

GERMANY 2021 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution prohibits religious discrimination and provides for freedom of faith and conscience and the practice of one's religion. The country's 16 states exercise considerable autonomy on registration of religious groups and other matters. Unrecognized religious groups are ineligible for tax benefits. The federal government banned the Muslim association Ansaar International, stating it financed terrorism, and Hamburg's intelligence service said it would classify the Islamic Center Hamburg (IZH) as an organization receiving "direct orders from Tehran." Federal and some state offices of the domestic intelligence service continued to monitor the activities of numerous Muslim groups and mosques, as well as the Church of Scientology (COS). Certain states continued to ban or restrict the use of religious clothing or symbols, including headscarves, for some state employees. A ruling on two German cases by the Court of Justice of the European Union said the needs of employers could outweigh an employee's right to wear religious clothing and symbols. Senior government leaders continued to condemn antisemitism and anti-Muslim sentiment and acts. In speeches in September and October, then Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed regret that public antisemitism had increased in the country and said Germany would expend great strength to resist it. The first antisemitism commissioner for the state of Hamburg assumed office in July; Bremen remained the only state without such a position.

There were numerous reports of antisemitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian incidents. These included assaults, verbal harassment, threats, discrimination, vandalism, and demonstrations. In separate incidents, two Jewish men were hospitalized after being severely beaten and suffering broken bones in the face. In May, there was an outbreak of antisemitic demonstrations and attacks, some of them violent, as well as vandalism and assaults across the country, during violence in the Middle East. According to figures collected by the Federal Criminal Police Office, as of November 5, there had been 1,850 antisemitic crimes reported during the year, including 35 involving physical violence leading to 17 persons injured. Ministry of Interior crime statistics for 2020, the most recent year for which complete data were available, cited 2,351 antisemitic crimes, an increase of 15.7 percent from 2019, attributing 2,224 (94.6 percent) of them to the far right. Fifty-seven of the antisemitic crimes involved violence. The ministry registered 929 crimes targeting Muslims and Muslim institutions – including 79 against places of worship and 51 involving battery – and 141 anti-Christian crimes, including seven involving violence. The ministry classified most of the perpetrators of anti-Muslim crimes as right-wing extremists; the composition of those acting against Christians was mixed. The partially

government-funded Federal Association of Departments for Research and Information on Antisemitism (RIAS) attributed the increase in antisemitic incidents to the large number of demonstrations against measures to contain COVID-19 or to other COVID-related issues, classifying 489 antisemitic incidents as connected to the pandemic. Demonstrations also occurred expressing anti-Muslim sentiment. In September, the Brussels-based nongovernmental organization (NGO) Action and Protection League issued the results of its European antisemitism survey, which found that 10 percent of 1,000 respondents ages 18-75 in Germany said they had negative feelings towards Jews.

In June, then Foreign Minister Heiko Maas and the U.S. Secretary of State launched the U.S.-Germany Dialogue on Holocaust Issues to promote accurate Holocaust education and information and to combat Holocaust denial and distortion and antisemitism. The U.S. embassy and five consulates general assessed the government's responses to incidents of religious intolerance and met with a wide range of officials at all levels and with federal and state legislators. They expressed concerns regarding antisemitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian acts, and advocated for more law enforcement and other resources to prevent violent attacks on religious communities. Consuls General met with state-level government representatives, including antisemitism commissioners. The embassy and consulates general maintained a dialogue with a broad spectrum of religious communities and human rights NGOs on their concerns regarding religious freedom and on ways to promote tolerance and communication among religious groups. The embassy and consulates worked closely with Jewish communities to support programs promoting religious tolerance and understanding, while countering antisemitism and extremism targeting religion. The embassy utilized virtual and in-person speaker programs and workshops to help preserve accurate Holocaust narratives and expand discussion of religious freedom issues. The Frankfurt Consul General visited Ulm's Jewish community in June following an attack on a synagogue there. The Charge d'Affaires and the Leipzig Consul General visited Halle, the site of a fatal 2019 attack on a synagogue, where they met with members of the Jewish community to discuss antisemitism, religious tolerance, and Jewish life in the east of the country. The embassy made extensive use of social media to amplify U.S. government messaging and disseminate its own original content advocating religious freedom.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 79.9 million (midyear 2021). Unofficial estimates based on the census and figures provided by religious groups indicate approximately 27 percent of the population is Catholic

and 25 percent belongs to the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD) – a confederation of Lutheran, Reformed (Calvinist), and United (Prussian Union) Protestant regional churches. Other Protestant denominations, including the New Apostolic Church, Baptist communities, and nondenominational Christians, account for approximately 2 percent of the population. Orthodox Christians represent 1.9 percent of the population.

According to government estimates published in April, approximately 6.6 percent of the population is Muslim, of which 74 percent is Sunni, 8 percent Alevi, 4 percent Shia, 1 percent Ahmadi, and 1 percent other affiliations such as Alawites and Sufis. The remaining 12 percent of Muslims in the country say they are not affiliated with any of the above groups or are unwilling to disclose an affiliation. Intelligence officials estimate there are approximately 12,150 Salafi Muslims in the country. Estimates of the Jewish population vary widely; the Federal Ministry of the Interior estimates it at 95,000, while other estimates place the number at approximately 190,000 when including Jews who do not belong to a specific Jewish community. According to the secular NGO Religious Studies Media and Information Service (REMID), Buddhists (270,000); Jehovah's Witnesses (167,000); Hindus (100,000); Yezidis (100,000); members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Church of Jesus Christ) (40,000); Sikhs (10,000-15,000); and members of the COS (3,400) together constitute less than 1 percent of the population. All of REMID's estimates are based on members who have registered with a religious group. According to the nonprofit Research Group Worldviews Germany, approximately 39 percent of the population either has no religious affiliation or belongs to religious groups not counted in government statistics.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on religious opinion and provides for freedom of faith and conscience, freedom to profess a religious or philosophical creed, and freedom to practice one's religion. It also prohibits an official state church. It stipulates no one shall be required to disclose his or her religious convictions nor be compelled to participate in religious acts. The constitution states religious instruction shall be part of the curriculum in public schools, and parents have the right to decide whether their children receive religious instruction. It recognizes the right to establish private denominational schools. The constitution guarantees the freedom to form religious societies and permits groups to organize themselves for private religious purposes without constraint. It allows registered religious groups with Public Law Corporation

(PLC) status to receive public subsidies from the states and to provide religious services in the military, hospitals, and prisons.

A federal law prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

The federal criminal code prohibits calling for violence, inciting hatred, or taking arbitrary measures against religious groups or their members. Violations are punishable by up to five years in prison. It also prohibits “assaulting the human dignity of religious groups or their members by insulting, maliciously maligning, or defaming them,” specifying a maximum penalty of five years in prison, although prison sentences are rare. The prohibition and penalties apply equally to online speech. In addition, the federal criminal code prohibits insulting a domestic religious organization, its institutions or practices, or the religious beliefs or world views of another person, if doing so could disturb the public peace. Violations are punishable by a fine or up to three years in prison but are rarely prosecuted. The federal criminal code prohibits disturbing religious services or acts of worship, with violators subject to a fine or imprisonment for up to three years. The law bans Nazi propaganda, Holocaust denial, and fomenting racial hatred, specifying a penalty of up to five years’ imprisonment.

