

# FRANCE 2021 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

## Executive Summary

The constitution and the law protect the right of individuals to choose, change, and practice religion. On August 24, President Emmanuel Macron signed a law providing authorities broader powers to monitor and close down religious organizations and groups they determined to be promoting ideas contrary to French values. Religious groups, including Muslim, Catholic, Protestant, and Christian Orthodox leaders, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) publicly condemned the law before it was enacted, saying that it “risks undermining fundamental freedoms” such as freedom of worship and of association. Although the law did not specifically mention Islam, critics said it targeted and stigmatized Muslims and that President Macron had initially proposed the law as a means to combat “Islamist separatism.” In January, the government praised Muslim leaders who reached an agreement on a “Charter of Principles for the Islam of France,” affirming the signatories’ adherence to national law and values. Critics of the charter said it was crafted by the government and represented an unconstitutional intervention into religious affairs. The government dissolved by decree several Muslim organizations it accused of “inciting hatred, violence, and discrimination,” and said that it had closed 672 Muslim establishments from February 2018 through October 2021, including 21 mosques since November 2020. On April 14, the Court of Cassation – the country’s highest court of criminal and civil appeal – upheld lower court rulings that cannabis use by the killer of a 65-year-old Jewish woman in 2017 rendered him criminally irresponsible for her death, leading to protests and creation of a parliamentary commission of inquiry into the affair. After President Macron’s announcement that a COVID-19 “health pass” would be required to enter public spaces beginning in August, some protesters wore the yellow Star of David or held signs comparing treatment of nonvaccinated persons to that of Jews during the Holocaust; others protested with antisemitic signs. President Macron and other government officials continued to condemn antisemitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian acts, and the government continued to deploy security forces to protect religious and other sensitive sites. In October, the Senate adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism. In February, the Paris city council adopted the IHRA working definition of antisemitism; in March, the Strasbourg city council rejected it.

There were instances of religiously motivated crimes and other abuses against Christians, Jews, and Muslims, including physical assaults, threats, hate speech,

discrimination, and vandalism and the killing in August of a priest in the Loire Region that generated a public outcry. In the latter case, authorities judged the killer mentally unfit and placed him in a psychiatric hospital. Authorities reported registering 1,659 antireligious acts during the year, a 12 percent drop compared with the same period in 2019, when 1,893 acts were reported. (According to the Ministry of the Interior, statistics from 2020, when it recorded 1,386 antireligious acts, were not comparable because of the COVID-19 lockdown.) While the total number of acts reported decreased from 2019, the number of anti-Muslim acts increased by 38 percent to 213, from 154 in 2019 (234 in 2020). Anti-Christian acts decreased 19 percent to 857, from 1,052 in 2019 (813 in 2020), and antisemitic acts fell 14 percent to 589, from 687 in 2019 (339 in 2020). In September, the Brussels-based NGO Action and Protection League issued the results of its European antisemitism survey based on data that was collected in France between February and June 2020. According to the survey, 7 percent of 1,000 respondents ages 18-75 in France said they had negative feelings towards Jews.

Officials from the U.S. embassy, consulates, and American Presence Posts (APPs) discussed religious tolerance, antisemitic and anti-Muslim acts, the role of religious freedom in combating violent extremism, and cooperation on these issues with officials at the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs and the Interministerial Delegation to Fight Against Racism, Antisemitism and Anti-LGBT Hate (DILCRAH). The Charge d’Affaires and embassy, consulate, and APP officials met regularly with religious communities and their leaders throughout the country to discuss religious freedom concerns and encourage interfaith cooperation and tolerance, including engaging Christian, Jewish, and Muslim representatives in Strasbourg, discussions of interfaith dialogue in Rennes, exchanges on antisemitism in Lyon, and raising Holocaust awareness in Marseille. The embassy sponsored projects and events to combat religious discrimination and religiously motivated hate crimes, such as projects bringing together youth of different faiths and a roundtable with religious leaders, and regularly used social media to convey messages highlighting issues pertaining to religious freedom.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 68.1 million (midyear 2021). According to a January 2020 report released by the government-appointed Observatory for Secularism, based on a poll conducted in cooperation with polling company Viavoice, approximately 47 percent of respondents identify as Catholic, 3 percent Muslim, 3 percent Protestant, 2 percent Buddhist, 1 percent Jewish, 1

percent Christian Orthodox, and 1 percent other religious groups; 34 percent said they have no religious affiliation and 8 percent preferred not to respond.

According to the observatory's 2019 report, there are 140,000-150,000 Jehovah's Witnesses and 150,000-300,000 Hindus. In a poll on secularism released in February and conducted with Viavoice, 35 percent of respondents say they are believers, 30 percent nonbelievers or atheist, 14 percent agnostic, and 13 percent indifferent. Most observers, including the observatory in its 2019 report, estimate the number of Muslims in the country at three to five million, or between 4 and 7 percent of the population. According to Church of Scientology leaders, there are approximately 40,000 followers in the country.

A poll by the research firm French Institute of Public Opinion (IFOP) conducted August 24-25 found that 51 percent of respondents said they do not believe in God, and 49 percent said they do. According to the IFOP poll, the highest percentage of believers (58 percent) was found among those 65 years and older and the lowest (45 percent) among those aged 35-49. Other age groups were close to evenly split, with a slight majority of nonbelievers.

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

### **Legal Framework**

The constitution defines the country as a secular republic and states it "shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law," regardless of religion, and shall respect all beliefs. The law provides for the separation of religion and state and guarantees the free exercise of religious worship except to maintain public order.

The law, as well as international and European covenants to which the country adheres, protects the freedom of individuals to choose, change, and practice their religion. Interference with freedom of religion is subject to criminal penalties, including a fine of 1,500 euros (\$1,700) and imprisonment for one month. Individuals who are defendants in a trial may challenge the constitutionality of any law they say impedes their freedom of religion.

Laws increase the penalties for acts of violence or defamation when they are committed because of the victim's actual or perceived membership or nonmembership in a given religious group. Additional penalties beyond those for the underlying crime for acts of violence that courts determine are religiously motivated are three to five years' imprisonment and fines of 45,000 to 75,000 euros (\$51,000-\$85,000), depending on the severity of the victims' injuries. For

religiously motivated acts of public defamation, defined as an allegation of fact that affects the honor of a person or body, the penalties are one year's imprisonment and/or a fine of 45,000 euros (\$51,000). The government may expel noncitizens for inciting discrimination, hatred, or violence against a specific person or group of persons based on religion.

The law penalizes hate crimes and hate speech. Provisions in the criminal code cover hate crimes. They criminalize racist, antisemitic, or xenophobic acts, considering them as aggravating circumstances when an offense is committed on the basis of a victim's membership or nonmembership, true or supposed, in a given ethnic group, nation, race, or religion. When made in public, such as on the internet, hate speech is covered by a special law related to the rights of the press that criminalizes the publication or dissemination of racist remarks, including those directed against persons because of their membership in religious groups. The law covers all means of public expression (speeches, exclamations, threats, writings, printed matter, drawings, engravings, paintings, symbols, images, etc.), and any media permitting wide dissemination to the public. When not made in public, hate speech is covered by the criminal code and punishable by a 1,500 euro (\$1,700) fine.

There is no national-level law prohibiting blasphemy, but Alsace-Moselle continues to retain part of an old German code, a remnant from past German annexation of the area, that declares "blasphemy" against Catholics a crime. However, a Ministry of Justice decree states that the antiblasphemy provision may not be applied anywhere in the country.

Although the law does not require it, religious groups may apply for official recognition and tax-exempt status. Religious groups may register under two categories: associations of worship, which are exempt from taxes; and cultural associations, which normally are not exempt. Associations in either category are subject to fiscal oversight by the state. An association of worship may organize only religious activities. Although not tax-exempt, a cultural association may engage in for-profit as well as nonprofit activity and receive government subsidies for its cultural and educational operations. Religious groups normally register under both categories. For example, Catholics perform religious activities through their associations of worship and operate schools through their cultural associations.

Religious groups must apply at the local prefecture (the administrative body, headed by a prefect, that represents the central government in each department) for

recognition as an association of worship and tax-exempt status. To qualify as an association of worship, the group's sole purpose must be the practice of religion, which may include liturgical services and practices, religious training, and the construction of buildings serving the religious group. The association must also engage in public worship and respect public order. Among excluded activities are those that are purely cultural, social, or humanitarian in nature. To apply for tax-exempt status, the association must provide to the prefecture its estimated budget for the year, annual accounts for the previous three years or since the association's creation, whichever is shorter, a written justification of eligibility for the status, and the number of members of the association. In Paris, the association must have a minimum of 25 members. Once granted, the association may use the tax-exempt status nationwide. The government does not tax associations of worship on donations they receive. If the prefecture determines an association is not in conformity with its tax-exempt status, however, the government may change that status and require the association to pay taxes at a rate of 60 percent on past, as well as future, donations until it regains tax-exempt status. The Ministry of Interior has not provided recent information on the number of associations with tax-exempt status. According to ministry data more than a decade old, there are 109 Protestant, 100 Catholic, 50 Jehovah's Witness, 30 Muslim, and 15 Jewish associations with tax-exempt status.

The number of cultural associations, many of which are not associated with religious groups, is in the thousands and changes frequently. Cultural associations may be declared using an online form through the government's public administration website. Cultural associations, even if associated with religious groups, may operate without applying for government recognition, but receiving government recognition exempts them from taxes. The Church of Scientology has the status of a secular and not a religious association.

