

DENMARK 2020 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution guarantees the right of individuals to worship according to their beliefs. It establishes the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) as the national church, which has privileges not available to other religious groups. Other religious groups must register with the government to receive tax and other benefits. Muslim and Jewish leaders expressed concerns over the reintroduction of a resolution, with significant public and political support, to ban ritual circumcision of boys. Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and the leader of the largest opposition party both opposed the resolution, which was scheduled for a parliamentary debate and vote in early 2021. Residents in select communities throughout the country filed discrimination lawsuits after they faced evictions under the government's "ghetto" law regulations, which critics said targeted Muslim-majority areas. The same regulations required parents in the "ghettos" to send their young children to government day care and receive instruction in "Danish values," including in Easter and Christmas traditions, in order to be eligible to receive social welfare payments. Parliament was considering a bill, reportedly with widespread support, that would require religious sermons to be translated into Danish to prevent the development of "parallel societies." At year's end, there were 14 foreign preachers on a government lists banning them from entering the country. The Pew Research Center categorized the country as having "high government restrictions on religion," a ranking the Pew Center attributed in part to the government's ban on face coverings.

Police reported 180 religiously motivated crimes in 2019, the most recent year for which data were available, 61 percent more than in 2018. There were 109 crimes against Muslims, 51 against Jews, eight against Christians, and 12 against members of other religions or belief groups. Most incidents involved harassment, hate speech, and vandalism, including desecration of cemeteries. In separate incidents, anti-Muslim protestors set a Quran on fire in a predominantly Muslim neighborhood, a man repeatedly kicked and punched a teenaged Muslim girl and tried to remove her headscarf, another man forcibly removed a Muslim woman's face covering, and a Jehovah's Witness was slapped while he was proselytizing. In January, unidentified persons vandalized a mosque in Copenhagen, and in September, on Yom Kippur, members of the Nordic Resistance Movement put up posters in 16 cities accusing the Jewish community of pedophilia in connection with circumcision.

The U.S. Ambassador and other embassy officials met with government representatives, including members of parliament and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Office of the Special Representative for Freedom of Religion of Belief, to discuss the importance of religious freedom. Embassy officials engaged with religious leaders from the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities throughout the year to discuss issues, including the debate on the proposed circumcision ban, the ban on ritual slaughter, the proposed bill requiring the translation of sermons into Danish, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their faith practices. They also met with media to discuss the proposed circumcision ban. In their discussions, embassy officials stressed the importance of religious freedom and tolerance.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 5.9 million (midyear 2020 estimate). According to an October estimate by the government's Statistics Denmark, 74.1 percent of all residents are ELC members. The Danish government does not collect data on religious affiliation outside of the ELC, but estimates that there are between 280,000 and 310,000 Muslims living in the country, accounting for 4.7 to 5.3 percent of the population. According to a January estimate by the University of Copenhagen's Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, there are 320,000 Muslims. Muslims are concentrated in the largest cities, particularly Copenhagen, Odense, and Aarhus. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimates other religious groups, each constituting less than 1 percent of the population, include, in descending order of size, Roman Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, Serbian Orthodox Christians, Jews, Baptists, Buddhists, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Pentecostals, members of the Baha'i Faith, and nondenominational Christians. According to a survey released in October by the Ministry of Immigration and Integration, approximately 11 percent of the population does not identify as belonging to a religious group or identifies as atheist. Although estimates vary, the Jewish Community in Denmark states there are approximately 7,000 Jews in the country, most of whom live in the Copenhagen metropolitan area.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution declares the ELC as the country's established church, which shall receive state support and to which the reigning monarch must belong. The

constitution also states individuals shall be free to form congregations to worship according to their beliefs, providing nothing “at variance with good morals or public order shall be taught or done.” It specifies that “rules for religious bodies dissenting from the established Church shall be laid down by statute.” The constitution stipulates no person may be deprived of access to the full enjoyment of civil and political rights because of religious beliefs and that these beliefs shall not be used to evade compliance with civic duty. It prohibits requiring individuals to make personal financial contributions to religious denominations to which they do not adhere.

