).

The Police Service of Northern Ireland reported 23 religiously motivated crimes in 2016, up from 20 in the previous year.

The Community Security Trust (CST), an NGO monitoring anti-Semitism, recorded 1,309 anti-Semitic incidents, a 36 percent increase from the previous year. The 1,309 incidents recorded in 2016 included 107 violent anti-Semitic assaults, an increase of 29 per cent from the 87 cases recorded in 2015. The most common single type of incident recorded by the CST in 2016 involved verbal abuse randomly directed at visibly Jewish people in public. In 385 incidents (29 percent of the overall total), the victims were attacked or abused while in public places. In at least 186 of these incidents, the victims were identified as "visibly Jewish," wearing religious or traditional clothing, or a school uniform or jewelry bearing Jewish symbols. The CST recorded 287 anti-Semitic incidents that involved social media in 2016, comprising 22 per cent of the overall total. Three-quarters of the 1,039 incidents happened in greater London and greater Manchester, the sites of the two largest Jewish communities in the country.

On March 24, Sunni Muslim Tanveer Ahmed killed Ahmadi Muslim shopkeeper Asad Shah outside Shah's store in Glasgow. Ahmed claimed he killed Shah because he "disrespected the Prophet Muhammad," and was sentenced to life in prison in August. Following the killing, there was an impromptu vigil outside Shah's store, held by the local community, which Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon attended. Shortly before his killing, Shah had posted on social media,

“Good Friday and very Happy Easter, especially to my beloved Christian nation. Let’s follow the real footstep of beloved holy Jesus Christ and get the real success in both worlds.” It is not known whether Shah’s overtures to the Christian community contributed to his death.

On February 18, Imam Jalal Uddin was killed walking through a children’s playground in Rochdale. Mohammed Hussain Syeedy, 21, of Rochdale was charged with murder and conspiracy to commit murder and found guilty on September 16. His alleged accomplice Mohammed Kadir left the country and was thought to be in Syria, according to court officials. Official reports indicated Uddin may have been targeted for practicing *taweez* faith healing, a form of Islamic healing in Rochdale's Bangladeshi community, which ISIS considered to be “black magic.”

On June 14, two men assaulted an Afghan taxi driver in his cab. The driver, who suffered injuries to his head and body, reported the perpetrators said they were attacking him for being a Muslim. Police arrested two people in connection with the crime.

In October a white male assaulted a Muslim woman on London’s Oxford Street, trying to remove her hijab by force after she refused to take it off. Westminster Police were investigating security footage at year’s end. In a separate incident in December an attacker in Chingford dragged a Muslim woman along the pavement by her hijab. She was taken to the hospital. NGO Tell MAMA called the incident “horrific” and said women were being disproportionately targeted in attacks on Muslims. A spokesperson for the NGO said, “For years data collected by us has shown that visible Muslim women are the ones most targeted for street-based anti-Muslim hatred.”

On December 12, a man reportedly stabbed a passenger on a train at Forest Hill station in southeast London before chasing people outside while waving a knife in his hand and shouting, “Who is a Muslim? I want to kill a Muslim.” The victim suffered a punctured lung and wounds to his head and torso. Police identified the suspect as Adrian Brown, 38, and by year’s end was remanded in custody. His next court appearance was scheduled for January 2017. In January three men attacked three Orthodox Jews in London, pelting them with small gas canisters and yelling “Hitler is on the way to you, heil Hitler, heil Hitler!” at them. There were no injuries.

A Muslim human rights lawyer reported receiving death threats after he condemned violence and extremism and called for unity within the Muslim

community following the killing of Asad Shah. The lawyer reported receiving death threats by phone in the middle of the night and suffered abuse on social media. Police were investigating the case.

In August a mosque in Rotherham received a letter stating, “Next time it will be a bomb, you Muslim scum, 1488.” NGO Tell MAMA stated the threat was sent by extremist and far-right groups, using the neo-Nazi terminology of 1488. According to the Anti-Defamation League, the “14” represents 14 words of the slogan, “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children,” and the “88” stands for “heil Hitler.” The incident was reported to the police and the NGO urged the public of Rotherham to remain vigilant.

A graduate student studying social work was expelled from Sheffield University after voicing opposition to gay marriage in a Facebook discussion. He stated that homosexual activity was contrary to his Christian beliefs and reported suffering religious discrimination from the university. At a university hearing, officials stated he was entitled to his opinion but his comment and beliefs would affect his ability to advance in the social work profession and, therefore, he was expelled from the university. The chief executive from the Christina Legal Centre condemned the ruling and stated, “This is just the latest step in a long line of cases in which professions have been closed off to Christians.”

In March Arsenal soccer fans chanted and shouted anti-Semitic slogans and sang about the Holocaust and Auschwitz in the London Underground on the way to a match. Passengers notified the police but stated they did not adequately respond to the incident.

According to a study published in June by the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, 32 percent of approximately 300 Jewish respondents living in Scotland voluntarily reported a heightened level of anxiety, discomfort, or vulnerability, even though the survey did not directly ask them such a question. The study’s methodology included focus group discussions and questionnaires. Four in five respondents said the events in the Middle East during the summer of 2014 had negatively affected their experience of being Jewish in Scotland, while 20 respondents (7 percent) said they kept their Jewish identity secret.

In November a protest occurred against a proposed mosque in Bolton. Protest organizer Bruan Morgan said, “Today was about highlighting the corruption of the council, the Islamification of the town, the mosque-building program” and denied the protest was “racist.” According to Tell MAMA, photos showed protesters

giving the Nazi salute. The protest and its 100 supporters dispersed after 90 minutes.