The law states, "Detained persons have the right to freedom of opinion, conscience, and religion. They may practice the religion of their choice...without other limits than those imposed by the security needs and good order of the institution."

Counterterrorism legislation grants prefects in each department the authority to close a place of worship for a maximum of six months if they find that comments, writings, or activities in the place of worship "provoke violence, hatred, or discrimination or the commission of acts of terrorism or praise such acts of terrorism." The management of the place of worship has 48 hours to appeal the closure decision to an administrative court. A place of worship that has been

closed may remain closed beyond the six-month maximum if it does not replace its chief cleric and/or management. Noncompliance with a closure decision carries a six-month prison sentence and a fine of 7,500 euros (\$8,500). A counterterrorism and intelligence law that parliament enacted on July 22 makes permanent some provisions of a 2017 law on internal security and counterterrorism that had been set to expire July 31. The new law allows authorities to close facilities belonging to places of worship linked to acts of terrorism, rather than only the places of worship themselves, as was previously the case.

The law prohibits covering one's face, including for religious reasons, in public places, including public transportation, government buildings, and other public spaces, such as restaurants and movie theaters. If police encounter a person in a public space wearing a face covering such as a niqab or burqa, they are legally required to ask the individual to remove it to verify the individual's identity. According to the law, police officials may not remove it themselves. If an individual refuses to remove the garment, police may take the person to the local police station to verify his or her identity. Police may not question or hold an individual for more than four hours. Refusing a police instruction to remove a face-covering garment carries a maximum fine of 150 euros (\$170) or attendance at a citizenship course. Individuals who coerce other persons to cover their face on account of gender by threat, violence, force, or abuse of power or authority are subject to a fine of up to 30,000 euros (\$34,000) and may receive a sentence of up to one year in prison. The fine and sentence are doubled if the person coerced is a minor. The law exempts use of face coverings mandated by the authorities, such as masks worn for COVID-19 prevention.

The law prohibits agents of the administration, public services, and companies or associations carrying out public services from demonstrating their religion through visible signs of religious affiliation, such as an Islamic headscarf, Jewish skullcap, Sikh turban, or Christian cross. The prohibition applies during working hours even if the agents are not in their place of employment and at any time at the place of employment.

By law, the government may not directly finance religious groups to build new places of worship, except, as noted below, in Alsace-Lorraine and overseas departments and territories. The government may, however, provide loan guarantees or lease property to groups at advantageous rates. The law also exempts places of worship from property taxes. The state owns and is responsible for the upkeep of most places of worship, primarily Catholic, built before 1905. The government may fund cultural associations with a religious connection.

The Upholding Republican Values law – passed by parliament on July 23, ruled constitutional on August 13 by the Constitutional Court, and signed by President Macron on August 24 – includes measures expanding requirements of neutrality in expression and attire for public servants and private contractors of public services, methods to combat online hate speech, stricter restrictions on homeschooling, increased control of public associations, transparency of religious associations, and enhanced measures against polygamy, forced marriages, and “virginity certificates.” The law requires audits of associations, including those that are religious in nature, that receive foreign funding of more than 153,000 euros (\$173,500) per year. The law imposes additional reporting requirements on local religious-based organizations. It modifies a law on policing of religions to include punishing the incitement to discrimination, hatred, or violence with up to five years in prison. The law also increases the punishment for holding political meetings in places of worship and prohibits the organization of campaigning operations for political elections in places of worship. In addition, a judge may forbid anyone convicted of provoking terrorism, discrimination, hate, or violence from entering places of worship. The government may temporarily close places of worship if it finds any activities that incite hatred or violence. The new law expanded the requirements for neutrality, impartiality, and principles of secularism, which previously applied only to government employees, to apply to private contractors for public services. The law also implements a commemorative “secularism day,” to be recognized annually on December 9. In addition, it requires municipalities and departments to inform local prefects three months before concluding a long-term lease with, or providing loans to, places of worship.

The Upholding Republican Values law includes provisions to combat hate speech, including the criminalization of disseminating personal information which could endanger the life of others. Violators may be punished with up to five years in prison and a fine of 75,000 euros (\$85,000) if the victim is a public official, a journalist, or a minor. An expedited procedure allows authorities to remove content on mirror sites.

The law separating religion and state does not apply in three classes of territories. Because Alsace-Lorraine (currently comprising the departments of Haut-Rhin, Bas-Rhin, and la Moselle and known as Alsace-Moselle) was part of Germany when the law was enacted, Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Jews there may choose to allocate a portion of their income tax to their religious group. Pastors, priests, and rabbis of these four recognized faiths in Alsace-Moselle receive a salary from the Interior Ministry, and the country’s President, with the agreement

of the Holy See, appoints the Catholic bishops of Metz and Strasbourg. The Prime Minister appoints the Chief Rabbi and the presidents of the Jewish and Protestant consistories (the administrative governance bodies of these groups) in Alsace-Moselle, and the Interior Minister appoints ministers of three Christian Churches (Catholic, Lutheran, and Protestant Reformed Church of Alsace and Lorraine) in the region. Local governments in the region may also provide financial support for constructing religious buildings. The Overseas Department of French Guiana, which is governed under 19th century colonial laws, may provide subsidies to the Catholic Church. Other overseas departments and overseas territories, which include island territories in the Caribbean and the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans, and several sub-Antarctic islands, may also provide funding for religious groups. This provision also applies to the portion of Antarctica the government claims as an overseas territory.

Public schools are secular. The law prohibits public school employees from wearing visible signs of religious affiliation and students from wearing “conspicuous religious symbols,” including the Islamic headscarf, Jewish skullcap, Sikh turban, and large Christian crosses. Public schools do not provide religious instruction except in Alsace-Moselle and overseas departments and territories. In Alsace-Moselle, religious education regarding one of the four recognized faiths (Catholicism, Lutheranism, Protestant Reformed Church of Alsace and Lorraine, and Judaism) is compulsory in public primary and secondary schools, although students may, with a written request from their parents, opt for a secular equivalent. Religious education classes are taught by laypersons who are trained and nominated by the respective religious groups but are paid by the state. Elsewhere in the country, public schools teach information about religious groups as part of the history curriculum. Parents who wish their children to wear conspicuous religious symbols or to receive religious instruction may homeschool their children or send them to a private school. Homeschooling and private schools must conform to the educational standards established for public schools; however, private schools may permit the wearing of religious symbols on their premises. Under the Upholding Republican Values law, beginning in September 2022, homeschooling will be allowed only for strictly defined reasons, including sickness, disability, intensive sport or artistic training, transient families, or those with geographic constraints. Parents who wish to take their children out of school will be required to get an annual authorization from the local education authority.

By law, the government subsidizes private schools, including those affiliated with religious organizations. In 98 percent of private schools, in accordance with the law, the government pays the teachers’ salaries, provided the school accepts all



children regardless of their religious affiliation. The law does not address the issue of religious instruction in government-subsidized private schools. According to the education code, religious instruction is allowed but optional in government-subsidized private schools. Students are not required to attend religion classes, and other activities are available for students who opt out.

Missionaries from countries not exempt from visa requirements must obtain a three-month tourist visa before traveling to the country. All missionaries from nonexempt countries wishing to remain longer than 90 days must obtain long-duration visas before entering the country. Upon arrival, missionaries must provide a letter from their sponsoring religious group to apply to the local prefecture for a temporary residence card.

The country adheres to the nonbinding Terezin Declaration of 2009 – an agreement to remedy the economic wrongs experienced by Jews and other victims of Nazi persecution – and its guidelines and best practices of 2010. The government has laws and mechanisms in place for property restitution and reparation, including for all three types of immovable property: private, communal, and heirless.

The government's Commission for the Compensation for Victims of Spoliation (CIVS or the "Drai Commission") is a sovereign and independent administrative body under the authority of the Prime Minister. CIVS recommends and examines reparations to individual victims of the Holocaust or their heirs not previously compensated for damages resulting from antisemitic legislation passed either by the Vichy government or by the occupying Germans. On June 17, the CIVS announced that on its recommendation, Prime Minister Jean Castex had ordered the return to the descendants of Jewish lawyer Armand Dorville 12 works of art acquired by the French State in 1942. At year's end, the government was working on a draft law to effectively implement this decision.

The law criminalizes the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) movement against Israel, treating it as "a provocation to discrimination or hatred or violence towards a person or a group of persons because of their origin or belonging to an ethnic group, a nation, a race, or a determined religion."

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

## **Government Practices**

On April 14, the Court of Cassation upheld the Paris Court of Appeals' decision that Kobili Traore, the killer of Sarah Halimi, a 65-year-old Jewish woman, was unfit to stand trial because his cannabis consumption prior to the killing rendered him psychotic, despite the judges' opinion that the attack was antisemitic in character. The Court of Cassation's decision closed the case. According to media reports, Traore continued under psychiatric care where he had been assigned since killing Halimi in 2017 and would remain hospitalized until psychiatrists concluded he no longer represented a danger to himself or others. Lawyers for Halimi's relatives announced their intention to take the case to the European Court of Human Rights. On April 21, lawyers representing Halimi's sister announced that she intended to file a criminal complaint against Traore in Israel.

On April 25, media reported that more than 20,000 persons demonstrated at Trocadero Square in Paris to "proclaim determination to continue the fight for Sarah's memory." Similar protests were held in several other cities across the country. French political leaders, including President Macron, criticized the court ruling and what he called the loopholes in law exposed by the case. Macron also told daily newspaper *Le Figaro* that "Deciding to take narcotics and then 'going mad' should not, in my view, remove your criminal responsibility," and said he wanted Justice Minister Eric Dupond-Moretti to introduce a change in the law "as soon as possible." On July 22, the National Assembly established a parliamentary commission of inquiry into the affair, which was continuing its investigation at year's end.