By law, social media companies with more than two million registered users in the country must implement procedures to review complaints and remove or block access to illegal speech within seven days of receiving a complaint and within 24 hours for cases considered “manifestly unlawful.” Noncompliance may result in fines of up to 50 million euros (\$56.69 million). Unlawful content includes actions illegal under the criminal code, such as defamation of religions and denial of historic atrocities.

The law permits the federal government to characterize “nontraditional” religious groups – such as the COS – as “sects,” “youth religions,” and “youth sects” and allows the government to provide “accurate information” or warnings about them to the public. The law does not permit the government to use terms such as “destructive,” “pseudo-religious,” or “manipulative” when referring to these groups. Several past court decisions ruled that the government must remain neutral toward a religion and may provide a warning to the public only if an “offer” by a religious group would endanger the basic rights of an individual or place the individual in a state of physical or financial dependence.

Religious groups wishing to qualify as nonprofit associations with tax-exempt status must register. State-level authorities review registration submissions and routinely grant tax-exempt status; if challenged, their decisions are subject to

judicial review. Those applying for tax-exempt status must provide evidence they are a religious group through their statutes, history, and activities.

A special partnership exists between the states and religious groups with PLC status, as outlined in the constitution. Any religious group may request PLC status, which, if granted, entitles the group to levy tithes (8 percent of income tax in Bavaria and Baden-Wuerttemberg, 9 percent in the other states) on members, who must register their religious affiliation with federal tax authorities. Each state collects the tithes on behalf of the religious community through the state's tax collection process, separately from and in addition to income taxes. PLCs pay fees to the government for the tithing service, but not all groups with PLC status utilize the service. PLC status also allows for benefits, including tax exemptions (larger than those given to groups with nonprofit status), representation on supervisory boards of public television and radio stations, and the right to special labor regulations. State governments subsidize institutions with PLC status that provide public services, such as religious schools and hospitals. In addition, due to historic "state-church contracts" dating back to before 1919, all state governments except for Bremen and Hamburg subsidize the Catholic Church and the EKD with different yearly amounts.

According to the constitution, the decision to grant PLC status is made at the state level. Individual states base PLC status decisions on a number of varying qualifications, including an assurance of the group's permanence, size, and respect for the constitutional order and fundamental rights of individuals. An estimated 180 religious groups have PLC status, including Catholics, the EKD, Baha'is, Baptists, Christian Scientists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews, Mennonites, Methodists, the Church of Jesus Christ, the Salvation Army, and Seventh-day Adventists. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has PLC status in the states of Hesse and Hamburg; no other Muslim communities have PLC status. The COS does not have PLC or nonprofit status in any state.

Federal animal protection laws prohibit the killing of animals without anesthesia, including as part of halal and kosher slaughter practices. Pursuant to a Federal Administrative Court decision, however, trained personnel may kill animals without anesthesia in a registered slaughterhouse under observation of the local veterinary inspection office if the meat is for consumption only by members of religious communities whose beliefs require slaughtering animals without anesthesia.

On July 6, a federal law took effect that enables authorities to restrict the tattoos, clothing, jewelry, and hair or beard styles of civil servants if this is necessary to ensure the functionality of public administration or fulfill the

obligation for respectful and trustworthy conduct. The law specifies that if these symbols are of a religious nature, they may only be restricted if they are “objectively suited to adversely affecting trust in a civil servant’s neutral performance of his official duties.”

According to a ruling by the Federal Constitutional Court, general headscarf bans for teachers at public schools are a violation of religious freedom, but implementation is left to the states, which may determine if special circumstances apply. The states of Bavaria, North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW), and Saarland render decisions on a case-by-case basis. Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, Bremen, and Lower Saxony do not prohibit headscarves for teachers. Hesse permits teachers to wear headscarves as long as doing so does not impair “school peace” or threaten perceptions of state neutrality. Rhineland-Palatinate and Baden-Wuerttemberg prohibit teachers from wearing full-face veils (i.e., niqabs or burqas). Berlin bans visible signs of religious affiliation for police, lawyers, judges, and law enforcement staff but not for primary and secondary school teachers. In Lower Saxony and Bavaria, judges and prosecutors may not wear religious symbols or clothing in the courtroom. Other states have laws that restrict religious attire in certain circumstances.

Citing safety reasons and the need for traffic law enforcement, federal law prohibits the concealment of faces while driving, including by a niqab. Infractions are punishable by a 60 euro (\$68) fine.

State law in Rhineland-Palatinate and Baden-Wuerttemberg forbids students in primary and secondary schools from full-face veiling at school (i.e., wearing a niqab or burqa). This state ban on full-face covering does not apply in higher education.

According to federal law, religious groups may appoint individuals with special training to carry out circumcision of males younger than six months. After six months, the law states circumcisions must be performed in a “medically professional manner” and without unnecessary pain.

All states offer religious instruction and ethics courses in public schools. Religious communities with PLC status (or those without such status that have concluded a special agreement with the state granting them this right) appoint religion teachers and work with the states to ensure the curriculum is in line with the constitution; the states pay the teachers’ salaries. Most public schools offer the option of Protestant and Catholic religious instruction in cooperation with those Churches, as well as instruction in Judaism if enough students (usually 12, although regulations vary by state) express an interest. Bavaria, Baden-Wuerttemberg, Berlin, Hesse, Lower Saxony, NRW, Rhineland-

Palatinate, Saarland, and Schleswig-Holstein also offer some religious instruction in Islam. In most federal states, Muslim communities or associations provide this instruction, while in Bavaria and Schleswig-Holstein, the state does. In Hamburg and Bremen, nondenominational religious instruction is offered for all students by the EKD and the state, respectively.

Students who do not wish to participate in religious instruction may opt out; in some states, those who opt out may substitute ethics courses. State authorities generally permit religious groups to establish private schools as long as they meet basic curriculum requirements. Schooling is constitutionally mandated, and homeschooling, including for religious reasons, is prohibited in all states.

The government provides annual payments to Holocaust victims and their descendants, and regularly expands the scope of these programs to broaden the eligibility requirements.

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

Government Practices

In May, then federal Interior Minister Horst Seehofer banned the Duesseldorf-based Muslim association Ansaar International and related suborganizations for financing terrorism and opposing the country's constitutional order. The NRW Office for the Protection of the Constitution (OPC, the state's intelligence service) had been observing these organizations since 2013. More than 1,000 officers were deployed in 10 states (Baden-Wuerttemberg, Bavaria, Berlin, Brandenburg, Hamburg, Hesse, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate and Schleswig-Holstein) to enforce the ban.

In July, Hamburg's domestic intelligence service announced that, based on new evidence, it would officially classify the IZH as an organization that is not independent, but rather one that "receives and depends on direct orders from Tehran." The IZH challenged this and previous claims in court; a verdict was pending at year's end. Hamburg opposition parties and civil society actors continued to advocate an end to Hamburg's formal relationship with the IZH, which they said was an important Iranian regime asset.

