

# DENMARK 2021 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

## Executive Summary

The constitution guarantees the right of individuals to worship according to their beliefs. The constitution establishes the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) as the national church, granting it privileges not available to other religious groups. The Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs is responsible for granting official status to religious groups other than the ELC through recognition by royal decree (for groups recognized prior to 1970) or through official registration. Congregations are not required to register by law, though registration is required to receive tax benefits. Religious communities must comply with annual reporting requirements to maintain their government recognition. In January, prior to parliamentary debate on 2020 draft legislation to mandate the translation of sermons into Danish, the Danish Council of Churches sent an open letter to Prime Minister Frederiksen opposing the legislation. The letter noted, “We welcome the broader political intention of integrating ethnic minorities in an open and pluralistic Danish society – but we see dangers in a law leading to religious harassment.” The letter stated that the draft legislation was “discriminatory and ill-considered” and would impose “significant burdens” on economically weak minority religious groups. In March, parliament approved a new law that bans foreign countries from funding and financing mosques in the country. The new law garnered support from all major political parties. Social Democrat Immigration and Integration Minister Mattias Tesfaye labeled the law as an important step to curb what he termed “Islamist extremism.” In a report released in September and drawn from data collected in 2019, the Pew Research Center categorized the country as having “moderate government restrictions on religion,” the second level in the report’s four-tiered system (low, moderate, high, and very high government restrictions). In November, the Immigration Service updated its national sanctions list of religious preachers barred from entering the country to include 21 individuals; five were U.S. citizens. The Ministry of Immigration and Integration stated the individuals were barred from entering the country for the “sake of the nation’s public order,” but provided no additional details.

In January, witnesses discovered the words “[expletive] the Quran,” accompanied by a drawing of a hand with the middle finger up, painted on the side of the mosque belonging to the Danish-Turkish Islamic Foundation in Aabenraa, in the southern part of the country. This was the third time vandals damaged the mosque since 2019. By year’s end, authorities had not arrested anyone for the incident. In April, vandals placed two dolls in nooses near a grave in the Jewish cemetery in

Aalborg and poured red paint over the dolls and the wall surrounding the cemetery. The vandals also left antisemitic flyers referring to a website for the right-wing radical organization Nordic Resistance Movement near the dolls. Police charged a man with vandalism and racism for the crime, and in June, a court sentenced him to one year in prison. He appealed the verdict and authorities released him in November, with the court expected to rule on his appeal in January 2022.

The U.S. Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues met with the Special Representative for Freedom of Religion or Belief to encourage the country to include the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's examples in applying the alliance's definition. Embassy officials met with parliamentarians and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Office of the Special Representative for Freedom of Religion or Belief to emphasize the importance the United States places on religious freedom, and to discuss ways to combat anti-Muslim sentiment and antisemitism. Embassy officials expressed concerns about legislation proposing to ban circumcision and requiring translation of sermons into Danish, and urged support for the protection of religious expression. Embassy officials engaged with religious leaders from the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities throughout the year to discuss issues including the debate on the proposed circumcision ban, the ban on ritual slaughter, the proposed bill requiring the translation of sermons into Danish, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their faith practices. Embassy officials met with representatives from the Danish Islamic Center, Muslim World League, and Danish Muslim Aid to discuss interfaith engagement opportunities and challenges for Muslims in the country, including anti-Muslim sentiment.

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

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 5.9 million (midyear 2021). As of the end of 2021, 73.2 percent of the Danish population were ELC members according to Statistics Denmark. In 2021, 8,961 members left the ELC, representing the lowest yearly number who departed that church since 2007. A church historian at the University of Copenhagen attributed this development to the pandemic, which highlighted the importance of religious communities. The Danish government does not collect data on religious affiliation outside of the ELC. A professor estimated in April 2020 that there are approximately 250,000 Muslims, accounting for 4.4 percent of the population. Muslims are concentrated in the largest cities, particularly Copenhagen, Odense, and Aarhus. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimates other religious groups, each constituting less than 1 percent of the population, to include, in descending order of size, Roman Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, Serbian Orthodox Christians, Jews, Baptists,

Buddhists, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Pentecostals, members of the Baha'i Faith, and nondenominational Christians. According to a 2020 survey released by the Ministry of Immigration and Integration, approximately 11 percent of the population does not identify as belonging to a religious group or identifies as atheist. The organization Jewish Community in Denmark estimates between 6,000 and 8,000 Jews live in the country, mostly in the Copenhagen area.