On March 15, following the resignation of M'hammed Henniche, the rector (administrator) of a mosque in Pantin, a Paris suburb, and the nomination of a new board of directors, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin called for the reopening of the mosque, made effective on April 9. In October 2020, Darmanin had ordered a six-month closure of the mosque, following the beheading of teacher Samuel Paty, who had shown his class cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad as part of a lesson on freedom of expression. The mosque's imam Ibrahim Doucoure had posted on social media calls to retaliate against Paty for showing the cartoons. The Montreuil Administrative Court had validated the government's decision to close the mosque.

On October 26, Junior Minister for Citizenship Marlene Schiappa reported that, since the end of 2019, as part of a nationwide program to counter "Islamism and communitarianism," the Ministry of Interior had conducted 23,996 assessments and closed 672 establishments of various kinds, including 22 mosques. According to Schiappa, those establishments, which the government did not specifically

identify, “were gathering places to organize Islamist separatism,” which President Macron had previously described as a “methodical organization” to create a “countersociety” in which Islamists impose their own rules and laws on isolated communities.

On October 13, Interior Minister Darmanin announced he had ordered authorities to close a mosque in Allonnes, in the Loire Region, following what he said was evidence the mosque preached radical Islamism. According to the local prefecture, some of its 300 members were linked to radical Islamist movements that “legitimized the use of armed jihad” as well as “hate and discrimination.” In early October, authorities froze the accounts of the two associations running the mosque.

On October 26, Interior Minister Darmanin reported that, following inspections of mosques conducted starting in November 2020, the government suspected 92 of the 2,500 mosques in the country of being radical and had closed 21 of them. On December 12, Darmanin said 36 mosques were removed from the list of those suspected of Islamist separatism after complying with government requests, including dismissing “dangerous” imams and rejecting foreign funding. Darmanin reiterated the mosques suspected of practicing radical Islam represented a very small minority.

In a December 27 decree, Darmanin announced the government administratively closed the mosque of Beauvais, north of Paris, for six months because of the anti-republican sermons of one of its imams. Darmanin accused Imam Islem, born Eddy Lecocq, of dividing society by justifying jihad and using discriminatory language against LGBTQ+ persons and women in his sermons. The mosque’s representative argued that Islem’s comments were taken out of context, calling the closure “unjustified” and the accusations against the imam false. Some members of the Beauvais Muslim community expressed frustration to the press, saying that while the law should apply to this imam, it was unfair that “the whole community was being punished” for his actions.

Contrary to the previous year, Jehovah’s Witness officials did not report any cases in which authorities interfered with proselytizing during the year.

After President Macron’s announcement that a COVID-19 health pass would be required to enter public spaces beginning in August, some protesters wore the yellow Star of David or held signs comparing treatment of nonvaccinated persons to that of Jews during the Holocaust; others protested with antisemitic signs.

With the stated intent to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, the government continued to impose measures limiting the distance between worshippers during religious services. It required places of worship to ensure that there were at least two empty seats between persons unless they were members of the same household and that only one row of seats out of two was occupied. Unlike with other gatherings, the government did not require a COVID-19 health pass to attend religious ceremonies. The Prime Minister's office told *Le Figaro* newspaper July 13 that places of worship enjoyed constitutional protections beyond those of other groups because of the fundamental value of the freedom of religion.

On August 24, President Macron signed into law the Upholding Republican Values bill, which the government used to continue closing organizations accused of separatism, including some places of worship. On March 10, leaders of the Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Churches in the country issued a public statement expressing their concern about the then draft bill. Catholic Archbishop Eric de Moulins-Beaufort, President of the Bishops Conference of France (CEF), Pastor Francois Clavairoly, President of the Protestant Federation of France, and Metropolitan Emmanuel Adamakis, Metropolitan of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of France, signed the statement. The statement said that “by its internal logic ... this bill risks undermining fundamental freedoms such as freedom of worship, association, teaching and even freedom of opinion.” The three leaders added that “turning its back on the separation [of church and state], the state interferes in the qualification of what is religious” and that the law allowed the state to apply more constraints and controls on religious organizations when the Christian churches believed the procedures necessary to maintain public order already existed. Muslim leaders, also speaking about the bill while in draft, said that, although it did not specifically mention the word Islam, many of its provisions clearly singled out Islam, targeting and stigmatizing Muslims. They also pointed out that President Macron had initially proposed the law as a means to combat “Islamist separatism.” NGOs expressed concern about the increased power of unelected prefects to close associations. Mohammed Moussaoui, president of the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM), said the then draft would increase restrictions on French religious associations, “but in the end it will be beneficial and there will be less suspicion towards donations.” France's Chief Rabbi Haim Korsia said the then draft law “reminds us of the importance of carrying the values of the republic everywhere, in all spaces, including religious spaces” and gives “legal tools to do what we could not do before.”

In a January 18 meeting with representatives of the CFCM, which until December was the government's main dialogue partner among groups representing the

Muslim community, President Macron praised the CFCM's adoption of the "Charter of Principles for the Islam of France," the Elysee (Office of the Presidency) reported. "This is a clear, decisive and precise commitment in favor of the republic," Macron said, hailing "a truly foundational text for relations between the state and Islam in France." According to the CFCM, the agreement was reached during a January 16 meeting of the CFCM with Interior Minister Darmanin after weeks of resistance from some CFCM members, who objected to a "restructuring" of Islam to make it compatible with French law and values. Signatories to the charter included the CFCM, the Union of Mosques of France, Gathering of Muslims of France, Great Mosque of Paris (GMP), and the French Federation of Islamic Associations of Africa, Comoros, and the West Indies. Signatories to the charter, composed of 10 articles, vowed to reject attempts to use Islam for political ends, refrain from distributing messages of violence, hate, terrorism, or racism, and educate youth against those who spread such messages; affirmed gender equality and the need to educate believers that certain cultural practices presumed to be Muslim are not part of Islam; and agreed to combat "superstitions and archaic practices" that endanger the lives of victims, recognize Muslims have the right to renounce Islam, and reject racism, antisemitism, and misogynistic acts.

Online news site *Middle East Eye* published an opinion piece in February that called the charter "the worst violation of the separation of Church and state in the history of the Fifth Republic," and stating it was crafted by the government, particularly President Macron and Interior Minister Darmanin, and not by Muslims. On January 17, Tareq Oubrou, the Great Imam of Bordeaux, said he deplored that the CFCM produced the charter "under political pressure."

On November 21, the GMP along with three Muslim federations announced they had set up a National Council of Imams (CNI) aimed at establishing a new certification system for imams in France. The CFCM, which President Macron had instructed in 2020 to establish a new imam certification system to ensure Muslim clerics' compliance with French republican values, denounced the initiative. The CFCM president, Mohammed Moussaoui, accused the GMP, the Gathering of Muslims of France; the French Federation of Islamic Associations of Africa, Comoros, and the West Indies; and the Muslims of France (former Union of Islamic Organizations in France) of having "taken the organization of Muslim worship hostage."

On July 23, the Ministry of the Interior and the Loire regional prefecture officially suspended Mmadi Ahamada, the imam of the Attakwa Mosque in Saint-Chamond,

for discriminating against women. In Eid al-Adha remarks, the imam said women should “stay home, not show off ... and not be too complacent in your language,” nor give in to “corruption and vice.” Interior Minister Darmanin tweeted that he would relentlessly counter those who violated the values of the republic, and said that at his instruction, the Saint-Chamond imam and another imam were fired for “unacceptable sermons.” Darmanin also ordered the Loire prefect to evaluate the Saint-Chamond imam’s renewal of his residency permit. According to media reports, the imam, a citizen of Comoros, could be deported if the permit were not renewed.

On July 15, the government announced the creation of a new Interministerial Committee on Secularism to replace the Observatory for Secularism – an independent public watchdog entity established in 2013 whose members were appointed by the government – that critics from the political right and left said did not crack down hard enough on radical Islam. According to Minister for Citizenship Schiappa, who announced the new committee, it would function under the authority of the Prime Minister’s office and be responsible, as the observatory had been, for coordinating government efforts to protect state secularism, for instance by ensuring no public funding was allocated to nonsecular programs. She stated the committee would also assume responsibility for secularism training for public employees, with the goal of providing such training to all five million employees by 2025. Twelve ministers on the new committee were tasked with coordinating state secularism and tracking the implementation of the Upholding Republican Values law. The committee was also tasked with placing a secularism specialist in each public administration by the end of the year to provide information and mediate on issues relating to religion. It would oversee new powers given to prefects to take legal action against local governments if they implement policies that seem to contradict secularism, for example by allowing women-only sessions in public pools. In her announcement, Minister Schiappa also said that, during the December 9 “Secularism Day,” the Ministry of the Interior would award a “Legality Prize” of 50,000 euros (\$56,700) for promoting secularism.

According to media, on October 12, at the request of President Macron, Interior Minister Darmanin summoned CEF President Archbishop de Moulins-Beaufort, after the Archbishop publicly stated that the secrecy of confession was “above the laws of the republic,” sparking outrage among groups of victims of sexual abuse by priests. De Moulins-Beaufort made the comment after a Church-commissioned independent report revealed more than 200,000 cases of sexual abuse by priests over the previous seven decades. After the meeting, Archbishop de Moulins-

Beaufort cited “the determination of all bishops, and all Catholics, to make the protection of children an absolute priority, in close cooperation with the French authorities.”

