

# UNITED KINGDOM 2021 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

## Executive Summary

In the absence of a written constitution, the law establishes the Church of England as England's state church and the Church of Scotland as Scotland's national church. The law prohibits "incitement to religious hatred," as well as discrimination on the grounds of religion. In March, the Scottish Parliament passed legislation abolishing blasphemy offenses and extending protection for religious and other vulnerable groups under the offense of "stirring up hatred," which previously had been applied only to race. In March, the National Secular Society publicly called on Northern Ireland Justice Minister Naomi Long to repeal blasphemy laws in Northern Ireland. At year's end, parliament had not adopted a working definition of "Islamophobia," although in September, the government said it would outline steps to achieve a "robust and effective definition." Under the Places of Worship Scheme, the government provided more than 1.704 million pounds (\$2.30 million) to fund increased security at places of worship and associated faith-based, group-run community centers. It also provided 14 million pounds (\$18.92 million) from April 2020 to March 2021 via a nongovernmental organization (NGO) to provide security at Jewish institutions, including schools and synagogues. Separately, in May, the Scottish government announced 500,000 pounds (\$676,000) of funding for security at places of worship. NGOs continued to call for the Northern Ireland government to introduce the Places of Worship Scheme in Northern Ireland, where it did not currently apply. In April, the Welsh Parliament passed the Curriculum and Assessment Act, permitting sixth-form students (age 16-18) to opt out of Religion, Values, and Ethics (RVE) instruction, which remained compulsory for younger students. In July, the NGO Wales Humanists called on the Welsh government to ensure RVE was taught in an "objective, critical, and pluralistic way." The main political parties continued to address or face accusations of religious bias. In May, a report published by a former commissioner for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHCR) found that the Conservative Party received reports of 727 incidents of discrimination from the beginning of 2015 to the end of 2020, two-thirds of which alleged anti-Muslim bias. The Muslim Council of Britain said the report failed to acknowledge "the root causes of this bigotry." At the Labour Party's annual conference in September, Labour Party Leader Sir Keir Starmer introduced new rules to address antisemitism within the party, including establishing an independent complaints process. The Board of Deputies of British Jews welcomed the new approach adopted by the party. In April, the Northern Ireland Assembly

adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) non-legally-binding Working Definition of Antisemitism. The 2021 census in England and Wales contained the question, "What is your religion?" The NGO Humanist UK, which had unsuccessfully lobbied the government to change the wording, stated this was a leading question and urged participants who did not believe in or practice a religion to select "No religion."

The government reported an 18 percent decrease in religiously motivated hate crimes: 5,948 offenses in England and Wales between March 2020 and March 2021, down from 6,856 in the same period one year prior. Where the perceived religion of the victim was recorded, 45 percent of religious hate crime offenses targeted Muslims, 22 percent targeted Jews, and 9 percent targeted Christians. Other religious groups targeted included Hindus and Sikhs. In January, the NGO Campaign Against Antisemitism published its *Antisemitism Barometer 2020*, which found that almost one-fifth of 1,846 Jews surveyed said they felt unwelcome in the country and 44 percent said they did not display visible signs of their Judaism in public due to antisemitism. There were several instances of coronavirus conspiracy theorists appropriating Holocaust imagery. The NGO Community Security Trust's (CST) annual report recorded 2,255 antisemitic incidents during the year, the highest annual total since CST began its tracking in 1984 and a 34 percent increase over 2020. Among the incidents were 176 violent antisemitic incidents, three incidents classified as involving "extreme violence," 82 incidents of damage or desecration of Jewish property, and 1,844 incidents of nonviolent abusive behavior, including verbal abuse, graffiti, antisemitic social media posts, and hate mail. According to CST, the record volume was "due to anti-Jewish reactions to the escalation of conflict in Israel and Palestine." In September, the Brussels-based NGO Action and Protection League issued the results of its European antisemitism survey, which found that 3 percent of 1,000 respondents ages 18-75 in the United Kingdom said they had negative feelings towards Jews. In December, media reported a person was injured in an antisemitic attack by an unknown assailant who allegedly told the victim he "looked Jewish." The perpetrator reportedly said he wanted to "kill his first Jew." Home Secretary Priti Patel described the incident as seriously disturbing. Also in December, the Board of Deputies of British Jews criticized the BBC for falsely alleging that victims of a November 29 antisemitic incident in London provoked their attackers with an anti-Muslim slur. The NGO Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks), which monitors anti-Muslim activity, stated in its 2020 annual report (the most recent) there were reports of anti-Muslim hate incidents during that year. According to a 2020 joint study conducted by Newcastle University, Northumbria University, the Economic and Social Research Council, and Tell MAMA, more

than two thirds of 111 participants living within the three police force jurisdictions of Cleveland, Durham, and Northumbria said manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment or anti-Muslim hatred were either a regular or everyday occurrence, and half of those who reported experiencing anti-Muslim sentiment or anti-Muslim hatred said they did not report the incidents to police. In April, the Westminster Magistrates' Court convicted and sentenced a woman to 18 weeks in prison for Holocaust denial, the first ever case in the country of imprisonment for that charge. In December, the Manchester Crown Court sentenced a man to four years in prison for posting hundreds of antisemitic videos online.