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

### **Legal Framework**

The constitution declares the ELC as the country's established church, which shall receive state support and to which the reigning monarch must belong. The constitution also states individuals shall be free to form congregations to worship according to their beliefs, provided that nothing "contrary to good morals or public order shall be taught or done." The constitution stipulates no person may be deprived of access to the full enjoyment of civil and political rights because of religious beliefs and that these beliefs shall not be used to evade compliance with any common civic duty. It prohibits requiring individuals to make personal financial contributions to religious denominations to which they do not adhere.

The law prohibits hate speech, including religious hate speech, and specifies as penalties a fine (amount unspecified) or a maximum of two years' imprisonment. The law also prohibits the incitement of terrorism, murder, rape or violence in connection with religious movements or training and specifies penalties, including a fine or a maximum of three years' imprisonment.

The ELC is the only religious group that receives funding through state grants and voluntary, tax-deductible contributions paid through payroll deduction by its members. Voluntary payroll deduction contributions account for an estimated 79 percent of the ELC's operating budget, and government grants contribute another 10 percent; the remaining 11 percent comes from a variety of activities, such as revenue from use of Church property. Members of other recognized religious communities may not contribute via payroll deduction but may donate to their own community voluntarily and receive a tax deduction. The ELC and other state-recognized religious communities have the authority to carry out registration of civil unions and name changes. The ELC also registers births and deaths of its members.

The Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs is responsible for granting official status to religious groups other than the ELC through recognition by royal decree (for groups recognized prior to 1970) or through official registration. Congregations are not required to register by law, although registration is required to receive tax benefits. Religious communities must comply with annual reporting requirements to maintain their government recognition. According to the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs, there are 448 religious groups and congregations the government officially recognizes or that are affiliated with recognized groups: 338 Christian, 65 Muslim, 16 Buddhist, seven Hindu, three Jewish, and 19 other groups and congregations, including Baha'is, the Alevi community, and followers of the indigenous Norse belief system *Forn Sidr*.

Recognized religious groups may perform legal marriage ceremonies, name and baptize children with legal effect, issue legal death certificates, obtain residence permits for foreign clergy, establish cemeteries, and receive various value added tax exemptions. The law allows only religious communities recognized before 1970 to issue birth, baptismal, and marriage certificates. In accordance with the 2018 law recognizing religions outside the ELC, this privilege will expire for all religious communities except the ELC in 2023. Members of other religious communities or individuals unaffiliated with a recognized religious group may have birth and death certificates issued by the health authority.

The state entitles groups not recognized by either royal decree or the registration process, such as the Church of Scientology, to engage in religious practices without public registration. The state does not grant unrecognized religious groups full tax-exempt status, but members may deduct contributions to these groups from their taxes.

The law codifies the registration process for religious communities other than the ELC and treats equally those recognized by royal decree and those approved through registration. A religious community must have at least 50 adult members who have resident status and possess Danish citizenship. For congregations located in sparsely populated regions such as Greenland, the government applies a lower population threshold, which varies according to the total population of the region.

Religious groups seeking registration must submit a document describing the group's central traditions and most important rituals to the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs. A group applying for registration must also provide a copy of its rules, regulations, and organizational structure; an audited financial statement

(which it must submit annually); information about the group's leadership; and a statement on the number of adult members permanently residing in the country. Groups also must have formal procedures for membership and make their teachings available to all members. The ministry makes the final decision on registration applications after receiving recommendations from a group consisting of a lawyer, religious historian, sociologist of religion, and nonordained theologian. Religious groups that do not submit the annual financial statement or other required information may lose their registration status.