According to the Ministry of Justice, as of 2018, the penitentiary system employed 720 Catholic, 361 Protestant, 231 Muslim, 191 Jehovah’s Witness, 74 Jewish, 54 Orthodox Christian, and 18 Buddhist chaplains. In detainee visiting areas, visitors could bring religious objects to an inmate or speak with the prisoner about religious issues but could not pray. Prisoners could pray in their cells individually, with a chaplain in designated prayer rooms, or, in some institutions, in special apartments where they could receive family for up to 48 hours.

In September, 55 foreign imams and two murshidates (Muslim religious female guides) began year-long assignments at mosques in the country. On September 14, Chemsedine Hafiz, Rector of the Grand Mosque of Paris, announced on social media that his mosque held a welcoming seminar before sending the imams and murshidates to their respective places of assignment. In accordance with a bilateral agreement with Algeria, the government hosted training sessions on secularism and French values for these imams and murshidates.

On September 29, as part of the government’s stated efforts to combat radicalization, Interior Minister Darmanin announced in a tweet the dissolution of the Nawa Center for Oriental Studies and Translation in the southwestern town of Pamiers for reportedly producing Islamist propaganda and legitimizing violence. In its decree, the government cited Nawa publications that called for the “extermination of the Jews,” legitimized violence against LGBTQ+ individuals, and encouraged the punishment of “adulterous women.” In a September 28 interview with *Le Figaro*, Darmanin said the government was in the process of closing six religious sites and banning another 10 local associations for ties to radical Islam.

In a September 24 ruling, the Council of State, the country’s highest court for public administration issues, approved the authorities’ December 2020 dissolution of the Collective Against Islamophobia in France, an NGO with the stated aim of combating discrimination towards Muslims in the country and providing legal support to victims of discrimination. The government had moved to close the collective in late 2020, following the killing of teacher Samuel Paty by an Islamist.

In a tweet published on October 20, Interior Minister Darmanin announced that, at his request based on the instructions of President Macron, the Council of Ministers

had dissolved the Coordination against Racism and Islamophobia, an association created in 2008 and based near Lyon. On its website, the association presented itself as “an initiative aiming at fighting against a continuously growing scourge: Islamophobia.” Darmanin said the association called for “hatred, violence, and discrimination,” and government spokesman Gabriel Attal added it also expressed antisemitism.

In May, President Macron’s ruling La Republique en Marche! (The Republic on the Move!) Party threatened to withdraw its support for a Muslim candidate running in June local elections after she wore a headscarf in a photograph on a campaign flyer. Party chief Stanislas Guerini said wearing “ostentatious religious symbols” in photographs appearing in campaign materials was against the party’s values.

On November 2, the Council of Europe retracted visuals that said, “freedom is in [a] hijab,” from a campaign combating discrimination and anti-Muslim sentiment after the French government rejected the messaging. One advertisement, published the previous week, showed a split image of two women, one wearing a hijab and the other not, alongside the slogan: “Beauty is in diversity as freedom is in hijab.” The split image “deeply shocked me,” Secretary of State for Youth Sarah El Hairy said in a November 2 television interview. “It is the opposite of the values France is standing up for ... which is why it was pulled today.” The council suspended the entire promotional campaign on November 3.

On December 21, the Paris Administrative Court upheld the 2020 ruling by the Court of Montreuil overturning a 2019 municipal decree that had refused a permit for the Church of Scientology to renovate a building it had purchased in the municipality of Saint-Denis for the purpose of converting it into its headquarters and a training center. The court ruled that the refusal was a “misuse of power” and ordered the city of Saint-Denis to reexamine the permit request within three months.

According to statistics released by the Ministry of the Armed Forces in March, the government regularly deployed 3,000 military personnel – a number that could rise to 10,000 at times of high threat – throughout the country to patrol vulnerable sites, including Catholic, Jewish, and Islamic sites and other places of worship. Some Jewish leaders requested the government also station armed guards at Jewish places of worship; the government did not do so.



Interior Minister Darmanin called for strengthening security at places of worship ahead of major religious holidays because of the “persistent terrorist threat,” AFP reported on March 17. Darmanin reportedly instructed prefects to pay particular attention to religious “gatherings and services that traditionally bring together large groups of people ... and consequently constitute targets with strong symbolism.” Darmanin also called for increasing counterterrorism patrols under the Ministry of the Armed Forces’ Operation Sentinel around vulnerable and symbolic religious sites.

In a September 1 memo to prefects during the Jewish month of Tishrei (September 7-October 6), which includes Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and several other Jewish holidays, Interior Minister Darmanin asked them to strengthen the security of Jewish places of worship and to ensure maximum police presence due to the “very high level of the terrorist threat.” Counterterrorism patrols under Operation Sentinel could also be deployed around particularly vulnerable sites, according to the memo. The MOI executed similar countermeasures at all Christian churches throughout the country on August 15 for the Day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

On January 4, according to judicial sources, two of 14 defendants that the Special Criminal Court found guilty in 2020 of supporting terrorists who conducted attacks against satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and a kosher supermarket in 2015 appealed their sentences. The appeal was scheduled to be heard in September-October 2022.

On March 22, the city of Strasbourg approved 2.56 million euros (\$2.90 million) in city funding for the construction of the Milli Gorus Islamic Confederation-sponsored Eyyup Sultan Mosque. In a March 23 Business FM television interview, Minister Darmanin stated that the city’s decision supported foreign interference in the country. He criticized the Milli Gorus Islamic Confederation for what he said was its affiliation with Turkey and for engaging in political Islam and refusing to sign the “Charter of Principles for the Islam of France,” a part of the government’s effort to fight Islamist separatism. Darmanin asked the local prefect to contest the city’s decision before an administrative judge. Mayor Jeanne Barseghian wrote in a letter to President Macron that she had set as conditions for final approval of the funding that mosque project leaders ensure transparency in their financing and subscribe to the values of the republic. The prefect disputed that conditions were set and announced on April 7 that the city’s decision would be contested in administrative court. Further information on the status of the project was unavailable at year’s end.

On January 27, the Paris Court of Appeals ruled that 67-year-old Hassan Diab, the main suspect in the 1980 deadly bombing of the rue Copernic Synagogue in Paris, would have to stand trial, and on May 19, the Court of Cassation upheld that decision. Diab, a dual Lebanese-Canadian citizen, is suspected of having prepared and placed the bomb, which killed three Frenchmen and an Israeli journalist and injured 46 persons. Diab returned to Canada in 2018 after three years in detention in France when judges determined the evidence was insufficient to warrant prosecution. On December 22, *Le Figaro* reported that Diab's trial would open in Paris in April 2023, but by year's end, authorities had not issued an arrest warrant and Diab remained in Canada.

On April 14, the Paris Appeals Court validated the grounds for an investigation of a 1982 terrorist attack against an Israeli restaurant in Paris that left six dead and wounded 22 others. The decision left open the possibility of a trial, judicial sources reported. The court dismissed two challenges relating to a missing signature on a judicial detention document and an attempt to nullify a December 2020 decision to place the suspect under investigation. In December 2020, Norwegian authorities extradited to France a suspect in the case, naturalized Norwegian Walid Abdulrahman Abou Zayed. On December 23, judges decided to keep the suspect in pretrial detention.

On April 16, the Ministry of Education reported 547 infringements of the secularism law in schools between December 2020 and March 2021. Middle schools accounted for 45 percent of incidents, while primary schools accounted for 33 percent and high schools for 22 percent; 32 percent of violations were in the form of religiously motivated insults or other verbal aggression, while 10 percent involved proselytism. According to a report released on December 9 by the ministry, 614 infractions of secularism in schools were reported between September and mid-November in the country's 60,000 schools, an increase of 12 percent compared to December 2020-March 2021. Incidents cited included insults or other verbal abuse of a religious nature, the wearing of religious symbols, and refusal to take part in school activities.

In February, Education Minister Jean-Michel Blanquer commissioned a report from former school inspector Jean-Pierre Obin on how teachers and headteachers might be better equipped to handle the issue of secularism in schools. The report, published on June 14, described some confusion among pupils and teachers about the meaning of secularism, exacerbated by the case of teacher Samuel Paty, beheaded in 2020. The report also highlighted how the historical roots of the

country's current laws were not always understood. Following the report's publication, according to Radio France International, Blanquer introduced training programs for teachers and principals on the place of religion in schools so that there would be a common understanding of what secularism entailed and what was and was not allowed. On October 19, 1,000 teachers started the 120- to 150-hour training.

On October 15-16, schools commemorated the first anniversary of the killing of Samuel Paty with a series of ceremonies and screenings of documentaries on freedom of speech. On October 16, Prime Minister Castex unveiled a memorial plaque honoring Paty at the entrance of the Education Ministry. Macron also received Paty's family at the Elysee Palace.

On February 20, 800 academics signed an open letter in *Le Monde* calling for Higher Education Minister Frederique Vidal's resignation for threatening "intellectual repression" by ordering, earlier that month, a "scientific investigation" of "Islamism" at universities. In a February 21 response, Vidal stated the investigation would be carried out in a "scientific" and "rational" manner. Several officials within the Macron administration, including President Macron, distanced themselves from Vidal's proposal, affirming their commitment to academic independence. Academics said it was a failed attempt to distract from the more important problem of growing student discontent and poverty caused by COVID-19. Information on the status of the investigation was unavailable at year's end.