The law prohibits hate speech, including religious hate speech, and specifies as penalties a fine (amount unspecified) or a maximum of one year’s imprisonment. If a religious leader disseminates the hate speech, the penalties increase to a fine or a maximum of three years’ imprisonment.

The ELC is the only religious group that receives funding through state grants and voluntary, tax-deductible contributions paid through payroll deduction by its members. Voluntary taxes account for an estimated 86 percent of the ELC’s operating budget; the remaining 14 percent is provided through a combination of voluntary donations by congregants and government grants. Members of other recognized religious communities cannot contribute via payroll deduction but may donate to their own community voluntarily and receive a tax deduction. The ELC and other state-recognized religious communities carry out registration of civil unions, births, and deaths for their members.

The Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs is responsible for granting official status to religious groups other than the ELC through recognition by royal decree (for groups recognized prior to 1970) or through official registration. The law requires individual congregations within a religious community to formally register with the government to receive tax benefits. Religious communities must comply with annual reporting requirements in order to maintain their government recognition. According to the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs, there are 448 religious groups and congregations the government officially recognizes or that are affiliated with recognized groups: 338 Christian groups, 66 Muslim (including the Alevi community, which the government does not categorize as Muslim), 16 Buddhist, seven Hindu, three Jewish, and 18 other groups and congregations, including the Baha’i Faith and followers of the indigenous Norse belief system Forn Sidr.

Recognized religious groups have the right to perform legal marriage ceremonies, name and baptize children with legal effect, issue legal death certificates, obtain

residence permits for foreign clergy, establish cemeteries, and receive various value added tax exemptions. The law allows only religious communities recognized before 1970 to issue birth, baptismal, and marriage certificates. This privilege will expire for all religious communities except the ELC in 2023. Members of other religious communities or individuals unaffiliated with a recognized religious group may have birth and death certificates issued only by the health authority.

Groups not recognized by either royal decree or the government registration process, such as the Church of Scientology, are entitled to engage in religious practices without any kind of public registration. Members of those groups, however, must marry in a civil ceremony in addition to any religious ceremony. Unrecognized religious groups are not granted full tax-exempt status, but members may deduct contributions to these groups from their taxes.

The law codifies the registration process for religious communities other than the ELC and treats equally those recognized by royal decree and those approved through registration. A religious community must have at least 150 adult members, while a congregation, which the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs considers a group within one of the major world religions (Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam), must have at least 50 adult members to be eligible for approval. For congregations located in sparsely populated regions, such as Greenland, the government applies a lower population threshold, which varies according to the total population of the region.

Religious groups seeking registration must submit to the Faith Registry in the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs a document on the group's central traditions; a description of its most important rituals; a copy of its rules, regulations, and organizational structure; an audited financial statement (which it must submit annually); information about the group's leadership; and a statement on the number of adult members permanently residing in the country. Groups also must have formal procedures for membership and make their teachings available to all members. The Ministry of Justice makes the final decision on registration applications after receiving recommendations from a group consisting of a lawyer, religious historian, sociologist of religion, and nonordained theologian. Religious groups that do not submit the annual financial statement or other required information may lose their registration status.

The law prohibits masks and face coverings, including burqas and *niqabs*, in public spaces. Violators face fines ranging from 1,000 to 10,000 Danish kroner (\$160-

\$1,600). Fines are 1,000 kroner (\$160) for the first offense, 2,000 kroner (\$330) for the second, 5,000 kroner (\$820) for the third, and 10,000 kroner (\$1,600) for the fourth and subsequent offenses.

The law bans judges from wearing religious symbols such as headscarves, turbans, skullcaps, and large crucifixes while in court proceedings.

The law requires persons to shake hands during their naturalization ceremonies to obtain Danish citizenship.