The law prohibits masks and face coverings, including burqas and niqabs, in public spaces. Violators face fines ranging from 1,000 to 10,000 Danish kroner (\$150-\$1,500). Fines are 1,000 kroner (\$150) for the first offense, 2,000 kroner (\$310) for the second, 5,000 kroner (\$760) for the third, and 10,000 kroner (\$1,500) for the fourth and subsequent offenses.

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

The law requires persons to shake hands during their naturalization ceremonies to obtain Danish citizenship, although authorities suspended the requirement during the COVID-19 pandemic. In December, the government passed a bill reintroducing the handshake requirement for citizenship ceremonies starting January 1, 2022.

All public and private schools, including religious schools, receive government financial support. The Ministry of Children and Education oversees private schools, which includes supervising teaching standards, regulating compliance with the country's regulations on curriculum, and financial screening. The Board of Education and Quality conducts systematic monitoring and has authority to issue directives to individual institutions, withhold grants, and terminate financial support. Public schools must teach ELC theology. The instructors are public school teachers rather than individuals provided by the ELC. Religion classes are compulsory in grades 1-9, although students may be exempted if a parent presents a request in writing. No alternative classes are offered.

The ELC course curriculum in grades 1-6 focuses on life philosophies and ethics, biblical stories, and the history of Christianity. In grades 7-9, the curriculum adds a module on world religions. The course is optional in grade 10. If the student is 15 or older, the student and parent must jointly request the student's exemption. Private schools must teach religion classes in grades 1-9, including world religions

in grades 7-9. The religion classes taught in grades 1-9 need not include ELC theology. The law allows collective prayer in schools but each school must regulate prayer in a neutral, nondiscriminatory manner, and students must be allowed to opt out of participating.

The law requires parents in communities with significant non-Western populations to send children from one year of age to government-funded daycare, where they learn what are considered to be Danish values, including Christmas and Easter traditions. The penalty for noncompliance is the loss of quarterly welfare benefits of up to 4,557 kroner (\$700).

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

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

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

By law, the Ministry of Immigration and Integration may prevent entry by foreign religious figures who do not already have a residence permit if it determines their presence poses a threat to public order. In such cases, the ministry places the

individuals on a national sanctions list and bars them from entry for two years, a period which it may extend. The sanctions list does not apply to European Union nationals and residents.

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

### **Government Practices**

In January, prior to parliamentary debate on 2020 draft legislation to mandate the translation of sermons into Danish, the Danish Council of Churches sent an open letter to Prime Minister Frederiksen opposing the legislation. The letter noted, “We welcome the broader political intention of integrating ethnic minorities in an open and pluralistic Danish society – but we see dangers in a law leading to religious harassment.” The letter stated that the draft legislation was “discriminatory and ill-considered” and would impose “significant burdens” on economically weak minority religious groups. Similarly, in February the Islamic Faith Society published a press release with concerns over the proposed bill’s potential to increase the alienation of Danish Muslims, referring to it as “an encroachment on religious freedom” and “a clear obstacle to the Danish Muslims’ practice of their religion.” In July, the government postponed indefinitely plans to introduce the legislation, which had been sponsored by the ruling Social Democratic Party but opposed by ELC, Muslim, Jewish, and Catholic religious leaders.

Representatives of the Muslim and Jewish communities continued to express frustration at the country’s limitations on slaughter of livestock meeting their religious requirements but reported that halal and kosher meat could be imported from within the European Union.

In March, parliament approved a new law that bans foreign countries from funding and financing mosques in the country. The new law garnered support from all major political parties. Social Democrat Immigration and Integration Minister Mattias Tesfaye labeled the law an important step to curb what he termed “Islamist extremism.” The law states, “Anyone who receives one or more donations that individually or together exceed 10,000 kroner (\$1,500) within 12 consecutive calendar months from a natural or legal person who is included on the public ban list is punishable by a fine.”

In March, the parliamentary Legal Committee held a hearing focusing on hate crimes committed against Muslim women in the country at the request of Free

Greens parliamentarian Sikandar Siddique. During the hearing, Siddique criticized the government for not doing enough to publicly denounce incidents, such as a confrontation between an elderly couple and a Muslim woman in a suburb of Copenhagen in February. In that incident, a Muslim woman reported that an elderly woman repeatedly slammed her car door into her car and when the young woman confronted the woman and her husband, they called her a racial slur and spat on her. Police charged the elderly couple with assault and the husband with threatening violence, as well as vandalism. In May, the court sentenced the husband to 50 days' probation, subsequently lowered to 60 days of community service because this was his first offense. The court acquitted his wife.