Federal and state OPCs continued to monitor numerous Muslim groups, including the U.S.-designated terrorist groups ISIS, Hizballah, and Hamas, as well as groups such as Turkish Hizballah, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Tablighi Jama'at, Millatu Ibrahim, the IZH, the Muslim Brotherhood, Milli Gorus, and various Salafist movements.

The OPC in Saxony continued to monitor two mosques it said were dominated by Salafists.

According to reports from the federal OPC and COS members, the federal OPC and the OPCs of six states – Baden-Wuerttemberg, Bavaria, Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg, Lower Saxony, NRW, and Saxony-Anhalt – continued to monitor the activities of the COS, reportedly by evaluating COS publications and members’ public activities to determine whether they violated the constitution. At least four major political parties – the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Christian Social Union (CSU), Social Democratic Party (SPD), and Free Democratic Party (FDP) – continued to exclude Scientologists from party membership. “Sect filters,” signed statements by potential employees to confirm they had no contact with the COS, remained in use in the public and private sectors.

Groups under OPC observation continued to say that OPC scrutiny implied they were extremist and that this constrained their ability to apply for publicly funded projects.

In speeches in September and October, then Chancellor Merkel expressed regret that expressions of public antisemitism had increased in the country and said the country would expend great strength to resist it. At the presentation of a prize for tolerance in September, she stated that support for Jewish life was a special obligation of the government and that the country would not tolerate racism, antisemitism, or hate directed at a group of persons. She also acknowledged a strong increase in antisemitic acts in 2020 and expressed concern that antisemitism was becoming bolder and more open than before.

In August, the federal government announced it would spend an additional 12 million euros (\$13.61 million) on research networks focusing on antisemitism between 2021 and 2024, complementing the one billion euros (\$1.13 billion) in spending already planned for 89 measures against right-wing extremism, antisemitism, and racism during that period. Then Education and Research Minister Anja Karliczek said the government wanted to invest millions in researching the causes of anti-Semitism in order “to efficiently fight” it, adding that there was reason to worry that the 2,351 cases of antisemitism reported in 2020 were “only the tip of the iceberg and that the unreported number of daily attacks on Jews is substantially higher.”

In July, the Duisburg public prosecutor’s office charged six law enforcement officers with sedition and spreading symbols of unconstitutional organizations by participating in right-wing extremist chat groups with names such as “Alphateam” and “Kunte Kinte.” According to the NRW Interior Ministry,

officers exchanged anti-Muslim content in the groups, including praise for the 2019 anti-Muslim attacks at mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. The groups had been found entered into an officer's phone in September 2020. Investigations against seven other accused members of the chat groups were dropped due to statutes of limitation or lack of sufficient evidence.

Investigations continued in 13 other cases, all involving law enforcement officers. In September, the NRW Interior Ministry's unit examining police right-wing extremism published its report of conclusions, in which it recommended 18 separate measures to fight right-wing extremism within the police.

In June, Frankfurt prosecutors launched investigations of 20 members of the city's elite police special forces (SEK) for exchanging right-wing extremist material in a chat group, including material venerating Nazi organizations and expressing hate against minority groups. On August 26, Hesse Interior Minister Peter Beuth dissolved the Frankfurt SEK and announced a statewide reorganization of SEK units. Investigations against a majority of the officers continued at year's end, but investigations of two superior officers for failing to report the activity were closed. Frankfurt Police president Gerhard Bereswill said in September that parts of the city's police force would be reformed to address antisemitic tendencies and other discriminatory attitudes within it.

In July, the chair of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany, Ayman Mazyek, and other representatives of the Muslim community said that military chaplains were not available to the estimated 3,000 Muslim soldiers who "put their heads on the line for Germany." The Ministry of Defense said that the lack of an umbrella organization for Muslims with which the ministry could negotiate made it difficult to appoint imams as chaplains.

In June, the Bundeswehr (military) appointed its first military rabbi, the first of up to 10 rabbis scheduled to serve the 150-300 Jews in the armed forces. The Central Council of Jews in Germany and leading politicians of all major parties welcomed the move.

According to the Rhineland-Palatinate Ministry of Justice, the state employed four Muslim prison chaplains, all of whom are state employees and had to pass a multistep recruitment process. The states of Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, and Bavaria also employed Muslim chaplains, according to media reports, and in Lower Saxony, 11 Muslim chaplains worked for the prison system on a freelance basis.

In May, the Stuttgart Administrative Court decided in favor of the Wuerttemberg EKD, ruling that the federal government's COVID-19

restrictions for areas with high infection rates did not apply to church funerals. The EKD had argued in April that church funerals were religious services, not private events, and should therefore be exempt from the 30-person attendance limit mandated by the COVID-19 regulations. The court also found that the federal regulation constituted an infringement on religious freedom.

Religious groups, including the Coordination Council of Muslims, whose members included the country's largest Muslim organizations, expressed concern that authorities might restrict civil servants from wearing headscarves or other religious symbols after the law allowing such restrictions in some circumstances came into effect in July.

On March 22-23, then Chancellor Merkel and the minister-presidents (governors) of the 16 states decided the government would ask churches to cancel in-person Easter services on April 4 as part of heightened COVID-19 restrictions during a five-day "quiet period" of no in-person gatherings. According to media reports, the Chancellor and minister-presidents did not consult with church leaders or government advisors on religious affairs before announcing the decision. On March 24, following strong protests by the Catholic Church, the EKD, and business leaders, the federal government withdrew the plan for the quiet period. The government, however, still encouraged churches to avoid in-person Easter services.

In April, NRW Interior Minister Herbert Reul suggested that religious congregations suspend in-person services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The suggestion followed a COVID-19 outbreak at a church in Euskirchen. Religious groups followed strict social distancing rules for in-person worship but also offered virtual and drive-in services.

Also in April, local officials and mayors across NRW encouraged Muslims to celebrate Ramadan virtually, as large gatherings were prohibited due to COVID-19 regulations. To comply with social distancing regulations, many mosques offered in-person services for smaller numbers of participants, as well as online prayers.

In August, the NRW state government established a reporting office for antisemitic incidents that do not rise to the level of criminal charges. The North Rhein State Association of Jewish Communities temporarily administered the office until the government could establish a new organization.

In March, the city of Cologne established a reporting and documentation office for antisemitic incidents at its National Socialist Documentation Center that it

said would coordinate its efforts with similar institutions at the state and national level.

In April, the Hamburg government appointed Stefan Hensel, the local chair of the German Israeli Society (DIG), as the city-state's first independent antisemitism commissioner. Hensel's three-year term began on July 1. Hamburg's largest Jewish congregation, led by Chief Rabbi Shlomo Bistritzky, as well as the smaller Liberal Jewish Community, endorsed the appointment. Hensel stated that he was committed to fighting both antisemitism and anti-Zionism, adding that the city should appreciate Hamburg Jews as modern citizens.

Bremen remained the only state in the country without an antisemitism commissioner. In previous years, the deputy chair of the Jewish community in Bremen said the community preferred to address antisemitism and other issues of concern in an existing forum that included the mayor and president of the legislature.