On April 14, the Mayor of Albertville, Frederic Burnier-Framboret, announced he would appeal an April 6 Grenoble Administrative Tribunal decision obliging him to grant a building permit for the Islamic school supported by the Milli Gorus Islamic Confederation, linked to Turkey. According to media reports, Burnier-Framboret's appeal would rest on an amendment to the Upholding Republican Values law that allows prefects to oppose the opening of out-of-contract schools supported by a foreign state "hostile" to the republic. On December 16, the Lyon Appeals Court approved the mayor's decision not to grant a building permit for the Muslim school.

On October 5, the Senate passed a nonbinding draft resolution to adopt the IHRA nonlegally binding working definition of antisemitism. The motion, which was sponsored by the Senate's majority party, the Republicans, with the government's support, was adopted by a show of hands by all political groups, with one exception, the Communist, Republican, and Citizen and Ecologist Group. Recalling the National Assembly had passed a similar resolution in 2019, Minister

Schiappa said she was “happy that the Senate is taking the same approach.” Although the resolution was not legally binding, it would allow for better identification and characterization of antisemitism, she added. In February, the Paris city council adopted the IHRA working definition, while in March, the Strasbourg city council rejected it. Pierre Jakubowicz, a council member who supported the IHRA working definition, said he was dismayed by the latter decision, adding that Strasbourg had been “plagued” by antisemitic outrages during the year.

In March, following a final judgment in 2020 by the European Court of Human Rights that the country had violated Article 10 (freedom of expression) of the European Convention on Human Rights when it convicted a group of 12 pro-Palestinian activists for incitement to discrimination for distributing leaflets calling for a boycott of Israeli goods, the government paid a fine of 380 euros (\$430) of pecuniary damage and 7,000 euros (\$7,900) in nonpecuniary damage to each activist.

On May 19, Normandy’s public prosecutor opened a formal investigation of what the prosecutor said were racist and anti-Islamic social media posts by the then far-right National Rally candidate for President of the Regional Council, Nicolas Bay. On May 5, Bay – a member of both the Normandy Regional Council and the European Union (EU) Parliament – posted a video calling the Evreux Mosque a hub of “delinquency and terrorism” and saying it was linked to the killing of Samuel Paty. Evreux elected officials denounced the video as a call to violence against Muslims, and the Great Mosque of Paris called for charges against Bay for inciting “racial hatred.” On Facebook, Bay responded that “identity politics and Islamism” were threats to the nation and that the Evreux minaret was not welcome in Normandy.

Various groups initiated multiple petitions seeking action against the government for failing, according to the petitions, to follow the rule of law in dealing with the country’s Muslim population. For example, in January, a coalition of 36 civil society and religious organizations from 13 countries, including the Strasbourg-based European Initiative for Social Cohesion, wrote to the United Nations Human Rights Committee to request that it open formal infringement procedures against the government for “entrenching Islamophobia and structural discrimination against Muslims.” The 28-page document stated that the country’s actions and policies in relation to Muslim communities violated international and European laws.

On March 8, 25 NGOs from 11 different countries signed a letter urging the EU to investigate the French government for “state-sponsored Islamophobia” and imposing what the letter described as the discriminatory Charter of Principles for the Islam of France. According to the signatories, the letter responded to what they said were the government’s efforts to isolate Islamist extremists through the Upholding Republican Values law, which was then under consideration in the Senate. The letter to the European Commission stated that the legislation was inherently discriminatory and that the charter censored free speech in violation of European law.

On May 6, the National Council of Evangelicals of France sent an official report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, criticizing the Upholding Republican Values law and stating it would restrict freedom of worship.

In an April 20 statement, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe’s General Rapporteur on combating racism and intolerance, Momodou Malcolm Jallow, expressed deep concern that the Upholding Republican Values law stigmatized Muslims and “will serve to further legitimize the marginalization of Muslim women and will contribute to establishing a climate of hate, intolerance, and ultimately violence against Muslims.”

In an October 4 meeting with prefects, Interior Minister Darmanin said the country had deported 72 radicalized foreign Islamists since October 2020 and 636 since 2018. The 72 were part of a list of foreigners on the FSPRT (*fichier des signalements pour la prevention de la radicalisation a caractere terroriste*) – a list of individuals suspected of radicalization – under orders of deportation. On September 28, Interior Minister Darmanin said he had called on regional prefects to refuse any residence permits for imams sent by a foreign government. According to the Ministry of Interior, approximately 300 imams, or 70 percent of all imams in the country, were trained in foreign countries such as Turkey, Morocco, and Algeria. In 2020, President Macron announced he would gradually end the foreign imam program by 2024, creating instead a program for imams to be trained in France.

On January 27, on International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 76th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the Education Ministry invited teachers to take part in special activities and reflect on the Holocaust with students.

On January 10, Interior Minister Darmanin, Justice Minister Dupond-Moretti, Education Minister Blanquer, Armed Forces Minister Florence Parly, government

spokesperson Gabriel Attal, and Junior Minister for Gender Equality, Diversity and Equal Opportunities Elisabeth Moreno attended a Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions (CRIF)-organized memorial ceremony outside a Paris kosher supermarket, where six years earlier a gunman had killed four Jews and held 15 other persons hostage.

On July 16, Prime Minister Castex, Junior Minister for Gender Equality, Diversity, an Equal Opportunities Moreno, and Secretary of State for the Armed Forces Genevieve Darrieussecq attended a ceremony at the Izieu Memorial Museum, the site where 44 Jewish children and their six educators were deported to Nazi extermination camps and later killed. Prime Minister Castex issued a call to “fight everywhere and always against the unfulfilled temptations of barbarism.”

President Macron and government ministers continued to condemn antisemitism and declare support for Holocaust education on several occasions, including a February 19 visit to the Shoah Memorial; the March 19 commemoration of the ninth anniversary of the killings of three Jewish children and their teacher by Mohammed Merah in Toulouse; and the April 30 Holocaust Remembrance Day commemoration. On April 25, Secretary of State for the Armed Forces Darrieussecq laid a wreath at the Shoah Memorial and the Memorial of the Martyrs of the Deportation in central Paris.

On April 26, the country held private or virtual ceremonies (because of COVID-19 restrictions) commemorating the thousands of persons deported to Nazi death camps during World War II. On July 18, Secretary of State for the Armed Forces Darrieussecq held a ceremony in Paris honoring the victims of the 1942 Velodrome d’Hiver roundup in which 13,000 Jews, including 4,000 children, were deported to extermination camps. At the ceremony, 94-year-old Holocaust survivor Joseph Schwartz expressed anger in a speech at seeing anti-COVID-19 vaccine activists comparing the government’s COVID-19 health pass with the yellow Star of David Jews were forced to wear during World War II.

On July 26, Interior Minister Darmanin participated in a tribute for Father Jacques Hamel, the Catholic priest killed in an attack at his church in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray in 2016, for which ISIS claimed responsibility. In his remarks, Darmanin said, “The government of the republic commemorates its martyrs, and there is no doubt that Jacques Hamel is one of them,” adding that “Islamist barbarism [touched] all the symbols that make the West and France.” President Macron and Prime Minister Castex also paid tribute to Father Hamel on social media on the same date, the anniversary of his death.

On October 18, Prime Minister Castex met with Pope Francis at the Vatican for celebrations to mark the centenary of the restoration of diplomatic relations between France and the Holy See. At a press conference after the meeting, Castex, in a reference to a report on the sexual abuse of French children by Catholic clergy, said the Church “will not revisit the dogma of the secrecy of the confession,” and emphasized the need to find “ways and means to reconcile this with criminal law, the rights of victims,” adding that “the separation of Church and state is in no way the separation of Church and law.”

On October 26, President Macron and Interior Minister Darmanin participated in the first Economy and Protestantism dinner organized by the Protestant Federation and the Charles Gide Circle, a Protestant association which advocates a “responsible economy.” In his remarks, President Macron stated that the Upholding Republican Values law was important “because we cannot deny [that] ... in the name of religions, strategies have been set up that want to separate the republic.” Macron added that he did not mean that the republic and society must separate itself from religion but that every person must be free to believe or not believe. He said he did not accept any speech separating an individual from these rules “on the basis of a religion, a philosophy or anything else. That is the basis of this law.”

On October 26, President Macron, accompanied by Chief Rabbi of France Korsia inaugurated in the village of Medan the first museum dedicated to the “Dreyfus Affair,” which recalls the 1894-1906 period when antisemitism led to the wrongful conviction of Jewish army captain Alfred Dreyfus.

On October 28, Interior Minister Darmanin attended a ceremony marking the repair of the Jewish cemetery of Sarre-Union, where vandals desecrated 269 graves in 2015. “There is no greater duty for the republic than the protection of our Jewish compatriots who have suffered so much,” Darmanin stated.

In June, declared presidential candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon of the France Unbowed Party said that the killing by Mohammed Merah of Jewish schoolchildren and a rabbi in Toulouse in 2012 was “planned in advance” to place blame on Muslims before elections. CRIF President Francis Kalifat condemned Melenchon’s remarks, tweeting they were an obscene attack on the memory of the victims and that Melenchon was pandering to Islamo-leftist voters and conspiracy theories.

On July 16, President Macron became the first president to visit the sanctuary of Lourdes on the same day when, according to believers, in 1858 the 18th and last apparition of the Virgin Mary to Bernadette Soubirous, also known as Saint Bernadette of Lourdes, took place in the cave of Massabielle, a Catholic holy place.

The country is a member of the IHRA.