All public and private schools, including religious schools, receive government financial support. The Ministry of Education has oversight authority of private schools, which includes supervision of teaching standards, regulatory compliance, and financial screening. The Board of Education and Quality conducts systematic monitoring and has authority to issue directives to individual institutions, withhold grants, and terminate financial support. Public schools must teach ELC theology. The instructors are public school teachers rather than persons provided by the ELC. Religion classes are compulsory in grades 1-9, although students may be exempted if a parent presents a request in writing. No alternative classes are offered. The ELC course curriculum in grades 1-6 focuses on life philosophies and ethics, biblical stories, and the history of Christianity. In grades 7-9, the curriculum adds a module on world religions. The course is optional in grade 10. If the student is 15 or older, the student and parent must jointly request the student's exemption. Private schools are also required to teach religion classes in grades 1-9, including world religions in grades 7-9. The religion classes taught in grades 1-9 need not include ELC theology. Collective prayer in schools is allowed, but each school must regulate prayer in a neutral, nondiscriminatory manner, and students must be allowed to opt out of participating.

Military service, typically for four months, is mandatory for all physically fit men older than 18. There is an exemption for conscientious objectors, including on religious grounds, allowing for alternative civilian service. An individual wishing to perform alternative service as a conscientious objector must apply within eight weeks of receiving notice of military service. The application is adjudicated by the Conscientious Objector Administration and must demonstrate that military service of any kind is incompatible with the individual's conscience. Alternative service may take place in various social and cultural institutions, peace movements, organizations related to the United Nations, churches and ecumenical organizations, and environmental organizations.

The law prohibits ritual slaughter of animals, including kosher and halal slaughter, without prior stunning and limits ritual slaughter with prior stunning to cattle, sheep, goats, and chickens. All slaughter must take place at a slaughterhouse. Slaughterhouses practicing ritual slaughter are obliged to register with the Veterinary and Food Administration. Violations of this law are punishable by a fine or up to four months in prison. Halal and kosher meat may be imported.

The law requires clergy members with legal authorization to officiate marriages to have an adequate mastery of the Danish language and to complete a two-day course on family law and civil rights administered by the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs. The law also requires that religious workers “must not behave or act in a way that makes them unworthy to exercise public authority.” Religious workers the government perceives as not complying with these provisions may be stripped of their right to perform marriages.

By law, the Ministry of Immigration and Integration may prevent foreign religious figures who do not already have a residence permit from entering the country if it determines their presence poses a threat to public order. In such cases, the ministry places the individuals on a national sanctions list and bars them from entry into the country for two years, a period which it may extend.

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

Government Practices

In September, 11 members of parliament (MPs) representing 11 minority political parties generally regarded as both left and right of center, and including a member from the ruling Social Democratic Party, reintroduced, for the third year in a row, a citizen proposal to ban ritual circumcision of boys under the age of 18.

Parliamentarian Simon Emil Ammitzboll-Bille introduced a second proposal to ban circumcision of minors, with a substantively identical text. If adopted, the resolutions, which call for a criminal penalty of up to six years in prison for violators, would require the government to introduce legislation banning circumcision of minors. The Danish Society of Anesthesiology and Intensive Care Medicine presented its case to parliament in support of the ban. According to an opinion poll conducted by Danish research consultancy Megafon, approximately 86 percent of the public supported the ban.

Prime Minister Frederiksen of the Social Democratic Party opposed the circumcision ban in a press conference on September 11. She stated that, while

she personally disagreed with ritual male circumcision, the country should not limit the religious rites of the Jewish community and that the circumcision debate could not be separated from Europe's history of Jewish persecution. Following the Prime Minister's statement, Jakob Ellemann-Jensen, the leader of the Liberal Party, the largest opposition party, publicly supported the Prime Minister's statement, agreeing that Denmark should not be the first European country to ban the practice. Following Frederiksen's and Ellemann-Jensen's statements, national daily *Kristeligt Dagblad* reported that a parliamentary majority opposed the ban and that the legislation would likely fail.