Siddique contrasted what he termed the government's weak reaction to attacks against Muslims to what he said was its stronger response to hate crimes against the Jewish community. He called for an action plan to combat what he labeled Islamophobia. In response to Siddique's comments, Minister of Justice Nick Haekkerup cited improved prosecution efforts for hate crimes and strengthened police training on identifying and handling hate crimes. In October, Siddique and his parents were targets of hate speech outside of parliament when a man accosted them and shouted at them, "Go home," and "Your Arabic culture has no place in Denmark, you're not welcome here."

In March, parliament amended the law for religion instructors seeking to extend their residency permits, raising the required passing grade for the test in competency in the Danish language and knowledge of Denmark and Danish society to qualify for an extension.

In April, Jakob Naesager, chairman of the Copenhagen municipality resident committee and member of the Conservative People's Party, stated that municipal legislation should be changed to ban the Islamic call to prayer in that city in the absence of national level legislation to do so. Legislators took no action on it during the year.

On May 18, parliament failed to pass legislation proposed in 2020 to ban and criminalize ritual circumcision for boys under the age of 18. The vote followed extensive political and public debate, including opposition from Prime Minister Frederiksen, leader of the largest opposition party Jakob Ellemann-Jensen, and Jewish community leaders. The Institute for Human Rights (IHR) stated that the proposed ban would have been "a significant encroachment on religious freedom." The Society of Anesthesiology and Intensive Care Medicine supported the legislation, which was proposed for the third year in a row in 2020. Despite the

government's opposition, approximately 74 percent of the public supported the ban according to an April opinion poll conducted by the Danish research firm Epinion. In a similar poll conducted by the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Jewish Community in September, only 38 percent of respondents supported the ban, due to a different phrasing of the question. Representatives from the Jewish and Muslim communities expressed concern that parliament could take up the bill again after the next parliamentary election, which will take place no later than June 2023.

In May, the Danish People's Party (DPP) proposed requiring that cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad and discussion of the 2005 controversy surrounding publication of those caricatures be included in school curricula. In a media interview, DPP parliamentary faction leader Peter Skaarup said the cartoon controversy is "part of Danish history" and reflected the country's "firm stance" in favor of free speech. Skaarup said the requirement would be "a protection for teachers who are under threat today because they want to show what the Muhammad cartoons are about, but they cannot be allowed to do so because someone is coming and threatening them." At the Socialist People's Party's annual meeting in September, Party Chair Pia Olsen Dyhr said there was a need for teachers to be able to use such "tools" in a classroom setting without fearing consequences. The Chair of the Union of Teachers said the DPP proposal, which was not presented as draft legislation, would still leave the choice of whether to include the cartoons to the teachers. Representatives from the Muslim community expressed concerns that if the proposal became enacted legislation, it would further fuel anti-Muslim sentiment.

In June, the government reached an agreement with five major political parties to modify the 2018 policy to reduce the number of what are termed "parallel societies" by 2030. The agreement passed as legislation in November and replaced the term "ghetto" with the term "parallel society," which the government defined as a neighborhood with more than 1,000 residents where at least two criteria based on employment, income, education, and crime rates were met and where the proportion of non-Western immigrants and their descendants exceeded 50 percent. The agreement also introduced a new category called "prevention areas," defined as meeting two of four socioeconomic criteria and where the proportion of non-Western immigrants and their descendants exceeded 30 percent. The stated goal of the agreement was to prevent the emergence of new parallel societies by reducing the percentage of non-Western residents in such neighborhoods to less than 30 percent within 10 years, according to the Ministry of the Interior and Housing website. In May, parliament had rejected a civil society petition that received

55,000 signatures calling for the pre-November “ghetto” law to be repealed altogether.