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

The Ministry of Interior reported registering 1,659 antireligious acts during the year, compared with the same period in 2019, when 1,893 acts were reported. (According to the ministry, statistics from 2020, when it recorded 1,386 antireligious acts, were not comparable because of the COVID-19 lockdown.) While the total number of acts reported decreased from 2019, the number of anti-Muslim acts increased by 38 percent to 213, from 154 in 2019 (234 in 2020). Anti-Christian acts decreased 19 percent, to 857, from 1,052 in 2019 (813 in 2020), and antisemitic acts fell 14 percent to 589, from 687 in 2019 (339 in 2020).

On August 9, Emmanuel Abayisenga, a Rwandan asylum seeker, killed Father Olivier Maire, a Catholic priest in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sevre in the Loire Region. Abayisenga was under judicial supervision while awaiting trial for allegedly setting fire to the Nantes Cathedral in 2020. Since the end of his pretrial detention, following an assessment he was mentally unfit to remain in the judicial system, Abayisenga had been staying with the victim. In an August 9 press conference, the regional deputy prosecutor said there was no initial indication of any terrorist motive. Media reported the killing had prompted a strong public outcry; President Macron and Prime Minister Castex both tweeted their condolences, and Minister of Interior Darmanin offered his support to the country's Catholics. At year's end, Abayisenga remained in a psychiatric hospital.

On May 29, a group of approximately 10 men jeered, whistled at, and physically attacked Catholics taking part in a procession in Paris commemorating Catholics killed during the 1871 Commune. The perpetrators tore down flags and threw projectiles at the marchers, injuring two of them. Interior Minister Darmanin condemned the attack on social media. Authorities charged one suspect with "aggravated violence" and "violation of religious freedom". His trial was scheduled for 2022.



In September, press reported that five men beat a Jewish man wearing a kippah on a street in Lyon, after the man confronted them when the group called him “a dirty Jew.” The man sustained minor injuries. Police arrested one suspect, a teenager. There was no further information on the case at year’s end.

On March 29, a Pakistani national in the country illegally attempted to attack with a knife three young Jewish men wearing kippahs as they were leaving a synagogue in Paris during Passover. According to press reports, authorities indicted the man for making a “threat with a weapon” but not for an antisemitic hate crime, reportedly because of insufficient evidence, and then released him. Authorities subsequently deported the man to Pakistan on April 16. The president of the local Jewish community expressed relief at the man’s deportation.

In March, according to press reports, guards at a Jewish school in Marseille overpowered a man with a knife whom they suspected of planning to stab customers at a nearby kosher store and bakery. The guards disarmed the man and police took him into custody. There was no further information on the case at year’s end.

According to media reports, in November, police arrested a teenager who brandished a machete, hurled marbles, and shouted “dirty Jews” in front of a Jewish high school outside Lyon. Police were investigating whether the teenager or his family had ties to terrorism.

On December 1, legal authorities announced the trial of a man known as Aurelien C., whom security forces arrested in 2020 in Limoges because they suspected him of planning an attack on the Jewish community, would begin in Paris in January 2022. Aurelien C, a former member of both the military and the Yellow Vest protest movement, had posted on social media white supremacist conspiracy theories and both antisemitic and anti-Islamic comments, while glorifying terrorists such as the 2019 Christchurch and 2011 Oslo attackers. Investigators reportedly found incendiary tools in his home that could be used as mortars and found evidence he had researched when Jewish religious sites would reopen in his town. Aurelien C. remained in detention at year’s end.

On May 26, a priest at the Toulon Cathedral received a voicemail warning that someone would come to “kill people in the church” and “make the building jump [i.e., explode].” Police secured the cathedral and arrested a minor in Annecy later that afternoon for what they said may have been a prank. The priest and police

admonished the public that such jokes were unacceptable, particularly in light of recent attacks on places of worship.

On April 17, authorities deported to Algeria an Algerian food delivery driver whom the Strasbourg Criminal Court had convicted on January 14 of antisemitic discrimination for refusing to transport orders of kosher food to Jewish customers. Interior Minister Darmanin said the courier, who was in the country illegally, was deported after serving his four-month prison sentence.

Jehovah's Witnesses officials reported 14 incidents during the year. On December 31, a physical attack took place against a Jehovah's Witness in a parking lot in Pierrefitte-sur-Seine. The individual filed a lawsuit.

According to the Israeli government's Aliyah and Integration Ministry figures released in October, 2,819 French Jews emigrated to Israel in the first half of the year, compared with 2,227 in all of 2019. According to the same source, approximately 2,220 Jews left France for Israel during the first 11 months of 2020.

On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the kidnapping, torture, and killing of Ilan Halimi, a young Jewish man, the CRIF commissioned a survey from research firm Ipsos on the perception of antisemitism in France. The survey was conducted between February 5 and 8 with a sample of 1,000 persons over the age of 18. The poll showed at least 74 percent of respondents believed that antisemitism was a widespread phenomenon in the country. The poll also found 56 percent believed antisemitism was more severe than 10 years previously and 88 percent believed that the fight against antisemitism should be a priority for public authorities. According to the poll, 69 percent of respondents were aware of the Ilan Halimi case; 53 percent believed that antisemitism had the same roots as other forms of racist hatred, and 38 percent did not fully understand the meaning of "anti-Zionism" rhetoric.

The annual report of the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights, an advisory body to the Prime Minister, released on July 22, included the results of an Ipsos poll conducted in November 2020 and involving face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of 1,323 residents above the age of 18. The results were similar to a poll Ipsos conducted a year earlier. According to the more recent poll, 47.6 percent (compared with 34.2 percent in 2019) of respondents believed Jews "have a particular relationship with money," and 21.9 percent (18.6 percent in 2019) thought Jews had too much power in the country. The poll found 46.1 percent (35.5 percent in 2019) of respondents had a negative image of Islam, and

58.9 percent (44.7 percent in 2019) considered it a threat to national identity. The commission's report again cited what it said was persistent societal rejection of Islamic religious practices, finding, for example, that 68.8 percent of respondents (45.5 percent in 2019) opposed women wearing a veil.

In September, the Brussels-Based NGO Action and Protection League issued the results of its European antisemitism survey based on data that in France was collected between February and June 2020. According to the survey, 7 percent of 1,000 respondents ages 18-75 in France said they had negative feelings towards Jews. Twelve percent said they would be “totally uncomfortable” or “uncomfortable” with having Jewish neighbors. The survey cited stereotypical statements about Jews and asked respondents the degree to which they agreed or disagreed. The proportion who responded “strongly agree” or “tend to agree” with the following statements were – “the interests of Jews in this country are very different from the interests of the rest of the population” (21 percent); “there is a secret Jewish network that influences political and economic affairs in the world” (28 percent); “Jews have too much influence in this country” (21 percent); “Jews will never be able to fully integrate into this society” (13 percent); “Jews are more inclined than most to use shady practices to achieve their goals” (15 percent); “many of the atrocities of the Holocaust were often exaggerated by the Jews later” (12 percent); “Jews are also to blame for the persecutions against them” (28 percent); “Jews exploit Holocaust victimhood for their own purposes” (24 percent).

In a July 25 interview with weekly *Le Journal du Dimanche*, CRIF President Kalifat condemned the anti-COVID-19 vaccine movement's use of references to the persecution of the Jews by the Nazis. Kalifat said he was angry at those who “compare the implementation of the COVID-19 health pass, a tool intended to save lives, with the yellow star, which was itself the symbol of discrimination and the death of six million Jews [who] went up in smoke in Nazi crematoria.” Kalifat said the pandemic was a pretext for online conspiracy theories accusing Jews and Israel of introducing the virus to profit from the vaccine.

According to a study by the London-based Institute for Strategic Dialogue, French antisemitic content in online media platforms Twitter, Facebook, and Telegram increased seven-fold in the first two months of the year, compared with the same period in 2020. In addition to frequent antisemitic content related to COVID-19, the study found 55 percent of the content had to do with conspiracy theories about Jews controlling international, financial, political, and media institutions.

On February 1, on the occasion of an official visit to a CEF session by Chief Rabbi of France Korsia, CRIF President Kalifat, and Joel Mergui, then president of the Israelite Central Consistory of France (the main Jewish administrative governance body), the CEF expressed its strong opposition to antisemitism and concern for growing intolerance against Jews in the country. In a statement released to mark the visit, the bishops said their warning of the dangers of rising antisemitism in the country was “all the more urgent” given a “trivialization of violence” raised through hate speech, especially on social media. The bishops also urged “not only Catholics, but also all our fellow citizens to fight vigorously against all forms of political and religious antisemitism in and around them.”

A report covering 2019-20 and issued in December by NGO The Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination Against Christians in Europe stated that society in the country seemed to be increasingly divided between Christians, secularists, and Muslims, adding that the government’s secularism had resulted in strong pressures on Christians on moral issues in which Christians and secular society have different views, such as marriage, family, education, bioethics, and identity politics. It also said media helped to perpetuate certain stereotypes about Christianity, leading to further division. The NGO expressed concern about what it called a lack of respect for Christianity and a high number of attacks on Christians, churches, and Christian symbols, as well as reports by Christians of feeling Islamic oppression. The report also stated authorities had noticed “the high number of serious attacks against churches, Christian buildings and symbols as well as against some citizens.”

In a report issued in March, NGO European Center for Law and Justice (ECLJ) stated that the overwhelming majority of converts to Christianity from Islam in the country experienced family and community contempt and persecution, most commonly in the form of verbal or physical aggression, threats, harassment, or rejection by members of the Muslim community. ECLJ added that persecution was greater for women and girls who converted from Islam, a significant proportion of whom it said were threatened with being forcibly married, sent to their parents’ country of origin, or sequestered if they did not return to Islam. The report stated that every year, 300 persons of Muslim origin were baptized into the Catholic Church and estimated that twice that number joined Protestant churches, concluding that there were at least 4,000 converts to Christianity from Islam in the country.