Henri Goldstein, the chairman of the Jewish Community in Denmark and a physician, said in an interview with the *Jerusalem Post* that the Jewish Community continued to see the proposed ban as "the worst threat since World War II." Naveed Baig, an imam and theologian, expressed shock at the wide public support for the ban in an interview with *Kristeligt Dagblad*. Other national dailies, including *Politiken* and *Jyllands-Posten*, reported on the absence of the Muslim community in the public responses to the legislation. Muslim leaders said that many Muslims remained intentionally quiet, as they felt their voices would hurt the case for ritual circumcision due to strong anti-Muslim sentiments in society. Jarun Demirtas, a nurse who supported the proposed ban and an opinion writer for newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, told the paper, "If it was only the Muslims [who were affected], we would have a majority for a ban on circumcision in one day." Representatives from the Muslim and Jewish communities said that even if the proposed ban failed again due to the Prime Minister's intervention, they remained concerned about the proposal and its annual reemergence in parliamentary debates. The proposed legislation was scheduled for a parliamentary debate and vote in early 2021.

Representatives of the Muslim and Jewish communities continued to express frustration at the country's limitation on religious slaughter of livestock but stated that halal and kosher meat could be imported from within the EU.

In April, the independent, state-funded Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) published a report by senior researcher Eva Maria Lassen, *Limitations to Freedom of Religion or Belief in Denmark*, that cited an upward trend of legislative constraints on religious expression. According to Lassen's research, recent legislation, such as the handshake requirement for new citizens, had limited non-Christian religious practices, particularly those of Muslim and Jewish minorities. In addition to the bans on ritual slaughter and face coverings, Lassen cited five acts passed in 2016 and 2017 targeting "religious preachers who seek to undermine

Danish Law and Values” as examples of increasing governmental limitations on religious freedom. One such act introduced a mandatory course in Danish family law, freedom, and democracy for non-EU religious preachers. Lassen stated that these legislative amendments disproportionately targeted religious preachers, and not “other leaders with comparable authority.”

In November, the Pew Research Center categorized the country as having “high government restrictions on religion,” the middle level in the report’s three-tiered system (low, high, and very high government restrictions). According to Pew, the country owed its ranking in part to the government’s ban on facial coverings.

The government fined two women for violating the ban on face coverings. In one case, in January, a local court fined a woman 1,000 kroner (\$160) for wearing a niqab in a shopping center in Odense in October 2019. In response to the coronavirus pandemic, the Ministry of Justice issued guidance stating the law did not apply to face coverings that served specific health purposes, such as masks worn to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Leaders of the opposition Danish People’s Party (DPP), generally described as right of center, called repeatedly for a ban on the Islamic call to prayer throughout the country. A 2019 parliamentary bill to ban the call to prayer lapsed without a vote. Martin Henriksen, a DPP board member, wrote in an opinion article for the newspaper *Dit Overblik* that Islamic calls to prayer should lead to deportation. ELC priest Niels Hviid defended Muslims’ right to religious expression; journalist Paula Larrain stated that if the Islamic prayer call was “noise,” then so was the sound of church bells.

The Ministry of Transport, Building, and Housing continued to implement the government’s parallel society program, which included the elimination by 2030 of “ghettos” (a term referring to neighborhoods of majority non-Western immigrants, which media widely interpreted to mean Muslim-majority communities). Authorities withheld quarterly benefits of up to 4,557 kroner (\$750) from parents in “ghetto” communities who refused to send toddlers over the age of one to government-funded day care to be taught “Danish values,” including Christmas and Easter traditions.

Asif Mehmood, a Muslim immigrant from Pakistan, and 11 of his neighbors filed a lawsuit challenging the parallel societies program with support from the Open Society Justice initiative. The government declared Mehmood’s four-block Copenhagen housing complex, Mjølnerparken, a “ghetto.” According to reports by

U.S. broadcaster National Public Radio (NPR) and UK newspaper *The Guardian*, the government wanted to sell Mjølnerparken to developers and told residents they would be offered equivalent housing nearby. NPR reported Mehmood and some political opposition parties, however, were skeptical of the offer, given the relatively low cost of their rent-controlled housing compared with market prices in surrounding areas. According to *The Guardian*, residents who refused to leave could be evicted.