U.S. embassy and consulate staff engaged with government officials, including the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion for Belief, and political parties. Embassy officers discussed freedom of belief and nonbelief issues with religious groups, including the Board of Deputies of British Jews, CST, the Jewish Orthodox Charedi community, and Humanist UK. Staff from the consulate general in Belfast continued to engage with all religious communities in Northern Ireland to discuss ongoing challenges in the region, such as addressing sectarianism and religious intolerance. In January, the Charge d'Affaires took part in the Holocaust Memorial Day virtual campaign #LightTheDarkness. In May, the embassy hosted a virtual interfaith iftar with the Naz Legacy Foundation. Throughout the year, the embassy highlighted the U.S. commitment to the promotion of religious freedom on social media, including on religious holiday occasions. Collectively, these messages reached approximately 110,000 persons.

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

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 66.1 million (midyear 2021). National census figures from 2011, the most recent, indicate 59.3 percent of the population in England and Wales is Christian. Of the remaining population, 4.8 percent identify as Muslim; 1.5 percent Hindu; 0.8 percent Sikh; 0.5 percent Jewish; and 0.4 Buddhist. Approximately 25 percent of the population reported no religious affiliation, and 7 percent chose not to answer. The Baha'i Faith community estimates it has more than 7,000 members.

According to the 2019 British Social Attitudes survey, a survey conducted by the independent National Center for Social Research, 52 percent of those surveyed described themselves as having no religion, 12 percent as Anglican, 7 percent as Catholic, 19 percent as belonging to other Christian groups, and 10 percent as belonging to non-Christian religious groups, of which 6 percent identified as

Muslim and 4 percent as other non-Christian, including less than 0.5 percent as Jews. Jehovah's Witnesses estimate there are 137,000 members in the country.

According to the Boston University 2020 World Religions Database, 67 percent of the country is Christian, 23 percent atheist or agnostic, 6 percent Muslim, 1 percent Sikh, and 1 percent Hindu. Other religious groups together comprise 2 percent, including approximately 278,000 Jews, 200,000 Buddhists, 39,000 Baha'is, 24,000 Jains, and 5,000 Zoroastrians.

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

Census figures for Scotland in 2011 (the most recent) indicate 54 percent of the population is Christian, comprising the Church of Scotland (32 percent), Roman Catholic Church (16 percent), and other Christian groups (6 percent). The Muslim community constitutes 1.4 percent of the population. Other religious groups, which together make up less than 1 percent of the population, include Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, and Buddhists. Persons not belonging to any religious group make up 36.7 percent of the population, and the remainder did not provide information on religious affiliation.

A 2017 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey found 58 percent of those surveyed did not identify with any religion, 18 percent identified as belonging to the Church of Scotland, 10 percent as Roman Catholic, 11 percent as other Christian, and 2 percent as non-Christian.

Census figures from Northern Ireland in 2011 indicated 41.5 percent of the population is Protestant – consisting of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland (19 percent), Church of Ireland (14 percent), Methodist Church in Ireland (3 percent), and other Protestant groups (6 percent) – and 41 percent Roman Catholic. Less than 1 percent of the population belongs to non-Christian religious groups, and approximately 10 percent professes no religion; 7 percent did not indicate a religious affiliation.

Research conducted at Ulster University in 2019 stated there is a “clear statistical trend towards a change in the religious minority-majority structure of Northern Ireland.” The university's statistics showed a consistent decline of Protestants in

all 26 district council areas of Northern Ireland since 2001, contrasted with an increased Catholic population in 19 of 26 council areas in the same period. Analysis of 2011 census figures conducted at Ulster University also illustrates this trend is likely to continue. Census figures show a Protestant majority in the over-60 age bracket and a Catholic majority in the under-20 age bracket.

Census figures from Bermuda in 2010 cited 22 religious groups in the population of 71,000; 78 percent identifies as Christian, including 16 percent Anglican, 15 percent Roman Catholic, 9 percent African Methodist Episcopal, and 7 percent Seventh-day Adventist. Approximately 2 percent identifies with other religious groups, including approximately 600 Muslims, 200 Rastafarians, and 120 Jews. Approximately 20 percent did not identify with or state a religious affiliation.

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

### **Legal Framework**

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

The 1998 Human Rights Act states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance." The Human Rights Act reaffirms the European Convention of Human Rights, Article 9, which guarantees freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, subject to certain restrictions that are "in accordance with law" and "necessary in a democratic society."

As the supreme governor of the Church of England, the monarch must always be a member of, and promise to uphold, that Church. The monarch appoints Church of England officials, including lay and clergy representatives, on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Crown Appointments Commission. Aside from these appointments, the state is not involved in Church administration. The Church of Scotland is governed by its General Assembly, which has the authority to make laws determining how it operates.