In January Muslim women students in Darlington, in northeast England, appealed to MP Jenny Chapman saying that anti-Muslim hatred had increased after the November 2015 Paris attacks. They gave the example of Muslim women wearing veils having been spat upon. Chapman condemned the “disgraceful” incidents and stressed the importance of reporting hate crimes. She stated, “It’s not acceptable and we all need to stand up to this together.”

In February the Muslim Council of Britain opened the doors of 92 mosques across the country to the public in a bid to counter negative stereotypes about Muslims. Thousands of people participated.

In an August convention of Ahmadi Muslims in Afton in Hampshire, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the Worldwide Caliph of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, led a crowd of some 30,000 in a “vow of peace and obedience.” He also stated, “Let it be clear that [terrorists] are not practicing Islam, rather it seems as though they have invented their own hate-filled and poisonous religion.”

On July 27, Heavenly Culture World Peace Restoration of Light, an international organization, hosted the 11th UK World Alliance of Religions’ Peace Office in the London Spirituality Center. Muslim, Sikh, International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Jain, and Buddhist religious leaders gathered to discuss the commonalities within their scriptures in order to spread a message of peace.

On November 15, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and UK Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis launched an initiative entitled In Good Faith, which began with an all-day conference for priests and rabbis serving similar local areas in England. The aim was to create relationships between pairs of priests and rabbis and discuss the challenges of creating and sustaining thriving faith communities, combating religious extremism, developments in the Holy Land and implications for interreligious relations, and opportunities to contribute to the common good together. Archbishop Welby acknowledged the Church of England’s own history of intolerance and deep-seated anti-Semitism and stated that he was ready to be answerable and held accountable for both “implicit” and “willful” anti-Semitism.

On August 28, unknown individuals destroyed 13 Jewish graves in Belfast. Police investigated eight youths who knocked over headstones and in some cases used hammers to destroy markers. Officials condemned the incident and local



authorities offered assistance to rectify the damage. A senior Jewish community member in Belfast expressed concern to local media outlets that the incident, coupled with anti-Semitic vandalism on other Jewish sites in Belfast and other cities, represented a rise in anti-Semitism in the region.

On July 18, a Bristol court jailed two men and gave suspended sentences to two women who pleaded guilty to religiously aggravated public order offenses in connection with a January 18 incident at Bristol Jamia Mosque in Totterdown, when the perpetrators hung pig meat outside the mosque and shouted insults at those praying inside. After the incident, Chief Inspector Kevin Rowlands said “behavior of this kind is totally unacceptable. Our communities have the right to live and worship peacefully without fear of being targeted for their race or religion.” All four were given a restraining order preventing them from going anywhere within 300 feet of a mosque in England or Wales for 10 years.

In January a man was arrested on suspicion of “racially or religiously aggravated provocation” by Lancashire police after he dumped two pig heads outside an Islamic girls’ school in Lancashire in December 2015. Police labeled the incident as a hate crime against Muslims.

In June Belfast police investigated an arson attack on a Jewish war memorial. Two containers filled with flammable liquid were set on fire next to the memorial. Pastor Paul Burns, of Jewish heritage, from the Adullam Christian Fellowship in Belfast condemned the attack and said Belfast’s Jewish community had been “deeply hurt, deeply alarmed” by the incident. Police treated the incident as a hate crime and were investigating the case at year’s end.

In September an object was thrown at the central mosque in Edinburgh, causing minor fire damage to a door. A 28-year-old man was charged with arson aggravated by religious and racial prejudice.

On September 5, the Belfast Islamic Center was defaced with paint. Police were investigating the incident as a hate crime. The Alliance Party and Sinn Fein Party both condemned the vandalism and called for help identifying the perpetrators.

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

The Ambassador and other embassy representatives and the U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom discussed religious freedom, intolerance, and protection of minorities with members of parliament, and the

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, including Minister for Human Rights Baroness Joyce Anelay, religious leaders, and representatives of NGOs.

In March the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism met with the UK Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues, Jewish community leaders, and civil society entities to discuss best practices to combat anti-Semitism. The embassy worked with the Tony Blair Faith Foundation Roundtable to host a discussion with the Special Envoy on countering rising religious hatred.

In September the embassy hosted a roundtable on hate crimes and hate speech, to which participants from the Muslim and Jewish community attended with Home Office, Foreign Office, Ministry of Justice, and Crown Prosecution Service representatives. Participants shared successes and ideas for improving society's education of religious tolerance, as well as ideas for how the government and social media companies could prevent the spread of religiously motivated hate speech.

The Ambassador and other embassy representatives and the U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom discussed religious intolerance and protection of religious minorities with religious leaders, and representatives of NGOs, including CST and Tell MAMA.

Embassy and consulates general officials engaged Muslim audiences, including student and youth groups, in a series of talks and discussions about the portrayal of Muslims and anti-Muslim sentiment in the media, and underscored the importance of religious tolerance. The Ambassador hosted a meeting with Muslim teens to discuss Muslim integration in the country. Separately, the embassy hosted a viewing of the film *My Son, the Jihadi*. More than 100 people, including a mix of Muslim civil society members and journalists, attended the event.

In November the Consul General in Edinburgh hosted an interfaith Thanksgiving dinner attended by representatives of the Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, and Bahai communities. A consulate officer discussed U.S. support for the work of Scottish religious leaders bringing together communities across all faith traditions.

The consulate general in Belfast gathered religious leaders on Religious Freedom Day, January 16, to discuss challenges in their communities. Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Ireland, Methodist, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and Sikh leaders participated.