In September, religious leaders and other commentators criticized presidential candidate for 2022 Eric Zemmour’s statement that the Nazi-aligned Vichy regime

“protected French Jews” during the Second World War. In an October TV interview, Chief Rabbi Korsia called Zemmour, who is of Jewish heritage, an antisemite for his comments doubting the innocence of Alfred Dreyfus, famously exonerated of treason charges in 1906. Zemmour was convicted in 2018 of incitement to religious hatred for making anti-Islamic comments.

On August 27, a fire, suspected to be arson, damaged a Protestant church in Behren-les-Forbach, in the eastern part of the country. On Twitter, Interior Minister Darmanin strongly condemned the arson and expressed his “support to France’s Protestants.” A gendarmerie investigation was ongoing at year’s end.

On April 12, students found a spray-painted crossed-out Star of David with the inscriptions “Death to Israel” and “Kouffar” (“nonbelievers” in Arabic and a pejorative term commonly used to describe Christians and Jews) on the facade of the Institute of Political Sciences, an institute of higher learning, in Paris. The Union of Jewish Students of France called for the institute to take action “to fight the scourge of racist and antisemitic hatred within its walls.” Higher Education Minister Vidal condemned the vandalism “in the strongest possible terms” on social media. At year’s end, authorities had not identified any suspects.

According to media reports, on August 28, neighbors discovered antisemitic slogans, such as “Death to the Jews,” painted on the wall of the cemetery and an adjoining barn in Rouffach, located in Upper Rhine Department. President of the Grand East Region Jean Rottner immediately condemned the incident on Twitter and called for an inquiry.

On August 11, local media in Brittany reported that a monument to French Holocaust survivor and European Parliament president Simone Veil in Perros-Guirec had been defaced three times with excrement and swastikas. On August 24, following a joint investigation conducted by gendarmes and the Central Office for the Fight against Crimes Against Humanity, two men were arrested. The local prosecutor announced on August 26 that the men were formally charged with aggravated degradation, aggravated public insult, and incitement to hatred charges, and were released on bail, with conditions. A trial had not been scheduled by year’s end.

On August 7, antipolice graffiti was discovered on the walls of the Nour El Mohamadi Mosque in central Bordeaux, which was vandalized twice in 2020. A police investigation was ongoing at year’s end.

On April 11, unidentified individuals defaced the Avicenne Muslim Cultural Center in Rennes with anti-Muslim graffiti, prompting a same-day visit by Interior Minister Darmanin and CFCM President Moussaoui. The Rennes prosecutor opened an investigation for vandalism of a religious nature. On April 29, vandals again defaced the Avicenne Muslim Cultural Center and a nearby halal butcher shop with anti-Muslim graffiti referencing a recent Islamist terror attack in Rambouillet, presidential candidate Melanchon, and right-wing monarchist group Action Française. Action Française denied responsibility for the vandalism. Elected officials and the regional prefect issued statements condemning the vandalism and affirming support for the Muslim community. The CFCM also condemned the incident as “a new and cowardly” provocation.

On December 10, unknown persons vandalized dozens of tombs in the Muslim cemetery in the town of Mulhouse, knocking flowers and ornaments off the graves, according to press reports. Mulhouse Mayor Michele Lutz condemned the vandalism.

On January 4, press reported local officials discovered swastikas and antisemitic graffiti spray painted on the walls of churches in Echouboulains and Ecrennes and the town hall of Vaux-le-Penil. Vandals had painted near-identical graffiti a week earlier on graves at a local cemetery and at a nativity scene in the nearby towns of Fontainebleau and Melun. The prefect of Seine-et-Marne Department and the mayor of Echouboulains condemned the vandalism, and Seine-et-Marne authorities opened an investigation.

On April 17, “The Return of Satan,” “Traitors,” and antisemitic graffiti were scrawled in red paint on the Saint-Sernin Basilica and in surrounding areas in Toulouse. Mayor Jean-Luc Moudenc condemned the vandalism. Local press said they believed far-right agitators could be behind the vandalism to create the impression of a Muslim attack on both Catholics and Jews.

The investigation of the 2020 killing of three Catholic worshippers in the Basilica of Notre Dame in the southern city of Nice continued at year’s end. The suspect in the killings, identified as Brahim Aouissaoui, an asylum seeker from Tunisia who entered the country shortly before the attack, remained in prison. The national counterterrorism prosecutor’s office said it was treating the attack as a terrorist incident.

On November 9, a Paris prosecutor requested a 32-year prison sentence for Yacine Mihoub, convicted of killing Holocaust survivor Mireille Knoll in 2018 and 18

years in prison for his accomplice, Alex Carrimbacus. On November 10, the Paris Criminal Court sentenced Mihoub to life imprisonment, with no possibility of parole before 22 years. Carrimbacus was acquitted of murder but found guilty of theft and sentenced to 15 years in prison. The court ruled the killing was fueled by “a broader context of antisemitism” and “prejudices” about the purported wealth of Jewish people. The victim’s family said the verdict was “just.” On November 15, Mihoub’s lawyer announced his client had appealed the ruling, paving the way for a second trial.

On August 27, the Paris Criminal Court concluded it did not have jurisdiction to hear a case involving two men who in 2020 shouted antisemitic insults and assaulted a Jewish man, stole his watch, and beat him unconscious. The criminal court transferred the case to the Court of Assizes – which hears the most serious criminal cases – because the two men could face more than 15 years in prison on a charge of violent theft motivated by religious reasons. At year’s end, a trial had not been scheduled, and the two men remained in detention.

On July 2, the Seine-Saint-Denis Criminal Court sentenced nine individuals to prison, with sentences ranging from four to 12 years for the violent September 2017 robbery of a Jewish family in Livry-Gargan, a northern Paris suburb. The individuals were convicted of breaking into the home of Roger Pinto, the president of Siona, a group that represents Sephardic Jews, and beating Pinto’s son and wife. The court confirmed the antisemitic nature of the robbery. The Pinto family’s lawyer called the ruling “a victory for the law.” The convicted individuals’ lawyer announced her clients would not appeal the ruling.

On July 8, the Colmar Court of Appeals declared a man accused of attempted murder after crashing his car into a mosque in Colmar in 2019 criminally not responsible for his actions and ordered he be sent to a psychiatric hospital instead.

On July 7, the Paris Criminal Court handed down suspended prison sentences ranging from four to six months to 11 of 13 defendants after they were found guilty of harassing and threatening a 16-year-old student, Mila, online in Lyon in 2020. The 13 defendants represented a variety of backgrounds and religions; one had charges dismissed for procedural reasons, and another was acquitted. The court considered the case a “real business of harassment.” The student’s lawyer told the court Mila had received approximately 100,000 threatening messages, including death threats, rape threats, misogynist messages, and hateful messages about her homosexuality after she posted a vulgar anti-Islam video online. The student said she posted the video in response to a vulgar attack on her sexuality by a Muslim.

Mila was also forced to change schools and continued to live under police protection through year's end. In July, the student met with Chemsedine Hafiz, Rector of the Great Mosque of Paris.

On September 22, four men and four women appeared before the Paris Criminal Court for posting antisemitic tweets against April Benayoum, the runner-up in the 2021 Miss France competition. The eight were tried for “public insults committed because of origin, ethnicity, race, or religion.” Benayoum received numerous antisemitic comments on social media after revealing that her father was Israeli during the televised competition in 2020. Prosecutors requested suspended sentences of two months' imprisonment. On November 3, a Paris court ordered seven of the eight defendants to each pay fines ranging from 300 to 800 euros (\$340-\$910). Each of the seven was also ordered to pay one euro (\$1.13) in damages to the contestant and to each of several associations involved in combating racism and antisemitism which had joined the plaintiff in the lawsuit. Four of the defendants were also ordered to attend a two-day civic class. The court acquitted the eighth suspect, finding that his tweet did not target Benayoum directly.

On July 2, a Paris court sentenced French comedian Dieudonne M'Bala to four months in prison for “public insult of an antisemitic nature” and “contestation of a crime against humanity” for two 2020 videos regarding the Holocaust. M'Bala appealed the decision.

On May 19, the Paris Court of Appeals condemned writer Alain Soral, commonly described in the press as a right-wing extremist, to four months in prison, with work release during the day, for incitement to religious hatred for blaming the 2019 fire in Notre Dame Cathedral on Jews from Paris. In a separate case, the Court of Cassation on October 26 rejected Soral's appeal of a 2020 ruling by the Paris Court of Appeals that convicted him for contesting crimes against humanity for his remarks regarding the Holocaust and ordered Soral to pay a fine of 5,000 euros (\$5,700) or face imprisonment.

On October 19, a court in Metz sentenced teacher and former National Rally political candidate Cassandre Fristot to a suspended prison sentence of six months for “inciting racial hatred.” Fristot held a placard with antisemitic slogans at an antivaccine protest in August, sparking wide condemnation and prompting Interior Minister Darmanin to ask the Prefect of Moselle to take legal action. The court also ordered Fristot to pay fines of between one and 300 euros (\$1.13-\$340) to eight out of 13 groups, including CRIF and various NGOs, that joined the case as



plaintiffs. Education authorities also suspended Fristot from her teaching position on August 9, pending disciplinary action.