Media continued to widely interpret “non-Western” to mean Muslim-majority communities. In March, Minister of Housing and the Interior Kaare Dybvad Bek said the government’s goal was to “prevent more vulnerable residential areas” by “creating more mixed residential areas” throughout the country. He also said, “The term ghetto is misleading....This is about helping the residents and creating equal opportunities for all children, no matter where they grow up in Denmark.” The November legislation required neighborhoods classified as parallel societies for four years in a row to reduce the amount of public housing in their area by 40 percent through demolition, sale, or privatization. The government would be responsible for rehousing evicted individuals. The legislation aimed to integrate Danish residents from these neighborhoods into other neighborhoods to reduce “the risk of an emergence of religious and cultural parallel societies,” according to Bek. The legislation also mandated that parents living in those areas send their children to daycare to learn Danish values, and doubled penalties and sentences for crimes committed in the neighborhoods, such as vandalism, burglary, arson, drug offenses, and possession of weapons.

One activist from a neighborhood affected by the legislation said, “The ghetto lists and ghetto legislation are an expression of the politicians’ desire to change the composition of the population [in those areas].” Some NGOs said that the government’s language regarding societal integration stemmed from anti-Muslim sentiment and therefore focused on predominately Muslim immigrant communities. DIHR advocated for the removal of ethnic origin from the legislation’s criteria to avoid discrimination, and it said the term “parallel society” could be as stigmatizing as the term “ghetto.” Several NGOs demonstrated against the new legislation on December 1 when the Interior Minister announced additions to the list of areas to be covered by the legislation.

In a report released in September and drawn from data collected in 2019, the Pew Research Center categorized the country as having “moderate government restrictions on religion,” the second level in the report’s four-tiered system (low, moderate, high, and very high government restrictions).

In November, the Immigration Service updated its national sanctions list of religious preachers barred from entering the country to include 21 individuals; five were U.S. citizens. The Ministry of Immigration and Integration stated the

individuals were barred from entering the country for “the “sake of the nation’s public order” but provided no additional details.

In consultation with Jewish Community, the government continued to provide security for sites considered to be at high risk of a terrorist attack, including Copenhagen’s synagogue, community center, and one school.

In a December letter to parliament, DIHR reiterated the need for religious communities to be able to apply for COVID-19 exemptions to permit services, weddings, and funerals to protect their religious freedom in future revisions of the Epidemic Act, which governed the country’s COVID-19 protocols. Most leaders of faith groups, however, reported that the pandemic did not have a major impact on their religious services, as they were able to adapt by implementing safety protocols such as social distancing.

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

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

Police reported 194 religiously motivated crimes in 2020, the most recent year for which statistics were available, 8 percent more than in 2019, in which 180 such crimes were reported. There were 87 crimes reported against Muslims, compared with 109 in 2019; 79 against Jews, compared with 51 in 2019; 25 against Christians, compared with eight cases in 2019; and three against members of other religions or belief groups, compared with 12 in 2019. Most incidents involved harassment, hate speech, and vandalism, including desecration of cemeteries, and mainly affected the Muslim and Jewish communities. The report cited hate speech as the most common type of religiously motivated hate crime. In 2020, 45 percent of religiously motivated hate crime cases reported were directed at Muslims. The number of hate crime cases committed against Jews increased significantly since 2018, when there were 26 cases reported. The police report attributed the 2020 increase in hate crimes against Christians to the 12 cases of parish priests who received threatening text messages in April and May that year.

Police Inspector Claus Birkelyng said it was unclear whether the increase in reports in 2020 reflected an increase in actual crimes or a higher number of reported crimes than in previous years. He also said there had been an increase in hate crimes committed online compared with previous years, from 128 in 2019 to

164 in 2020. Of the 164 reported online hate crimes, 99 were identified as religiously motivated, of which 32 were directed at Muslims and 51 at Jews.

In January, witnesses discovered the words “[expletive] the Quran,” accompanied by a drawing of a hand with the middle finger up, painted on the side of the mosque belonging to the Danish-Turkish Islamic Foundation in Aabenraa, in the southern part of the country. This was the third time vandals damaged the mosque since 2019. By year’s end, officials had not arrested anyone for the incident.