Samiah Qasim, a social worker and Muslim resident of Mjølnerparken, told al-Jazeera television in January that she had received “a letter saying that since I’m from a ‘ghetto’ area, I have to sign up to send my child to this institution for 25 hours a week to learn ‘Danish values’.... If we refuse, we don’t get any benefits or child support.” Samiah added, “This has nothing to do with me as a mother. It is based simply on my address. If I moved over to the other side of the road, I would not be having any of these problems.” Al-Jazeera cited another Mjølnerparken resident as stating, “I felt Danish until recently. Now I feel I’m not a part of this society. The politicians created their ‘parallel society’ with the bad reputation they’ve given Mjølnerparken so that ethnic Danes don’t want to live here.”

Residents of a public housing complex in Helsingør accused housing authorities of illegal discrimination after they told 96 families they had to relocate from the majority-Muslim neighborhood due to building renovations. The residents challenged their removal in court, but in November, the Helsingør City Court ruled that no discrimination had taken place and those evicted must vacate the property by April 2021. In October, the UN Office of the Human Rights Commissioner issued a statement urging the country to stop the sale of residences classified as “ghettos” until the government determined whether the subsequent evictions violated citizens’ human rights. A similar case occurred in Vollsmose, a suburban town on the island of Fyn, where 118 residents of a majority-Muslim residential community were also contesting eviction notices.

In October, the ruling Social Democratic Party announced plans to introduce a bill, with strong parliamentary support, in 2021 that would require the translation of all religious sermons into Danish. The government stated that this legislation would stop the development of parallel societies. Minority religious leaders from the Muslim, Jewish, and Catholic faiths said the legislation would create challenges for their large immigrant communities, who often preferred to worship in their native languages. ELC bishops for the dioceses of Copenhagen, Ribe, and Haderslev publicly opposed the proposal. The legislation would also affect ELC services given in the Greenlandic or Faroese languages.

In February, authorities denied a man citizenship after he refused to shake hands with the government representative during his naturalization ceremony. Badar Shah, the government representative and a politician in the Alternative Party, said that, while the refusal to shake hands was not connected to gender, it was “a silent protest” against the handshake requirement, which religious leaders said unfairly targeted Islamic religious practices. Some municipalities, including Syddjurs and Hedensted in Jutland, subsequently staged the ceremony with both a male and female government representative present so that new citizens could choose to shake hands with an official of the same gender. In April, the government suspended the handshake requirement due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In July, the Islamic Faith Community sent an official complaint to parliament’s Standing Orders Committee in connection with remarks made by MPs Morten Messerschmidt and Pernille Vermund during legislative debate on public Islamic calls to prayer. Vermund described Islam as a “weed,” and Messerschmidt stated that increased Muslim populations in the country had “worsened problems.”

The immigration service listed 14 persons, including four U.S. citizens, on the national sanctions list of religious preachers barred from entering the country. The Ministry of Immigration and Integration stated the individuals threatened the nation’s public order but did not provide additional details. Entry bans remain in force for two years from the date of issuance and may be extended. Foreign nationals holding a residence permit, along with European Union (EU) nationals and residents, could not be placed on the sanctions list.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, some politicians and media commented on outbreaks among Muslim communities. In an August opinion article for online news site Altinget, Johanne Thorup Dalgaard wrote that the country was scapegoating Muslims for virus transmission when most Danes, including the author herself, were guilty of attending graduation parties and flouting social distancing guidelines throughout the summer months. Members of the Muslim community said politicians had “weaponized” cases of COVID-19 among Muslims early in the year to suggest that Muslims did not follow or respect public health guidelines. After reports of high infection rates among majority Muslim communities in the spring, New Right MP Pernille Vermund wrote on Facebook, “They should not destroy our freedom,” referring to an outbreak in the Aarhus Muslim community following a funeral attended by 300 to 400 persons and the potential for additional COVID-19 restrictions. MP and former Immigration Minister Inger Stojberg criticized the Muslim community’s participation in the

funeral, and her supporters agreed, writing on Facebook, “Use water cannons against [Muslims],” and “shoot them [with water cannons].”