Blasphemy and blasphemous libel remain criminal offenses in Northern Ireland under common law. To date, however, there have been no convictions for blasphemy or blasphemous libel there. These laws prohibit “composing, printing or publishing any blasphemous libel or any seditious libel tending to bring into hatred...any matter in Church or State.” The law applies only to Christianity.

In England and Wales, the law prohibits religiously motivated hate speech and any acts intended to incite religious hatred through the use of words or the publication or distribution of written material. The law defines religious hatred as hatred of a group because of its religious belief or lack thereof. Police are responsible for investigating criminal offenses and for gathering evidence; the Crown Prosecution Service, which is an independent body and the main public prosecution service for England and Wales, is responsible for deciding whether a suspect should be charged with a criminal offense. The maximum penalty for inciting religious hatred is seven years in prison. If there is evidence of religious hostility in connection with any crime, it is a “religiously aggravated offense” and carries a higher maximum penalty than does the underlying crime alone.

In March, the Scottish Parliament passed the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act, which abolished blasphemy as an offense and criminalized “stirring up hatred” on the basis of, among other things, religion or perceived religious affiliation. The offense of “stirring up hatred” had previously applied only to race.

Northern Ireland does not have specific hate crime laws, but current legislation allows for increased sentencing if offenses are judged to be motivated by hostility based on religion, among other aggravating factors.

By law, the General Register Office for England and Wales governs the registration and legal recognition of places of worship in England and Wales. A representative of the congregation, for example, a proprietor, trustee, or religious head, must complete and submit an application form and pay a fee of 29 pounds (\$39) to a local registrar. The General Registrar Office typically provides registration certificates to the local superintendent registrar within 20 working days. The law also states buildings, rooms, or other premises may be registered as meeting places for religious worship upon payment of a fee. The General Register Office for England and Wales keeps a record of the registration, and the place of worship is assigned a “worship number.” Registration is not compulsory, but it provides certain financial advantages and is also required before a place of worship may be registered as a venue for marriages. Registered places of worship are

exempt from paying taxes and benefit from participating in the country's Gift Aid program. Gift Aid allows charities to claim back the 25 percent basic rate of tax already paid on donations by the donor, boosting the value of a donation by one quarter. The law only applies in England and Wales.

The law requires religious education (RE) and worship for children between the ages of three and 18 in state-run schools, with the content decided at the local level. Specialist schoolteachers, rather than religious groups, teach the syllabus. Parents may request to exempt their children from RE, and in England and Wales, students may opt out themselves at age 14, although religious worship continues until students leave school at either age 16 or 18. State schools that are not legally designated as religious require the RE curriculum to be nondenominational and refrain from attempting to convert students. RE instruction must also include the practices of principal non-Christian religions in the country. All schools not designated as religious, whether private or state-run, must maintain neutrality in their interpretation of the RE syllabus and must avoid presenting one faith or belief as greater than another.

State schools in England and Wales that are not legally designated as religious are required to practice daily collective prayer or worship of "a wholly or mainly...Christian character." Schoolteachers lead these assemblies; however, parents have the legal right to request their children not participate in collective prayer or worship. Teachers, unless they are employed by faith-based schools, may decline participation in collective worship, without prejudice. The law permits sixth form students (generally 16- to 19-year-olds in the final two years of secondary school) to withdraw from worship without parental permission or action. State schools not designated as religious are free to hold other religious ceremonies as they choose.

The government requires schools to consider the practices of different religious groups when setting dress codes for students. This includes wearing or carrying specific religious artifacts, not cutting hair, dressing modestly, or covering the head. Guidance from the Department of Education requires schools to balance the rights of individual students against the best interests of the school community as a whole; it acknowledges schools could be justified in restricting individuals' rights to manifest their religion or beliefs when necessary, for example, to promote cohesion and good order.

In Scotland, only denominational (faith-based) schools practice daily collective prayer or worship; however, religious observance at least six times per year is

compulsory in all Scottish schools. Religious observance is defined as “community acts which aim to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school’s community.” Examples of religious observance include school assemblies and events to recognize religious occasions, including Christmas and Easter. Parents or legal guardians may elect to have their children opt out from this requirement, but students may not make this decision themselves.

In Bermuda, by law, students attending state schools may participate in collective worship, characterized by educational officials as reciting the Lord’s Prayer, but it prohibits worship “distinctive of any particular religious group.” At the high school level, students are required to take a course that explores various religions until year 9 (ages 11-14); in years 10 and 11 (ages 15-16), courses on religion are optional.

There are two faith-based private schools in Bermuda that operate from kindergarten through high school. One follows the guidance of the North American division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The other follows principles of the Catholic Church. There is one primary school that follows Islamic principles.