In August, the government of Baden-Wuerttemberg announced that the annual budget of the state's antisemitism commissioner would be doubled to more than 2.2 million euros (\$2.49 million).

In January, the Baden-Wuerttemberg State Criminal Police Office and the state Interior Ministry announced a new prevention program called "Safe in Religious Communities" aimed at improving communication between law enforcement agencies and religious communities, while giving community representatives tools to safely organize events and identify extremism. Police officers at regional headquarters were trained to act as liaisons to the Jewish and Muslim communities. According to a press release by the Baden-Wuerttemberg government, more religious communities might be added at a later date.

On August 23, Baden-Wuerttemberg Interior Minister Thomas Strobl officially inaugurated the country's first two police rabbis, Moshe Flomenmann from Loerrach and Shneur Trebnik from Ulm. According to Strobl, the police rabbis would serve as counselors and points of contact for prospective and current police officers, as well as for community members.

In September, the Central Archive for the History of Jews in Germany reopened at a new location in Heidelberg. The federal Ministry of the Interior funded the archive with 900,000 euros (\$1.02 million) annually.

On October 7, the Berlin Administrative Court dismissed a lawsuit filed by two supporters of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement in which

they said the Bundestag had infringed upon their fundamental rights when it passed a resolution criticizing the BDS as antisemitic in 2019.

In May, the Moenchengladbach District Court of Appeals overturned a man's eight-month suspended sentence imposed by a lower court for distributing the antisemitic manifesto of the 2019 Halle synagogue attacker online, and instead fined him 900 euros (\$1,000). The court stated it found the defendant's claims that he had shared the manifesto only to mock its contents to be credible.

In May, the NRW Higher Administrative Court in Muenster rejected an exemption for a woman from Duesseldorf who wanted to drive a car while wearing a niqab. The court cited the law prohibiting drivers from fully covering their face except for the eyes. The decision could not be appealed.

According to a 2020 survey of state-level education ministries, the most recent available, more than 900 schools in the country offered Islamic religious instruction. Almost 60,000 students took part in Islamic religious instruction in the school year 2019-20, an increase of 4,000 from the previous year. Since 2017-18, approximately 35 schools had added Islamic religious instruction.

In May, the NRW Ministry of Education created a new commission to cooperate on Islamic religious instruction in public schools.

In July, the Wiesbaden Administrative Court ruled the Hesse state government had unlawfully ended cooperation with the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB) on Islamic religious education in public schools in April 2020. The state government appealed the decision in August; the appeal was pending at the end of the year.

In the 2021-22 school year, 364 schools in Bavaria began offering Islamic religion courses, similar to existing religion courses on Christianity and Judaism. All pupils in Bavaria must receive instruction in one of these religions, or an ethics course if courses in their religion are not available. Approximately 100 Muslim instructors were expected to teach approximately 17,000 Muslim pupils, although demand for Islamic religion courses was much higher than 17,000, according to parents, schools, and education ministry officials. Muslim communities complained that the state government, not the religious community, set the curriculum of the course.

In October, Saxony-Anhalt also began offering pupils Judaism instruction for the first time as a pilot project at an elementary school in Magdeburg. Fourteen pupils enrolled in the course.

In April, the Mainz Administrative Court ruled that the 2019 closure of Rhineland-Palatinate's only Islamic daycare center, the al-Nur center in Mainz, was lawful. State authorities had closed the center, saying it was linked to the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist organizations.

In May, the Sunni School Council Foundation, which oversees Islamic religious education in Baden-Wuerttemberg public schools, rejected the teaching license of Abdel-Hakim Ourghi, head of the Islamic Theology department at the University of Education in Freiburg. While the foundation cited missing credentials as a reason for its decision, critics, including members of the Muslim community, academics, and politicians, accused it of trying to silence a prominent voice of a liberal interpretation of Islam. The Baden-Wuerttemberg Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs defended the decision, which could be appealed.

The government continued to subsidize some Jewish groups. Based on an agreement between the federal government and the Central Council of Jews in Germany, the federal government contributed 13 million euros (\$14.74 million) to help maintain Jewish cultural heritage and support integration and social work. In addition, the federal government provided financial support to the Institute for Jewish Studies in Heidelberg, the Rabbi Seminar at the University of Potsdam, and the Leo Baeck Institute, an international group researching the history and culture of German Jewry.

State governments continued to provide funds to Jewish communities and organizations in various amounts for such purposes as the renovation and construction of synagogues. The federal government continued to cover 50 percent of maintenance costs for Jewish cemeteries. State and local police units continued to provide security for synagogues and other Jewish institutions.

In March, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany (also known as the Jewish Claims Conference) and the government announced an agreement to provide transitional payments to surviving spouses of Jewish victims of the Nazis who had been receiving a pension from the government.

In January, the Baden-Wuerttemberg state government signed a contract with the state's Jewish communities to protect Jewish institutions and combat antisemitism. The contract stipulated the state government would provide funds to protect Jewish facilities totaling one million euros (\$1.13 million) in 2021 and 1.17 million euros (\$1.33 million) in each of the ensuing three years, as well as 200,000 euros (\$227,000) yearly for three years for the construction of a Jewish academy.

On April 22, the Dresden city council voted to establish a museum on the history of Jewish life in the states of Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, and Thuringia and in Poland and the Czech Republic.

After many years of renovation, the Goerlitz synagogue reopened on July 12. Consecrated 110 years earlier, it had survived the Nazi pogrom of November 1938 (also referred to as Kristallnacht) and been neglected during the German Democratic Republic period. The federal government supported the construction with 2.8 million euros (\$3.17 million).

Construction of Frankfurt's Jewish Academy began in September. The academy, due to open in 2024, would function, according to sponsors, as an intellectual center of Jewish life, philosophy, and culture. The costs of construction, estimated at 34.5 million euros (\$39.12 million), was to be shared by the federal government, the state of Hesse, the city of Frankfurt, and the Central Council of Jews in Germany.

In September, the city of Frankfurt and its Jewish community signed an extension to the contract that governs cooperation between them. The contract stipulated the city would provide an additional one million euros (\$1.13 million) for the protection and security of the Jewish community, starting with the 2022 fiscal year.

According to media reports and the Humanistic Union, an organization that describes its mission as working to protect and enforce civil rights, including the right to free development of the personality, total state government contributions during the year to the Catholic Church and the EKD totaled approximately 581 million euros (\$658.73 million). The union said it calculated its estimate based on budgets of the 16 states. The Humanistic Union advocates the abolition of state church privileges such as faith-based religious education as a regular school subject, collection of church taxes, and other financial aid to religious groups.

On June 16, the country's first publicly funded Islamic seminary opened in Osnabrueck with a class of 50 students. Five Muslim federations, including the Central Council of Muslims in Germany and the Muslim Community of Lower Saxony, founded the seminary. A commission of their representatives sets the curriculum, which is taught in German. The federal and Lower Saxony governments committed to provide 5.5 million euros (\$6.24 million) in funding to the school over five years.