The government continued to provide armed security, consisting of police and military personnel, for Jewish sites it considered to be at high risk of terrorist attack, including Copenhagen’s synagogue, community center, and schools, along with the Israeli embassy and ambassador’s residence.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

According to police statistics in a report released in late October, there were 180 religiously motivated crimes in 2019, the most recent year for which statistics were available, a 61 percent increase over the 112 crimes reported in 2018. Police officials stated that, while they could not be sure of the causes of the sharp increase in hate crimes, it might be tied to the terrorist attacks at mosques in New Zealand, as well as to increased reporting resulting from the “Stop Hate” campaign by police. National Police Chief Thorkild Fogde described the increase in hate crimes (among which religiously motivated crimes increased the most) as “remarkable, and something we must take very seriously.”

Of the 180 religiously motivated crimes, 109 were against Muslims (63 in 2018), 51 against Jews (26), 8 against Christians (14) and 12 against other religions (nine). Police did not provide a precise breakdown of religiously motivated crimes by type of incident. According to an official in the police National Prevention Center, religiously motivated crimes in 2019 increased in November on and around the anniversary of Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass) in Nazi Germany. There were at least two reports in that year of Muslim women who were physically assaulted, as well as verbally harassed. In one case, a man repeatedly kicked and punched a teenage girl while he yelled anti-Muslim insults and tried to remove her headscarf. Police opened an investigation into the case but did not publish further information on its outcome. In another case, a man pulled off a woman’s face covering and directed anti-Muslim insults at her. According to police reports, anti-Muslim protestors set a Quran on fire in a predominately Muslim neighborhood. In other incidents, a male Jehovah’s Witness was slapped and had a car door slammed on him while “engaging in religious activities in the street,” according to the police report, which added, without more details, that the perpetrator was sentenced for committing a hate crime. In another case, an individual vandalized more than 80 gravestones in a church cemetery with anti-Christian graffiti. The perpetrator had previously been convicted of a similar offense. Other examples of religiously motivated hate crimes in 2019 highlighted in the police report included

vandalism against Jewish cemeteries and the posting of Stars of David on mailboxes and houses.

Representatives of Copenhagen's Jewish Society said they received 37 reports of anti-Semitic incidents in 2019, 8 percent fewer than in 2018 (45). The Jewish Society noted that while there were fewer cases reported to them, the number of cases reported to police increased. The incidents, in descending order of frequency, included anti-Semitic speech, vandalism, threats, and discrimination. Two incidents were related to the topic of circumcision. Seven cases occurred on the anniversary of Kristallnacht and included the placement of Stars of David and the word "Jew" on Jewish families' and Jewish-affiliated organizations' mailboxes or houses throughout the country. In one case, a Jewish family in the greater Copenhagen area found papers outside their house and in their mailbox that included a drawing of Hitler's face, swastikas, and derogatory statements such as "stingy pigs." In another case, three sixth-grade students in northern Jutland repeatedly harassed a Jewish girl in their class by, for example, etching swastikas into the girl's desk and chair, drawing swastikas on the classroom blackboard, and posting "Out with the Jewish girl" in a group WhatsApp chat. The girl's parents reported the case to the school, which suspended the perpetrators.

Rasmus Paludan, a lawyer and founder of the Stram Kurs (Hard Line) political party, which was not represented in parliament and cited in its platform "the unacceptable behavior exhibited by Muslims" and what it described as the need to deport all non-Western residents, continued to hold anti-Muslim rallies, though fewer than in 2019, in Muslim-majority immigrant neighborhoods across the country. At one demonstration in Aarhus in June in which press reports estimated 50 to 100 persons participated, demonstrators threw stones and fireworks at police, which was followed by further violence. One man broke down a police barrier and threatened police with a knife. Also in June, a court found Paludan guilty of 14 counts of racism, defamation, and reckless driving. The court disbarred Paludan for three years, suspended his driver's license, and sentenced him to one month in prison. Paludan was appealing the verdict at year's end.