The government determines whether to establish a faith-based school when there is evidence of demand, such as petitions from parents, religious groups, teachers, or other entities. If a faith-based school is not oversubscribed, then the school must offer a place to any child, but if the school is oversubscribed, it may use faith as a criterion for acceptance. Nonstate faith-based schools are eligible to claim “charitable status,” which allows for tax exemptions.

Almost all schools in Northern Ireland receive state support, with approximately 90 percent of students attending Protestant or Catholic schools. Approximately 7 percent of school-age children attend religiously integrated schools that have admissions criteria designed to enroll equal numbers of Catholic and Protestant children as well as children from other religious and cultural backgrounds. Students of different faiths may attend Protestant or Catholic schools but tend to gravitate toward the integrated schools. These integrated schools are not secular but, according to the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, are “essentially Christian in character and welcome all faiths and none.” RE – a core syllabus designed by the Department of Education, Church of Ireland, and Catholic, Presbyterian, and Methodist Churches – is compulsory in all government-funded schools, and by law each school day must include collective Christian worship. All schools receiving government funding must teach RE;

however, students may opt out of the classes and collective worship. Catholic-managed schools draw uniquely on the Roman Catholic tradition for their RE, while other schools may draw on world religions.

An estimated 30 sharia councils operate parallel to the national legal system. They adjudicate Islamic religious matters, including religious divorces, which are not recognized under civil law. Participants may submit cases to the councils on a voluntary basis. The councils do not have the legal status of courts, although they have legal status as mediation and arbitration bodies. As such, rulings may not be appealed in the courts.

The law prohibits discrimination on the grounds of “religion or belief” or the “lack of religion or belief” and requires “reasonable” religious accommodation in the workplace for employees. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) – a body sponsored by the Department of Education’s Government Equalities Office – is responsible for enforcing legislation prohibiting religious and other discrimination. The EHRC researches and conducts inquiries into religious and other discrimination in England, Scotland, and Wales. The Minister for Women and Equalities appoints the members. If the EHRC finds a violation, it has a range of powers at its disposal, including offering guidance or initiating court proceedings, resulting in binding, legally enforceable judgments. The EHRC receives government funds but operates independently. The Northern Ireland equivalent to the EHRC is the Equality Commission.

In Northern Ireland, the law bans discrimination on the grounds of religious belief in employment; however, schools may be selective on the grounds of religion when recruiting teachers. In the rest of the country, the law prohibits any discrimination, including employment discrimination, based on religious belief unless the employer can show a genuine requirement for a particular religion.

There are separate legal regimes for civil marriage and civil partnerships. Civil partnerships are formed when parties sign and register a civil partnership document, with no words required to be spoken. Civil marriages are solemnized by saying a proscribed form of words. In England, Northern Ireland, and Wales, civil partnership ceremonies must be nonreligious. They must not include religious music or readings and must be free of obvious specifically religious connotations. In Scotland, civil partnership ceremonies may be conducted by religious or humanist leaders. Nonreligious belief (humanist) marriages are legally recognized in Scotland and Northern Ireland but not in England and Wales, where “religious” marriages must take place in registered places of worship. In England

and Wales, humanists must have a civil marriage alongside any humanist wedding, if they want to be legally married. There are four categories of religious marriage: Church of England and Church of Wales, Jewish, Quaker, and others (e.g., Muslims or Hindus). Anglican marriages must be conducted by a member of the clergy, who registers the marriage. Jewish and Quaker marriages are conducted in accordance with appropriate religious rites and the officiant registers the marriage. Other religious marriages must take place in a registered place of worship, have at least two witnesses present, and include the necessary declarations; a registrar or a person certified by the Registrar General (e.g., the imam) must then register the marriage.

Citing a limited broadcast spectrum, the law prohibits religious groups from holding national radio licenses, public teletext licenses, more than one television service license, and/or radio and television multiplex licenses, which would allow a group to offer multiple channels as part of a single bundle of programming.

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

The law requires visa applicants wishing to enter the country as “ministers of religion” to have a certificate of sponsorship for their job from a bona fide religious organization, proof of their knowledge of English, personal savings, and a travel history over the last year. The law defines “minister of religion” as a religious functionary whose main regular duties include leading a congregation in performing the rites and rituals of the faith and in preaching the essentials of the creed. “Minister of religion” includes anyone doing preaching and pastoral work or coming to the country as missionaries or members of religious orders.

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

### **Government Practices**

In March, the Scottish Parliament passed the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act. The legislation, which criminalized “stirring up hatred” on the basis of, among other things, religion or perceived religious affiliation, generated controversy on its way through parliament over its perceived potential effect on free speech. The Scottish Police Federation stated it would force officers to “police what people think or feel,” while Scottish Conservatives said noted author

JK Rowling could have “conceivably” faced prosecution for expressing her views on transgender rights. The LGBTQI+ rights organization Stonewall Scotland, however, welcomed the legislation and dismissed these concerns, saying, “Courts and prosecutors should be well versed in the distinction between freedom of expression and incitement to hatred.” The law also abolished blasphemy offenses. The legislation had been significantly amended after legal bodies expressed concerns that the bar for prosecution was too low, while religious groups worried that the expression of certain religious beliefs, such as opposition to same-sex marriage or increased transgender rights, could be considered criminal acts. Scottish government ministers insisted the legislation was fair. Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf said that “robust scrutiny has ensured we have met the right balance between protecting groups targeted by hate crime and respecting people’s rights to free speech.”