The government continued the German Islam Conference dialogue with Muslims in the country. The dialogue's stated aim was to improve the religious

and social participation of the Muslim population, give greater recognition to Muslims' contributions to society, and – in the absence of a central organization representing all Muslims in the country – further develop partnerships between the government and Muslim organizations. Among the specific outcomes of the dialogue were the April publication of a large study on Muslim life in the country that included new official estimates of the size of the Muslim population, the first in years; a May conference on young Muslims' perspectives on issues affecting Islam in the country; the establishment of an Islamic seminary in Osnabrueck in June, including government funding for it; and support for efforts to inform the Muslim community about the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the year.

The country is a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and held the organization's chairmanship for the year ending March 31.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were numerous reports of antisemitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian incidents across the country, including assaults, verbal harassment, threats, discrimination, and vandalism. According to figures collected by the Federal Criminal Police Office, as of November 5, there had been 1,850 antisemitic crimes reported, including 35 involving physical violence leading to 17 persons injured.

In August, a group insulted and severely beat a young Jewish man wearing a kippah while he was sitting in a Cologne park. The victim was hospitalized with broken bones in his face. The two attackers were arrested and released; police investigations into the crime continued at year's end. Cologne Mayor Henriette Reker, Catholic Archbishop of Cologne Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki, and President of the Jewish Community in Munich and Upper Bavaria Charlotte Knobloch condemned the attack, which police said they suspected was motivated by antisemitism.

In Hamburg on September 18, a man and his companion shouted antisemitic slogans before attacking a 60-year-old Jewish man, leaving him hospitalized with potentially lifelong injuries, according to media reports. Hamburg Anti-Semitism Commissioner Stefan Hensel said the attacker and his companions were shouting antisemitic and anti-Israel insults at a pro-Israel vigil in central Hamburg and, when vigil participants asked them to stop, the attacker punched the Jewish man in the face, breaking his nose and cheek bone. Hamburg Deputy Mayor (equivalent to deputy governor) Katharina Fegebank condemned the attack. Police arrested a 16-year-old suspect, Aram A., in Berlin in late September.

In May, during clashes in Gaza and Israel, there was an outbreak of antisemitic demonstrations, some of them violent, as well as vandalism and assaults across the country. On May 10, unknown individuals burned a memorial plaque at the site of the former Duesseldorf synagogue, and on May 11, demonstrators burned Israeli flags in front of synagogues in Bonn and Muenster. Demonstrators also threw stones at the Bonn synagogue. Approximately 180 persons attended an anti-Israel demonstration in Gelsenkirchen May 12, chanting antisemitic insults describing Jews as subhuman. Some made the hand signal of the Grey Wolves, a Turkish right-wing extremist group.

The NRW Interior Ministry reported a total of 77 incidents with antisemitic or anti-Israeli connections (the ministry did not separately categorize antisemitic from anti-Israeli incidents) at pro-Palestinian demonstrations in May, for which it believed at least 125 individuals were responsible; it identified 45 persons by name.

On May 15, 3,500 persons participated in a pro-Palestinian demonstration in the Neukoelln district of Berlin that turned antisemitic. Demonstrators chanted antisemitic slogans and displayed signs equating Israel with the Nazis. According to media reports, participants included members of the Grey Wolves and left-wing extremist groups. After police tried to end the demonstration due to noncompliance with COVID-19 requirements, participants became violent, throwing bottles, stones, and burning objects at police and journalists covering the event. Ninety-three police officers were injured, and 59 persons were arrested for battery, assaulting police, and other charges; police restored order after several hours. Police investigations were underway at year's end. The then mayor of Berlin, Michael Mueller, condemned the demonstration as "unacceptable."

In a statement delivered by the federal government spokesman, then Chancellor Merkel condemned the demonstrations and attacks on Jewish institutions as antisemitic abuses of the right to free assembly. They had shown that those involved were not protesting a state or government but expressing hate against a religion and those that belong to it, she said. Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier also condemned the demonstrations and attacks, saying that that country "will not tolerate hate against Jews, no matter who it comes from ... Nothing justifies threatening Jews or attacking synagogues in our cities." Then Bundestag President Wolfgang Schaeuble issued a statement that there was "no justification for antisemitism, hate, and violence at the protests," while acknowledging the existence of antisemitism in the country. Then Interior Minister Seehofer said that attacks on synagogues and spreading antisemitism would be met with the full force of the law. President of the Central Council of

Jews in Germany Josef Schuster and Chairman of the Central Council of Muslims Mazyek also condemned the incidents. The president of the Central Council of Jews and the German Conference of Bishops issued a joint press statement warning of growing antisemitism and a “combination of political conflict and religious fanaticism.” Several state-level religious leaders and government officials, including DITIB Hesse Managing Director Onur Akdeniz, Bishop of Limburg Georg Baetzing, and Hesse Antisemitism Commissioner Uwe Becker, spoke out against antisemitic propaganda at the pro-Palestinian demonstrations.

In May, the Hessian State Criminal Police Office arrested a Berlin-based man, identified only as Alexander M., for sending more than 85 threatening letters with right-wing extremist content, sometimes including antisemitic content, to politicians, journalists, and other prominent figures from late 2018 through 2020. Many of the most visible targets were Muslim women. Among the recipients were the heads of the Central Council of Jews in Germany and the Central Council of Muslims in Germany.

In June in Moenchengladbach, two men assaulted a Jewish man, speaking to him in Arabic. Police were investigating but had not identified any suspects at year’s end.

During a September 30 soccer match in Berlin’s Olympic Stadium between 1.FC Union Berlin and Haifa Maccabi – the first time an Israeli team had played in the stadium opened by the Nazis for the 1936 Olympic games – Maccabi supporters reported that some Union supporters threatened them, used antisemitic insults, and threw objects at them. According to press reports, one Union fan also attempted to burn an Israeli flag. 1.FC Union apologized for the flag burning, insults, and physical attacks, all of which it termed antisemitic, and banned one person from attending games in the future. Police were investigating at year’s end.

In April, on Easter Sunday, three unidentified men entered a church in Nidda, Hesse, shouted slogans such as “There is only one God, and that is Allah,” and “Allah is greatest,” and insulted a worshipper attending the church service. The political crimes unit of the Hesse state police investigated the incident as a possible infringement of the free exercise of religion.

In September, a Halle police officer was suspended for repeatedly corresponding with Stephan Balliet, who had attacked the Halle synagogue on Yom Kippur in 2019. The officer wrote Balliet at least 10 letters using a pseudonym and false address and reportedly expressed sympathy for the attacker, while minimizing his crimes, in conversations with colleagues. The

police officer had left the force as of October 31, according to newspaper *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*.

On June 15, the Erfurt newspaper *Thueringer Allgemeine* reported that local construction companies had repeatedly declined orders for the construction of a mosque in Erfurt because they feared their involvement would precipitate attacks on their vehicles by opponents of the mosque. Another newspaper reported in 2020 that construction companies had also declined to participate in the mosque construction at that time. Suleman Malik, the spokesman for the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in Erfurt, said the reaction of the construction companies had delayed the construction of the mosque by two years.