On September 28, Yom Kippur, members of the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) put up posters in 16 cities, including Copenhagen, accusing the Jewish community of pedophilia in connection with circumcision. Affected municipalities removed the posters.

In August, the public transportation company DSB received complaints after it ran a political advertisement for the DPP that read, "No to Islam." The advertisement

appeared in the company's magazine *Ud & Se*, which was available on public trains. DSB removed the ad after receiving a complaint from a train customer.

In January, unknown persons vandalized the exterior of the Røvsingsgade Mosque in northwest Copenhagen, spray-painting anti-Islamic epithets such as, "Islam = cancer," and "[a derogatory slur for Muslim immigrants] are garbage." A spokesperson for the mosque, Somaia Hamdi, said the vandalism sparked fear in the Muslim community.

On October 16, the Randers City Court convicted two men connected with the NRM of a religiously motivated hate crime for desecrating a Jewish graveyard in Randers in 2019, on the anniversary of Kristallnacht, covering more than 80 tombstones in green paint, turning over six tombstones, and painting "Jew" on one grave. The court sentenced one man to one year in prison. At year's end, the second man still awaited sentencing, pending a psychological evaluation. In 2019, police had arrested the men and charged them with vandalism and, preliminarily, a hate crime under the "racism clause" for "abusing a certain population group based on their religion."

Following the killing of a teacher in France in October after he showed his class cartoons of the prophet Muhammad, a Danish primary school teacher expressed solidarity with the French teacher on social media, stating she would use cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in her classroom to teach about freedom of speech and encouraged other teachers to do the same. The post sparked a renewal of the debate about whether the cartoons should form a part of the national curriculum, and the author received multiple threats of violence. MPs from across the political spectrum, including the Social Democratic, Liberal, Danish People's, and New Right Parties, generally described, respectively, as left-of-center, right-of-center, right-wing, and right-wing, supported the idea of using the cartoons in classes, while Claus Hjortdal, the head of the school principals' union, cited safety concerns and warned against showing the cartoons in school. In an opinion piece in the newspaper *Information*, graduate student Negin Mohammadzadeh al Majidi wrote, "As a normal Muslim Dane, I get upset every time I see the Muhammad cartoons." He added that "society misses the nuance" when it debates the issue, alienating average Muslims and not just radicalized ones.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The U.S. Ambassador and other embassy officials met with MPs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Office of the Special Representative for Freedom of Religion

of Belief to emphasize the importance the United States places on religious freedom and to discuss the ongoing debate on the proposed circumcision ban.

Embassy officials engaged with religious leaders from the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities throughout the year to discuss the communities' efforts to address religious freedom and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their faith practices. Embassy officials met with representatives from the Muslim World League to discuss challenges for Muslim residents, including anti-Muslim sentiment. Representatives of the Jewish Community discussed concerns about increasing anti-Semitism and the perspectives of community members on religious freedom. The embassy discussed with both groups their concerns over the proposed circumcision ban. Embassy officials also met with Christian groups, including representatives from the ELC and Roman Catholic Church. In addition, embassy officials met with media, including the Danish Broadcasting Corporation, TV2, and newspapers *Berlingske* and *Kristeligt Dagblad*, to discuss issues of religious freedom, including the proposed ban on circumcision. The embassy engaged with interfaith organizations, including the nongovernmental organizations Religion and Society and DIHR, to discuss local efforts to increase interfaith dialogue and understanding.

On October 19, the Charge d'Affaires hosted an interfaith event with religious leaders from the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish faith traditions to discuss issues pertaining to religious freedom and the groups' concerns, including the ban on ritual slaughter, the proposed circumcision ban, and the proposed bill requiring the translation of sermons into Danish.