In April, vandals placed two dolls in nooses near a grave in the Jewish cemetery in Aalborg and poured red paint over the dolls and the wall surrounding the cemetery. The vandals also left antisemitic flyers referring to a website for the right-wing radical organization Nordic Resistance Movement near the dolls. Police charged a man with vandalism and racism for the crime and in June, and a court sentenced him to one year in prison. He appealed the verdict and officials released him in November, with the court expected to rule on his appeal in January 2022.

On April 6, a court sentenced a man to nine months in prison for racism, violation of the peace of a graveyard, and gross vandalism against a grave in a Jewish cemetery in Randers in 2019.

In May, a video of a Danish man verbally abusing a Muslim couple and their two small children went viral, prompting several politicians, including Prime Minister Frederiksen, to condemn the act. Frederiksen said, “We all have a responsibility to speak out – against racism, hate, and discrimination. It doesn’t belong in Denmark.”

In July, the newspaper *Kristeligt Dagblad* released the findings of a survey the paper had conducted among 81 Muslim associations in the country. The survey found that 30 percent of the associations contacted had been vandalized since January 2017. The incidents ranged from graffiti and stickers promoting hatred on walls to door handles wrapped in bacon. The survey reported that in two-thirds of the cases, the mosque or organization involved did not report the incident to the police. In a media report about the survey, Ismail Celik, chairman of the mosque in Odense and spokesman for the Danish-Turkish Islamic Foundation said, “People are worried about the hatred of Muslims. We want to be part of society and we want to be respected in the community.” Similarly, a study released by the Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs in February showed that 19 percent of all churches had experienced vandalism since 2017.

In its report released in September, the Pew Research Center categorized the country as having “moderate societal hostility to religion.”

In September, a Danish-Somalian family appeared on television after being harassed by their downstairs neighbor in Copenhagen. The family showed videos, including a clip in which the neighbor yelled “You know what you are? You are dirty Muslim animals.” Authorities did not file charges in this case.

Also in September, unknown persons physically and verbally assaulted a Muslim woman at a public library in Copenhagen, where an individual called her a “Muslim [expletive]” and told her to “take that [expletive] off,” referring to her hijab. Authorities charged the perpetrator with assault. No further information emerged on the case.

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

The U.S. Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues met with the Special Representative for Freedom of Religion or Belief to encourage the country to include the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s examples in applying the alliance’s definition. Embassy officials met with parliamentarians and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Office of the Special Representative for Freedom of Religion or Belief to emphasize the importance the United States places on religious freedom, and to discuss ways to combat anti-Muslim sentiment and antisemitism. Embassy officials expressed concerns about legislation proposing to ban circumcision and requiring translation of sermons into Danish, and urged support for the protection of religious expression.

Embassy officials engaged with religious leaders from the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities throughout the year to discuss issues including the proposed circumcision ban, the ban on ritual slaughter, the proposed bill requiring the translation of sermons into Danish, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their faith practices. Embassy officials met with representatives from the Danish Islamic Center, Muslim World League, and Danish Muslim Aid to discuss interfaith engagement opportunities and challenges for Muslims in the country, including anti-Muslim sentiment.

The embassy funded a project designed by the Jewish Community to survey attitudes and knowledge about male circumcision and to create a website to counter misinformation related to this topic. Representatives of the organization discussed their concerns about negative societal attitudes, which they attributed to

increasing antisemitism in the country and fueled by extremists such as the Nordic Resistance Movement. Embassy officials also supported the development of a national action plan to combat antisemitism.

Embassy officials also met with Christian groups, including representatives from the ELC and Roman Catholic Church, and discussed the proposed requirement for sermon translation, as well as broader issues of religious freedom and practice. The embassy engaged with interfaith organizations, including the NGOs Religion and Society, the Islamic Christian Study Center, and DIHR, to discuss efforts to increase interfaith dialogue and understanding.

On May 6, the Charge d’Affaires hosted an iftar with leaders of the Muslim community and discussed issues pertaining to religious freedom and the groups’ concerns, including the ban on ritual slaughter, the proposed circumcision ban, and the proposed bill requiring the translation of sermons into Danish.