On May 18, the Lyon Criminal Court dropped charges against French-Palestinian activist Olivia Zemor, stating lack of evidence. An Israeli pharmaceutical company had sued Zemor for defamation and incitement to economic discrimination after she posted an article on Europalestine, a pro-Palestinian website, accusing the company of being complicit in “apartheid and occupation.”

According to media, on October 26, a court in Val d’Oise, a region north of Paris, gave an optician a one-year suspended prison sentence for having harassed a Jewish family returning from synagogue on August 21. The woman repeatedly gave the Nazi salute, shouted “Heil Hitler,” and told the family, “Dirty Jews, you are the shame of France.”

On October 29, the Paris Criminal Court declared Jean-Marie Le Pen, the 93-year-old founder of the National Front party, now known as National Rally, not guilty of charges of inciting racial hatred for comments targeting a Jewish pop singer. Asked in June 2014 about the French singer and actor Patrick Bruel, Le Pen referred to Bruel’s Jewish origins with a pun evoking the Holocaust, stating, “I’m not surprised. Listen, next time we’ll do a whole oven batch!” The court said Le Pen had clearly targeted Jews with his comment but that the statement did not amount to “inciting discrimination and violence.”

According to press reports, in September, the Correctional Tribunal of Toulouse acquitted Mohamed Tatai, the Rector of the Great Mosque of Toulouse, for a sermon he gave in Arabic in 2017 that prosecutors stated was antisemitic. In the sermon, posted on a U.S. website, Tatai said, “The Prophet Muhammad told us about the final and decisive battle: the last judgment will not come until Muslims battle Jews.” The court ruled that Tatai, who said he was mistranslated, had no desire to incite hatred in his sermon. Jewish leaders criticized the ruling. Franck Teboul, the president of the Toulouse chapter of the CRIF, likened the decision to the Court of Cassation’s ruling not to convict the killer of Sarah Halimi, and commented, “...so you tell thousands at a mosque to kill Jews and hide beyond a centuries-old text.” Abdallah Zakri, President of the Observatory for the Fight Against Islamophobia, called Tatai a moderate Muslim who had maintained good relations with Jews and Catholics and said his acquittal would undercut radical fundamentalists.

On January 5, the Correctional Court of Saint-Nazaire ordered a man to pay a 400-euro (\$450) fine and complete an internship on citizenship for posting in 2020 on social media, “You want to honor [Samuel Paty]? Go burn down the mosque in [the southern town of] Beziers to send the message that we are sick of it.”

On May 5, the Rhone Mosque Council published a request asking women not to attend mosques for the planned May 13 Eid al-Fitr prayer. Kamel Kabtane, the Rector of the Lyon Great Mosque, said this decision was due to the COVID-19 crisis, and added that the elderly and weak were also advised to stay home. He denied accusations of discrimination that were posted on social media stating individuals were trying to be malicious toward Muslims. Kabtane also said mosques did not have sufficient capacity to hold all worshippers and cited a note from the Ministry of the Interior prohibiting prefects and mayors from renting them larger spaces.

On October 5, the Catholic Church’s Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Church released its report on child abuse committed by Catholic priests, concluding that, not counting deceased victims, priests had abused 216,000 minors in the country between 1950 and 2020. Adding claims against lay members of the Church, such as teachers at Catholic schools, the report said the number of victims might total 330,000. Commission President Jean-Marc Sauve said the abuse was systemic and the Church had shown “deep, total, and even cruel indifference for years.” CEF President Archbishop de Moulins-Beaufort, who had requested the report along with Sister Veronique Margron, President of the Conference of Monks and Nuns of France, expressed “shame and horror” at the findings. The CEF said it would financially compensate victims by selling its own assets or taking on loans if needed and that an independent national commission would be set up to evaluate the claims. In a November 8 statement, CEF leadership recognized formally for the first time that the Church bore “an institutional responsibility” for the abuse and, in what they said was a gesture of penance, prayed on their knees at the sanctuary of Lourdes.

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

The Charge d’Affaires and other staff from the embassy, consulates general, and APPs engaged relevant government officials, including at the religious affairs offices of the Ministries of the Interior and Foreign Affairs and DILCRAH, on ways to combat antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred and strengthen religious freedom. Topics discussed included religious tolerance, antisemitic and anti-Muslim acts, the role of religious freedom in lessening violent extremism, the BDS

movement, Holocaust-related compensation, and bilateral cooperation on these issues. Embassy officials closely monitored official government positions on antisemitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian incidents.

Staff from the embassy, consulates general, and APPs met regularly in person and virtually with religious community leaders, activists, and private citizens throughout the country to discuss issues of discrimination and to advocate tolerance for diversity. Embassy officials discussed religious freedom, antisemitism, anti-Muslim sentiment, and interfaith dialogue and tolerance with senior Christian, Muslim, and Jewish representatives, and NGOs such as Coexister, an organization that promotes interfaith dialogue, and the American Jewish Committee (AJC) Europe. They also hosted meetings with representatives from CRIF, the Israelite Central Consistory of France, the CFCM, the Paris Great Mosque, and Catholic and Protestant representatives working on interfaith dialogue.

The embassy supported for a second year an interfaith program, “Kol Yoom,” with local NGO Institut Hozes. The program conducted interfaith “boot camps” gathering Jewish and Muslim teenagers from different social backgrounds to create shared experiences to foster tolerance and mutual understanding. The groups participated in workshops and community service activities and acted as a force of positive change in their communities. The embassy facilitated an Escape Zoom, an online cooperative game to foster ties between Jewish and Muslim students aged 12-17. In April, the Interfaith Tour documentary, *Le Temps des Olives* (the Olive Season), was screened online for the group, followed by a discussion of ways to build societal cohesion and fight against hate speech. The documentary portrayed four youths of different faiths from Coexister who conducted an eight-month world tour in 18 countries, funded in part by the embassy, to interview activists, academics, politicians, and interfaith leaders and to research projects to build diverse, inclusive, and sustainable societies.

On May 18, the Charge d’Affaires and the Consul General in Marseille took part in a conference at the Camp des Milles Holocaust Memorial and educational site. They discussed with other participants opportunities to raise Holocaust awareness and increase societal tolerance.

In September, embassy representatives met with Chemsedine Hafiz, Rector of the Grand Mosque of Paris, to discuss religious freedom, anti-Muslim sentiment, societal tolerance, and interfaith dialogue.

In September, the Consul General in Strasbourg hosted an interfaith roundtable with the Council of Europe, the Holy See's Ambassador to the council, and religious leaders from across the region, including Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, Jewish, and Muslim representatives from Alsace. Participants discussed current challenges presented by social media platforms regarding intolerance and radicalization, and ideas on how to bring interfaith discussion to the international identity of Strasbourg, in partnership with the Council of Europe.

During the year, the Consul General in Marseille held a series of meetings with religious leaders to discuss religious freedom issues. The Consul General met with the Regional Council of the Muslim Faith (CRCM) in the Midi Pyrenees Region and the CRCM spokesperson in Toulouse on February 18, where they discussed preventing violent extremism, the Upholding Republican Values law, and tolerance and acceptance towards Muslims in French and American society. On March 2, she met with the CRIF Marseille president and discussed tolerance and acceptance towards Jews, and Jewish and Muslim cooperation and understanding in Marseille's northern neighborhoods. In April, she held a virtual iftar with the Muslim community of the Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur Region, with attendees from Marseille, Avignon, Nice, and Carpentras at which they discussed the Ramadan traditions of the North African diaspora in Southern France, countering violent extremism in prisons, the Upholding Republican Values law, and the importance of interfaith dialogue in increasing societal tolerance. On May 25, she met with the Vaucluse Jewish community and the CRCM representative for Vaucluse, and visited the Carpentras Synagogue and the Carpentras Mosque. At the synagogue, she and Jewish community representatives discussed how community members were working to preserve their Jewish traditions within their congregation. In the mosque, she and Muslim community representatives discussed how Muslim leaders were helping newcomers integrate into the country, especially with material support for young families and with literacy education.

On October 2-4, an official from the consulate general in Marseille and representatives of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum visited the Camp de Rivesaltes Memorial site in the Pyrenees Orientales Region and met with the memorial's staff to explore opportunities for cooperation on Holocaust remembrance. The camp was a transit point for deportees who were later sent to Nazi extermination camps.

APP Rennes officials met with Marc Brzustowski and Philippe Strol, respectively Vice President and President of the Rennes synagogue, on September 22 to discuss religious freedom, antisemitism, and opportunities for interfaith dialogue. In

October, APP Rennes officials discussed opportunities for interfaith dialogue with local government officials.

APP Lyon officials attended the investiture of the new Grand Rabbi of Lyon and the Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes Region, Daniel Dahan, in October. The Consul spoke with the Grand Rabbi and other Jewish leaders regarding their concerns about the growth of antisemitism in the region.

On November 11, the Second Gentleman of the United States visited the Shoah Memorial in Paris to pay homage to victims of the Holocaust while marking Franco-American resolve to combat contemporary antisemitism. He lit a memorial candle in honor of the 76,000 Jews deported from the country under Vichy rule at the Wall of Names that lists the victims.

The embassy regularly amplified messages from the Secretary of State and Department of State on religious freedom on embassy social media platforms in French and in English. For example, in May and July, it posted remarks by the Secretary on religious freedom as a human right. The Charge d’Affaires also published messages related to religious holidays on his Twitter accounts to highlight the diversity of religions and high-level engagement on religious freedom issues. These included posts on Yom Kippur, Easter, Ramadan, Naw Ruz, and Holi, among others.