In March, the National Secular Society publicly called on Northern Ireland Justice Minister Long to repeal blasphemy laws in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Humanists group also continued to publicly call for the repeal of the region’s blasphemy laws, passed in 1891 and 1888. According to sources, all major political parties supported repeal except for the Democratic Unionist Party, Northern Ireland’s largest political party.

Conservative Member of Parliament (MP) Fiona Bruce, the Prime Minister’s Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion for Belief, continued to work with faith groups and civil society to promote freedom of religion internationally throughout the year, as reflected in the MP’s social media account. In November, Bruce launched the #EndThePersecution campaign, an initiative to raise awareness of persecution faced by Christians and those of other religions or beliefs around the world. Bruce also served as vice chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Freedom of Religion or Belief. At an APPG event in November, Bruce called for “a time for action, to reassert our commitment to advocate to end the persecution for all.”

As of year’s end, parliament had not adopted a working definition of “Islamophobia.” In 2019, the government appointed Imam Qari Asim, the deputy chair of the government’s Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group, as an independent advisor to propose a new working definition after the government rejected the then proposed working definition. That definition stated, “Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.” At the time, the chair of the National Police Chiefs’ Council said the proposed definition was “too broad... and could be used to challenge legitimate

free speech.” During a September parliamentary debate, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Housing, Communities, and Local Government Eddie Hughes said, “We remain committed to there being a robust and effective definition, and we will outline our steps to achieve that in due course.” The government and Muslim groups established the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group in 2012 to develop and implement proposals to address anti-Muslim sentiment in the country. It is made up of representatives from Muslim communities, independent experts, academics, and a range of government departments, including the Attorney General’s Office, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO), and the Home Office.

The pastoral needs of prisoners were addressed, in part, through chaplains paid for by the Ministry of Justice, rather than by religious groups. All chaplains worked as part of a multifaith team, the size and breakdown of which was determined by the number of inmates in the prison and their religious composition. Prison service regulations stated, “Chaplaincy provision must reflect the faith denomination requirements of the prison.”

The military generally provided adherents of minority religious groups with chaplains of their faith. There were approximately 240 recruited chaplains in the armed forces, all of whom were Christian. The armed forces also employed five civilian chaplains as full-time civil servants to care for Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish, and Muslim recruits.

According to media, most religious groups in Scotland followed that government’s COVID-19 pandemic restrictions; however, in January, a group of 27 cross-denominational church leaders brought an action in Scotland’s civil court, challenging the Scottish government’s forced closure of places of worship during the lockdown. In March, Lord Peter Braid, a judge on the Court of Session, Scotland’s highest civil court, ruled in favor of the church leaders, holding that the Scottish government had overstepped its emergency powers in ordering closure of places of worship. Lord Braid stated the regulations disproportionately interfered with the freedom of religion secured in the European Convention on Human Rights. Church leaders welcomed the decision. Andrea Williams, chief executive of the Christian Legal Centre, said she was “thankful and relieved” the court recognized the regulations as a “dangerous interference.” Lord Braid said his ruling did not mean there could be no circumstances in which restrictions on places of worship were justified. The Scottish government acknowledged the opinion and said it would “carefully consider the findings, its implications, and our next steps.”

Under the Places of Worship Scheme, the government provided 1,704,237 pounds (\$2.30 million) for security measures to reduce the risk and impact of hate crimes at places of worship and associated faith group-run community centers at 58 places of worship and community centers, comprising 30 churches (12 in 2020), 9 mosques (27 in 2020), 6 Hindu temples (4 in 2020), 10 Sikh gurdwaras (5 in 2020), and 3 other faith-based group-run centers. In 2020, the government provided 1.6 million pounds (\$2.16 million).

The Places of Worship Scheme was open to all faiths apart from the Jewish community, which received 13.5 million pounds (\$18.24 million) from a separate government grant administered by CST. According to CST, the grant to the Jewish community, covering April 2020 to March 2021, would have been 14 million pounds (\$18.92 million) (compared with 14 million pounds in April 2019-March 2020), but 500,000 (\$676,000) pounds carried over unused from the prior time period, as many community buildings were closed for part of the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The grant funded commercial security guards at Jewish community buildings across the country, with priority placed on schools. The grant to CST did not apply in Northern Ireland.

As of year's end, the government continued to analyze the results of a 2020 public consultation on measures to improve its response to religiously motivated hate crimes at places of worship.