In July, according to press reports, the Duesseldorf Hyatt Hotel cancelled the reservation of the Baba Sheikh, the spiritual leader of the Yezidis, and his two companions. The hotel said the cancellation was due to technical issues, apologized for the misunderstanding, and upheld the reservation.

In October, Jewish singer Gil Ofarim reported that hotel staff told him to remove his Star of David necklace during check-in at the front desk of Leipzig's Westin Hotel. Hotel employees denied doing so and filed a defamation suit against the singer. In response, Ofarim accused employees of filing a false report. Ofarim's discrimination lawsuit against the hotel was pending at the end of the year. According to the hotel, it conducted its own investigation that exonerated its employees.

Media again reported that women who wore a hijab faced employment discrimination and that discrimination was made easier by the customary practice of requiring photographs as part of job applications. According to one March report, a job seeker who wore a headscarf said that she had to submit 450 applications before she got an interview, while hearing about others who did not wear headscarves and received interviews after four applications.

In June, a man attempted to set fire to the Ulm synagogue, resulting in limited damage to the building. The suspect was a German-born Turkish national who fled to Turkey after the attack. According to Baden-Wuerttemberg authorities, the Turkish government refused to extradite the suspect. Following the incident, nearly 500 persons, including various city and state politicians, attended two separate support vigils, and the Baden-Wuerttemberg state parliament passed a resolution denouncing antisemitism.

In April, an unknown perpetrator shot at the Bochum synagogue and a nearby planetarium. According to police, the attack destroyed windows in both buildings. Police did not rule out an antisemitic motive for the crime. In May,

police announced they had surveillance camera footage and issued an appeal to the public to help identify the suspect. The Bochum prosecutor's office closed the investigation in December, citing insufficient evidence.

On July 24, unknown persons set on fire a banner announcing the construction of a new synagogue in Magdeburg. Police were investigating the case. The state of Saxony-Anhalt earmarked 2.8 million euros (\$3.17 million) for the construction of the synagogue, out of a total construction cost of approximately 3.4 million euros (\$3.85 million).

In June, a swastika was found painted on the Torah ark in a Jewish prayer room at Frankfurt International Airport. The country's Orthodox Rabbinical Conference denounced the act of vandalism, saying, "This hatred of Jews must finally stop."

According to Ministry of Interior federal crime statistics, there were 2,351 antisemitic crimes committed during 2020 (the most recent year for which complete statistics were available), including 57 crimes involving violence. This represented a 15.7 percent increase from the 2,032 antisemitic crimes reported in 2019, of which 73 were violent; federal crime statistics classified 2,224 crimes (94.6 percent) as motivated by far-right ideology. RIAS attributed the increase in antisemitic crimes and incidents to the large number of demonstrations against measures to contain COVID-19 or to other COVID-related issues, and it reported 489 antisemitic incidents connected to the pandemic.

The federal OPC annual report stated that, of the 57 violent antisemitic crimes committed in 2020, 48 were motivated by right-wing extremism, a 14 percent drop compared to 2019, when it reported 56 such crimes. According to the report, membership in right-wing extremist parties such as the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party dropped slightly, from approximately 13,330 persons in 2019 to 13,250 in 2020.

In May, the NRW commissioner for antisemitism published the second NRW antisemitism report, which cited 276 antisemitic crimes (down from 310 in 2019) registered in the state in 2020, of which 254 (down from 291) were motivated by right-wing ideologies. The crimes ranged from verbal abuse to physical injury; all cases resulted in criminal investigations. The NRW commissioner stated that 500 antisemitic incidents were reported to her office, including incidents that did not rise to the level of criminal complaints.

A July study by RIAS based on Jewish residents in the state and other sources found that antisemitism was an everyday experience of Jews in Baden-

Wuerttemberg, ranging from mundane to virulent forms. A leading Jewish community representative described antisemitism as “background noise of Jewish life.” The study analyzed 671 antisemitic crimes that occurred in the state between 2014 and 2018. A spokesperson of the state’s youth foundation pointed to an increasing online dimension to antisemitism, stating there were 200 such incidents reported in 2020, and 300 in the first half of 2021 alone.

RIAS, to which victims may report antisemitic incidents regardless of whether they file charges with police, reported 1,437 such incidents in the states of Berlin, Brandenburg, Bavaria, and Schleswig-Holstein in 2020, compared with 1,253 in 2019, an increase of 14.6 percent.

Lower Saxony’s government recorded 189 antisemitic crimes in 2020, down from 212 in 2019. The Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania government counted 73 such crimes in 2020, up from 52 in 2019.

In 2020, the Ministry of Interior registered 929 crimes targeting Muslims and Muslim institutions, including 77 against places of worship and 51 incidents of battery. The ministry classified most of these incidents as having been carried out by right-wing extremists. Other recorded incidents included online hate speech against Muslims, hate mail, and aggressive public behavior against persons who appeared to be Muslim.

The Ministry of Interior counted 141 anti-Christian crimes in 2020, including seven cases involving violence, up from 128 in 2019, an increase of 10 percent. The ministry classified 30 percent of these crimes as motivated by right-wing ideology and 12 percent as motivated by left-wing ideology.

In May, the Ministry of Interior presented its annual report on politically motivated crime, according to which police registered 1,026 crimes motivated by antireligious sentiment.

In January, an unknown person threw stones and paint at St. Luke’s, a confessional Lutheran church in Leipzig, breaking windows and damaging a newly restored mosaic. An anonymous letter claiming responsibility for the attack was posted online; the writer accused Martin Luther of sexism and tyranny and called churches “one of the best targets” for attacks against western morals. At year’s end, police had not identified a suspect.

In April, an unknown man broke the windows of the prayer room of a Hildesheim mosque and entered its courtyard before fleeing. Police arrested and charged a suspect. A trial was scheduled for 2022.

In August, a man assaulted a woman wearing a headscarf at a subway station in Berlin. The unknown assailant beat her severely and tore off her headscarf while shouting xenophobic insults. As she attempted to flee, he knocked her to the ground with his bicycle and left the scene. The woman required hospitalization; the police unit responsible for hate crimes and political violence was investigating the incident at year's end.

In September, unknown persons threw stones through six windows of what police called "a Muslim institution" in Zwickau, shattering them; media reports called the building a mosque, which had been the target of vandalism in the past. Police had not arrested a suspect at year's end.

In February, the Hamburg District Court found a man who had assaulted a Jewish student with a shovel in October 2020 guilty of attempted murder and aggravated battery. The court, however, ruled the man was mentally ill and therefore not criminally liable, sentencing him to psychiatric institutionalization. The man, who was wearing a military-style uniform, assaulted the student at a Sukkot celebration at the Hohe Weide Synagogue in Hamburg, leaving him with a serious head injury.

In January, the Hildesheim District Court in Lower Saxony ruled that a Hildesheim resident arrested in 2020 upon suspicion of planning attacks against Muslims and mosques was suffering from a severe mental illness and could not be held responsible for his behavior. It ordered him placed in temporary psychiatric care. Police had found weapons in his apartment, and the suspect had said in an online chat that he wanted to carry out an attack similar to the 2019 mosque attacks in New Zealand and "kill Muslims."