On May 26, the Scottish government announced it would provide 500,000 pounds (\$676,000) to protect places of worship via the Hate Crime Security Fund, the same amount as in 2020. Scottish Social Justice Secretary Shona Robison said, "Places of worship should be places of peace and sanctuary and our faith communities should feel safe and secure when they visit them." Assistant Chief Constable Gary Ritchie said, "Faith leaders and their congregations should be able to attend worship without fear of crime or persecution."

The Christian charitable organization Care NI continued to call for the Northern Ireland government to introduce the Places of Worship Scheme in Northern Ireland, where it did not currently apply. According to Police Service of Northern Ireland statistics, there were 123 incidents of criminal damage to religious facilities in Northern Ireland between September 2020 and September 2021.

In March, the government announced an extension to funding available for the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme (LPW) until March 2022. The LPW, run by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport, and focused on

preserving cultural heritage, provided Value Added Tax (VAT) relief on repairs to worship structures, turret clocks, pews, bells and pipe organs, in addition to associated professional fees. All faiths and areas of the UK were eligible for the plan.

In April, the Welsh Senedd (parliament) passed the Curriculum and Assessment Act, permitting sixth-form students (age 16-18) to opt out of RVE instruction, which remained compulsory for younger students. The NGO Wales Humanists stated children who were not yet in the sixth form should also be given a legal right to freedom of religion or belief that extended to determining for themselves whether to participate in worship. From May to July, the Welsh government invited public comments on draft implementing guidance to “provide an opportunity for all practitioners and other stakeholders to offer input,” but it had not released the results of public comments by year’s end. In July, Wales Humanists called on the Welsh government to amend the guidance to ensure RVE was taught in an “objective, critical, and pluralistic way.” The NGO stated the guidance’s definition of “non-religious philosophical convictions” could lead to the “exclusion of humanism in favor of beliefs that should not be covered in RVE” instruction.

According to 2019 data, the latest available, there were 6,802 state-funded, faith-based schools in England, representing 34 percent of all state-funded mainstream schools and serving approximately 1.9 million students. Church of England schools were the most common type among primary schools (26 percent); Roman Catholic schools were the most common at the secondary level (9 percent). Additionally, at the primary and secondary levels, there were 72 “other Christian,” 36 Jewish, 25 Methodist, 14 Islamic, six Sikh, five Hindu, and two multifaith state-funded faith-based schools. There were 370 government-funded denominational schools in Scotland: 366 Catholic, three Episcopalian, and one Jewish. The government classified schools with links to the Church of Scotland as nondenominational.

In July, England amended the Health and Social Care Act of 2008 to mandate that all frontline healthcare workers receive two doses of COVID-19 vaccine by November 1. The amendment did not include an exemption for individuals who objected to vaccination based on religious or philosophical beliefs, but such workers had the option to redeploy to non-frontline roles or go on unpaid leave. Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales did not have vaccine mandates.

In March, the England and Wales High Court held that the religious freedom rights of three pagan and Druid protesters at Stonehenge were not infringed when they were convicted of violating restrictions on entry to the stone circle under provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the Stonehenge Regulations. The court said the “removal of restrictions on access to the stone circle because the appellants turned up and wanted access to the stone circle to protest and exercise religious freedoms would not strike a fair balance between the important rights of the individual appellants and the general interest of the community to see Stonehenge preserved for present and future generations.”

In October, media reported Mary Onuoha, a Christian nurse, sued her former employer, Croydon University Hospital, for harassment, victimization, direct and indirect discrimination, and constructive and unfair dismissal (i.e., being forced to quit), alleging she was intimidated and forced out of her job because she wore a necklace with a Christian cross. Onuoha’s lawyers stated that Croydon Health Services National Health Service Trust violated Onuoha’s freedom to manifest her faith under Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the country’s Equality Act. The hospital argued the cross was capable of harboring bacteria or viruses and was therefore an infection risk. The suit was pending at year’s end.

The 2021 Census in England and Wales contained the question, “What is your religion?” Humanists UK, which had unsuccessfully lobbied the government to change the wording, stated this was a leading question and urged participants who did not believe in or practice a religion to select “no religion.” On the group’s website, it wrote, “The results of the Census are used to make decisions about everything from the types of new schools to open to the types of emotional support offered in hospitals, so it really matters. We want people’s answers to reflect what they truly believe.”

Humanist UK stated nonreligious belief marriages, which are legally recognized in Scotland and Northern Ireland, should also receive legal recognition in England and Wales.

Humanist UK said the state should increase the availability of nonpastoral support in prisons and hospitals.

A report commissioned by the Conservative Party and published in May concluded that anti-Muslim sentiment “remains a problem” in the party. The report was authored by former EHRC commissioner Swaran Singh, who analyzed 1,418

complaints regarding 727 separate incidents between 2015-2020. Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who was criticized in 2018 for comparing Muslim women wearing burqas to “letter boxes,” said he was “obviously sorry for any offense taken” to past remarks but did not specifically address his burqa comment. Singh called for the party leadership to publish an action plan to address its failings, recommended that each local party be given equality training, and recommended that the party produce and implement a new code of conduct. The EHRC, which had suspended its own investigation into allegations of anti-Muslim bias in the Conservative Party while Singh’s review took place, said it “would assess the report... and await the Conservative Party’s response on the actions they will take.” The Muslim Council of Britain said that while Singh’s report “rightly recognizes that Islamophobia has been a serious issue” for the Conservatives, it failed to acknowledge “the root causes of this bigotry.”

Media reported in January that two MPs, Sally-Ann Hart, MP for Hastings, and Lee Anderson, MP for Ashfield, voluntarily attended online training sessions organized by the NGO Antisemitism Policy Trust to “give them a greater understanding of what constitutes anti-Jewish racism.” In 2017, Hart posted to social media a link to a YouTube video about the EU that used the image of a prominent Jewish American businessman accused of manipulating European politics. Hart then liked a comment left underneath the video that said “Ein Reich,” a Nazi slogan. She later apologized for these actions. Anderson was an active member of a Facebook group called Ashfield Backs Boris that promoted conspiracy theories concerning the same U.S. businessman. Anderson told media he never posted antisemitic content and left the group after learning of its practices. The Conservative Party investigated both members in 2017 but did not make its findings public.

Media reported in February that among nine individuals appointed to the Labour Party’s new Antisemitism Advisory Board were Mark Gardner, chief executive of CST; Marie van der Zyl, president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the country’s European Jewish Conference affiliate; Adrian Cohen, a trustee of the Jewish Leadership Council; and Natasha Engel, a trustee of the Antisemitism Policy Trust.

At the Labour Party’s annual conference in September, Labour Party Leader Starmer said the party had “closed the door” on the “dark chapter” of antisemitism by introducing new rules and establishing a fully independent process to handle complaints involving antisemitism. The new rules included prohibiting or sanctioning political interference in the complaints process; publishing a

comprehensive policy and procedure setting out how antisemitism complaints would be handled; commissioning and providing education and training for all individuals involved in the antisemitism complaints process; and monitoring and evaluating improvements to ensure lasting change. The party published its plan for a major overhaul in response to the EHRC's highly critical October 2020 report into Labour's handling of antisemitism complaints under former Leader Jeremy Corbyn. The Board of Deputies of British Jews welcomed the new approach adopted by the party. Jewish Labour MP Dame Margaret Hodge said the changes brought "enormous relief and immeasurable hope to every Labour Party member who has been a victim of vile anti-Jew hate." Former Labour MP Dame Louise Ellman, who resigned from the party in 2019 over what she viewed as its inadequate handling of antisemitism, rejoined in September following the rule changes and said she was "confident" Starmer was tackling the issue.

CST recorded 30 incidents connected to specific political parties or their supporters, all linked to the Labour Party. This represented a large decrease from 2020, when 175 of the 180 incidents related to political parties were Labour Party-related. There were also two incidents connected with the country's withdrawal from the European Union. According to CST, "The issue of alleged antisemitism in the Labour Party has been less prevalent in public discourse and consciousness than it was in 2020, when the leadership change and subsequent suspension of Jeremy Corbyn from the Labour Party inspired a deluge of online vitriol from those who held Jews accountable for the end of Corbyn's tenure."

At its fall conference in October, the Green Party of England and Wales formally adopted guidance for dealing with internal disciplinary cases relating to antisemitism. The guidance incorporated both the IHRA non-legally-binding Working Definition of Antisemitism and the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism; the declaration includes a definition and 15 guidelines of what constitutes antisemitism. The party conference also stated, "This motion does not in any way conflict with other policies on, for example, B[oycott] D[ivestment] S[anctions] and freedom of speech, and will not prevent legitimate criticism of the actions of any nation state." The Board of Deputies of British Jews criticized the Green Party's decision to adopt both definitions. The board's vice president, Amanda Bowman, stated that "by adopting a series of contradictory definitions of antisemitism, the Green Party has not helped Jews." The board called instead for the adoption of the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism alone.

In April, the Northern Ireland Assembly adopted the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism. A proposal by the Sinn Fein party to remove references to the IHRA and its examples of antisemitism did not pass.

In July, in a letter to Facebook, Twitter, Google, Snapchat, and TikTok, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport Oliver Dowden called on these platforms to adopt the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism in response to rising online antisemitism. He wrote, “I would like to strongly encourage you to adopt the definition and consider its practical application in the development of your company's policies and procedures.”

In January, leaders of multiple faith and belief communities and political leaders from across the country commemorated International Holocaust Memorial Day in a virtual ceremony. Attendees included Prince Charles, Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and the First Ministers of Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Media reported Prime Minister Johnson stated the country “can’t get complacent” about antisemitism. Labour Leader Starmer took part in a candle-lighting ceremony “to remember the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust, along with the other genocides and persecutions that have taken place around the world.” House of Commons speaker Sir Lindsay Hoyle held a candle-lighting ceremony for members of parliament, the first ever such event in parliament to mark the day.