On June 16, the Bavarian Court of Administrative Appeals ruled in favor of a COS member whose 2018 application for a 500 euro (\$570) electric bicycle subsidy was rejected by the city of Munich because she refused to sign a written statement pledging not to employ COS methods or spread COS ideas. The state of Bavaria and some other states and many cities require persons to sign such a declaration before they can accept public employment or government grants. The court ruled that, as a citizen, the plaintiff had a right to the subsidy from the city, just like anyone else.

In July, the Court of Justice of the European Union, addressing appeals in two cases, one from Hamburg and one from Bavaria, ruled that employers could ban employees from wearing headscarves under certain circumstances. Both cases were brought by employees who did not wear headscarves when they started their jobs but decided to do so after returning to work from maternity leave. Their employers refused to allow them to do so, saying that the employees had

to project a neutral image to clients. The court agreed with the employers. Muslim organizations and NGOs criticized the verdict, saying it made it difficult for Muslim women to choose a profession.

In September, a trial of two individuals arrested for the vandalism of a Jewish cemetery in Geilenkirchen began. According to police, the pair knocked over more than 40 gravestones in the cemetery and defaced gravestones with blue paint and Nazi symbols in 2019. They were charged with property damage and disturbing the peace of the dead. Prosecutors said both were members of a Neo-Nazi group. The trial started in September and continued at year's end.

In September, the Moenchengladbach District Court convicted a man of placing a bloody pig's head, plastic bags filled with blood, right-wing extremist slogans, and swastikas in front of the al-Rahman Mosque in Moenchengladbach in 2019 and sentenced him to four months' probation.

In October, a man claiming that Christianity is a false religion forcibly removed sacred religious objects from a church in Nordhausen, Thuringia, including its crucifix and a medieval wooden altarpiece, damaging both. Police stated they intended to press charges against the man, whose asylum claim had been denied.

The Catholic Church and the EKD continued to oppose the COS publicly. "Sect commissioners" or "departments on sects and worldview matters" of the EKD and the Catholic Church continued to investigate "sects and cults" and publicize what they considered to be the dangers of those groups. On its website, the EKD Center for Questions of World Views continued to warn the public about what it said were the dangers posed by multiple religious groups, including the COS, the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (Unification Church), Bhagwan-Osho, Transcendental Meditation, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Universal Life, and continued to produce literature criticizing the groups.

In September, the Brussels-based NGO Action and Protection League issued the results of its European antisemitism survey based on data from December 2019-January 2020. According to the survey, 10 percent of 1,000 respondents ages 18-75 in Germany said they had negative feelings towards Jews. Fifteen 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" (23percent); "there is a

secret Jewish network that influences political and economic affairs in the world” (15 percent); “Jews have too much influence in this country” (12 percent); “Jews will never be able to fully integrate into this society” (20 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” (8 percent); “Jews are also to blame for the persecutions against them” (7 percent); “Jews exploit Holocaust victimhood for their own purposes” (23 percent).

In a nationwide, representative survey conducted for the Alice Schwarzer Foundation, Giordano Bruno Foundation, and WZB Berlin Social Science Center published on June 11, 65 percent of respondents said it was “right” that freedom of religion applied to Muslims as well as Christians, whereas 18 percent said it was “not right” and 17 percent were unsure. When asked whether “Islam is part of Germany,” 44 percent said “yes, but only peaceful, non-radical groups” and 44 percent answered “absolutely not,” excluding all Muslim groups. Only 5 percent said they would completely agree that Islam was part of the country. The survey also showed support for a ban on burqas among the general population had grown to 73 percent, from 56 percent in 2016. Another 17 percent supported a ban in certain situations (32 percent in 2016), and 5 percent were generally opposed to such a ban (8 percent in 2016). Majorities also supported banning headscarves for certain groups: 61 percent supported headscarf bans for public school teachers, 58 percent for public-sector employees, 56 percent for child-care workers, and 53 percent for girls younger than 14 years of age.

In February, Bundestag member Norbert Roettgen removed a social media post and image of a discussion he had held with Muslim students after the post was flooded with anti-Muslim insults. Roettgen said he removed the image to protect the identities of the participants and decried what he described as the anti-Muslim hate the post had exposed.

In September, authorities initially did not allow a woman in Bergheim, Hesse, to cast her vote at a local polling station because she was wearing a headscarf and a medical mask. Poll workers insisted she remove her headscarf to identify herself, stating that the law required that a person’s face not be covered when voting. According to the electoral committee, the scarf only covered the woman’s hair and neck, not her face. The woman protested to city election authorities and was later allowed to vote while wearing the headscarf. The city apologized for the incident.

The far-right group Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident (PEGIDA) continued to organize weekly demonstrations in Dresden,

although media reports indicated significantly fewer demonstrators than in years prior to 2020. Approximately 300 to 400 supporters continued to join PEGIDA rallies, even after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants regularly expressed anti-Muslim sentiments during the rallies, including by carrying posters expressing opposition to women who wore religious head coverings. Authorities approved the demonstrations contingent upon participants adhering to masking and social distancing requirements.

Protesters at demonstrations against COVID-19 restrictions in Berlin, Kassel, Munich and other cities continued to use antisemitic rhetoric, including equating vaccines or the anti-COVID lockdown to Nazi-era persecution of Jews, or asserting that Jews were responsible for unleashing the corona virus. For the year ending on March 17, RIAS registered antisemitic incidents, none of them violent, at 324 separate demonstrations against restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. For example, in March, numerous antisemitic acts, including ones trivializing the Nazi regime and the Holocaust, were reported at a large demonstration against COVID-19 measures in Kassel.

In May, President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany Schuster remarked on the connection between COVID-19 conspiracy theories and antisemitism, saying, “The old antisemitic narrative of the Jewish world conspiracy has been adapted to the current situation.” Federal Commissioner for Jewish Life in Germany and the Fight Against Anti-Semitism Felix Klein also cited the role of the internet, saying, “In times of crisis, people are more open to irrational explanations, including antisemitic stereotypes. . . . What is new, however, is that. . . groups that previously had little or nothing to do with each other are now making common cause at demonstrations against the corona measures or on the [inter]net.”

In June, the U.S.-based newspaper *The Algemeiner* cited a study by the London-based Institute for Strategic Dialogue that found German-language antisemitic posts in major online platforms in January and February had increased 13-fold over the same period a year earlier. According to the report, antisemitic narratives related to COVID-19 were frequent, and the most common narratives, 89 percent of the content, pertained to conspiracy theories about Jews controlling financial, political, and media institutions.

In May, NRW Antisemitism Commissioner Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger and the University of Bielefeld published a study on the influence of rap on antisemitic attitudes in young people. The study found listeners of rap were more likely to have antisemitic and misogynistic views and were more prone to believe in conspiracy theories.

In July, a woman from Cologne was fined 700 euros (\$790) for incitement for sharing an antisemitic Facebook post. The woman said she had not read the full text of the post.

Approximately 20 churches continued to use bells bearing Nazi symbols and inscriptions. A church in Berlin removed such a bell, and some churches in other part of the country said they had plans to do so. In June, the Association of Protestant Churches in Central Germany held a conference on the issue; the association also offered financial support to churches under its jurisdiction to cover the cost of new bells.

In October, Cologne Lord Mayor Henriette Reker announced a two-year test phase for Muslim communities to issue calls to Friday prayer using outdoor speakers, if they applied to do so. The call to prayer may only be made between noon and 3 p.m. and is limited to a maximum of five minutes. The volume is to be based on the location of the mosque. Of approximately 35 mosque congregations, two had requested permits by early December.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

In June, the U.S. Secretary of State and then Foreign Minister Maas launched the U.S.-Germany Dialogue on Holocaust Issues to promote accurate Holocaust education and information and to combat Holocaust denial and distortion and anti-Semitism. As part of the dialogue, embassy officials met on a monthly basis with representatives of the country's foreign ministry, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe to develop programs and initiatives.

The U.S. embassy and the five consulates general continued to engage closely with authorities at all levels of government regarding responses to incidents of religious intolerance. Embassy officials met with Federal Commissioner for Jewish Life in Germany and the Fight Against Antisemitism Klein and Ambassador Michaela Kuehler, the country's Special Representative for Relations with Jewish Organizations, Issues Relating to Antisemitism, International Sinti and Roma Affairs, and Holocaust Remembrance on multiple occasions to discuss antisemitism, the growth in antisemitic incidents and violence, antisemitic conspiracy theories, and Holocaust denial. Consulate officials also met with the commissioners for antisemitism in their districts. Embassy and consulate officials engaged with other local, state, and federal officials to discuss religious freedom issues. These included meetings with state interior ministers, state parliamentarians from the SPD, CDU, and Green party, and mayors. At a meeting in November, the Cologne Consul General and Lord

Mayor Henriette Reker discussed Cologne's pilot program to allow mosques to issue calls to prayer, among other issues.

Embassy and consulate representatives met with members and leaders of numerous local and national religious and civil society groups regarding their concerns related to tolerance and freedom of religion. Among the meetings were ones with President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany Schuster; Abdassamad El-Yazidi, speaker of the Coordination Council of Muslims in Germany; Burhan Kesici of the Islamic Council for the Federal Republic of Germany; Remko Leemhuis, director of the AJC Berlin Lawrence and Lee Ramer Institute for German-Jewish Relations; representatives of the Catholic, Evangelical, and other Protestant Churches; the Central Council of Muslims; the Association of Islamic Cultural Centers; the World Uyghur Congress; Alevi Muslims, and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat.

Topics of discussion with Jewish groups included concerns regarding what they characterized as the growing acceptability of antisemitism throughout the country, concern that right-wing conspiracy groups had exacerbated antisemitism, and growing antisemitism on the intellectual left.

Topics discussed with Muslim groups and representatives included stereotypes and discrimination against Muslims, socioeconomic and cultural challenges that Muslim residents and immigrants faced in the country, and the training of imams.

In June, the Frankfurt Consul General visited Ulm's Jewish community following an arson attack on the Ulm synagogue and met Ulm Rabbi Schneur Trebnik, as well as Israelite Religious Community of Wuerttemberg representatives. The visit included a tour of the synagogue and the community center and a discussion on the situation of Ulm's and Baden-Wuerttemberg's Jewish community, various forms of antisemitism, and Trebnik's work as one of the country's first police rabbis.

Also in June, the Charge d'Affaires and the Leipzig Consul General met with members of the Jewish community in Halle, the site of a fatal 2019 attack on a synagogue, to discuss antisemitism, religious tolerance, and Jewish life in Eastern Germany. The Leipzig Consul General visited the synagogue and laid a wreath at the site of the attack in October.

The embassy and consulates worked closely with Jewish communities, especially in the east of the country, to provide small grants in support of programs promoting religious tolerance to leading NGOs countering violent extremism related to religion and antisemitism. For example, the consulate in

Leipzig funded an appearance by a Jewish-American speaker in Halle on Holocaust Remembrance Day as well as a small grant for Jewish Remembrance Week in Goerlitz in November.

The embassy utilized virtual programs in which presenters spoke on ways of preserving and promoting accurate Holocaust narratives in the fight against antisemitism. Four German participants joined a program that showed archivists and museum professionals how to maximize outreach within their fields to counter Holocaust distortions and denial. Participants included 12 staff members from the Arolsen Archives, a center that documents, archives, and researches Nazi persecution, forced labor, and the Holocaust. The consulate in Leipzig also supported October and November presentations in Jena and Weimar by the archives' exhibit #Stolen Memory, featuring items the Nazi regime stole from Jews.

As a follow-up to a 2020 teacher academy that focused on engaging with teachers about Jewish life in the United States, the embassy expanded its discussion of religious freedom by raising awareness of hidden bias and stereotypes. A workshop on hidden bias as part of a March teacher seminar reached 300 teachers and generated a lively discussion with the presenter, a senior lecturer on North American studies at Leuphana University. In May, the embassy followed up with a film presentation and discussion of the documentary "Bias" with the filmmaker (including additional sessions with the local state police academies) and, in June, a discussion with a U.S. historian and American Academy in Berlin fellow.

In August, the consulate general in Leipzig provided financial support to the 21st Yiddish Summer Weimar in Thuringia, one of the world's leading summer programs for the study and presentation of traditional and contemporary Yiddish culture. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many concerts and workshops again took place outdoors in public spaces in Weimar, Erfurt, and Eisenach, and other smaller towns in Thuringia. The consulate also provided funding for several Jewish cultural events in Halle as part of a series of such events focusing on Jewish culture across the state of Saxony-Anhalt.

The consulate general in Leipzig provided seed money for the establishment of the *Fachstelle Globaler Antisemitismus* (Global Antisemitism Office) in Dessau-Rosslau, Saxony-Anhalt. This NGO works to educate the public about online right-wing extremism and radicalization.

In October, the embassy and the consulate general in Leipzig cooperated to bring a senior American Jewish Congress official to the country, where he met

with Berlin police and NGOs working against antisemitism and spoke on countering antisemitism in Cottbus, Jena, and Leipzig.

The embassy and consulates actively promoted religious freedom and tolerance through their social media channels, utilizing Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to highlight the engagement of senior embassy officials on the issue. Examples included visits of the Charge d'Affaires to Goerlitz for Jewish Remembrance Week; the meeting in Halle in June of the Charge d'Affaires and the Leipzig Consul General with representatives of NGOs working on tolerance and openness; and meetings with religious community leaders. The embassy and consulates also amplified social media messaging by the President, Secretary of State, and Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues in support of religious freedom on many occasions throughout the year, often with German translations, to highlight U.S. religious pluralism and support for religious freedom.

The embassy and consulates general also created their own content, including greetings from the Charge d'Affaires on Jewish and Muslim holidays, social media posts on the right to freedom of religion, and a statement by the Charge d'Affaires condemning antisemitic vandalism at a memorial site to the Nazi concentration camp in Auschwitz. Public meetings with officials and religious community and public engagements by embassy and consular officials were also accompanied by social media messaging. Religious freedom and tolerance were topics of frequent focus of the embassy's and consulates' digital platforms.