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

According to Home Office figures for the 12 months ending in March, religious hate crimes fell by 17 percent to 5,948 offenses in England and Wales, down from 6,856 in the previous year; this was the second successive fall in religious hate crimes since a peak of 7,202 offenses in the 12-month period ending March 2019. Where the perceived religion of the victim was recorded, 45 percent of religious hate crime offenses targeted Muslims (2,703 offenses), 22 percent targeted Jews (1,288 offenses), 9 percent targeted Christians (521 offenses), 3 percent targeted Hindus (166 offenses), 2 percent targeted Sikhs (112 offenses), 6 percent targeted members of other religions (373 offenses), and 3 percent targeted individuals professing no religion (174 offenses). In 16 percent of offenses, the targeted religion was not known. Some of these incidents targeted multiple religions.

In January, the NGO Campaign Against Antisemitism published its *Antisemitism Barometer 2020*, combining two surveys it commissioned that were carried out by King’s College London. The first survey asked 1,853 non-Jewish respondents 12 questions relating to anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist sentiment in December 2020.

The report found that 55 percent of respondents did not agree with any of the statements and did not hold antisemitic views; 45 percent agreed with at least one antisemitic statement. The most popular antisemitic statement was “Israel treats the Palestinians like the Nazis treated the Jews,” with which 23 percent of respondents agreed. A separate survey of 1,846 Jewish respondents conducted between November and December 2020 found that there was high confidence in how police handled antisemitic incidents, but low confidence in the courts. Jewish respondents believed almost every political party was more tolerant of antisemitism in 2020 than in 2019. Two-thirds of respondents were “deeply concerned” by the BBC’s coverage of matters of Jewish concern and 55 percent were concerned by its handling of antisemitism complaints. Almost one-fifth of respondents said they felt unwelcome in the country and 44 percent said they did not display visible signs of their Judaism in public due to antisemitism.

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, 3 percent of 1,000 respondents ages 18-75 in the United Kingdom said they had negative feelings towards Jews. Four percent said they would be “totally uncomfortable” or “uncomfortable” with having Jewish neighbors. The survey cited stereotypical statements about Jews and asked 1,000 respondents ages 18-75 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” (7 percent); “there is a secret Jewish network that influences political and economic affairs in the world” (10 percent); “Jews have too much influence in this country” (6 percent); “Jews will never be able to fully integrate into this society” (5 percent); “Jews are more inclined than most to use shady practices to achieve their goals” (3 percent); “many of the atrocities of the Holocaust were often exaggerated by the Jews later” (3 percent); “Jews are also to blame for the persecutions against them” (2 percent); “Jews exploit Holocaust victimhood for their own purposes” (8 percent).

According to a 2020 joint study conducted by Newcastle University, Northumbria University, the Economic and Social Research Council, and Tell MAMA entitled *Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hatred in North East England*, more than two-thirds of 111 participants living within the three police force jurisdictions of Cleveland, Durham, and Northumbria said manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment or anti-Muslim hatred were either a regular or everyday occurrence. Eighty-four percent of Muslim respondents said they had directly experienced anti-Muslim sentiment and 33 percent of non-Muslim respondents said they had

experienced anti-Muslim sentiment due to being perceived as Muslim. According to the study, anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Muslim hate most often manifested as verbal abuse, harassment, intimidation, or online abuse, including comments based on incorrect assumptions about someone's immigration status or ability to speak English. It also included damage to buildings and property owned by Muslims. Individuals encountered anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Muslim hatred in public places such as supermarkets or public transport systems, as well as in the workplace. According to the study, "Only 22 percent of respondents had reported their experience of Islamophobia to the police. Those who had not reported to police gave diverse reasons, including not being taken seriously by the police... There was also a sense among participants that reporting Islamophobia to the police would be a waste of police time."

In Scotland, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) reported 573 religiously motivated crimes in the 12 months ending in March, a 14 percent decrease from the 660 crimes recorded in the same period in 2019-20. The COPFS cautioned against making direct comparisons with previous data sets due to a change in methodology.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) reported 37 religiously motivated hate crimes committed in 49 incidents during 2020-2021, an increase from 15 crimes reported in 2019-2020. The PSNI additionally reported 792 sectarian crimes, described as religion being among the motivating factors, in 841 incidents during 2020-21, compared with 622 sectarian crimes in 2019-2020.

In December, media reported a person was injured in an antisemitic attack by a man who allegedly told the victim he "looked Jewish." The perpetrator reportedly said he wanted to "kill his first Jew." Home Secretary Priti Patel described the incident as seriously disturbing. Stephen Silverman, director of investigations and enforcement at the Campaign Against Antisemitism called it the "most heinous of a considerable number of antisemitic crimes reported that we have reported over the course of Hannukah." At year's end, the suspect remained at large.

In December, the Board of Deputies of British Jews criticized the BBC for falsely alleging that victims of a November 29 antisemitic incident in London had provoked their attackers with an anti-Muslim slur. In the incident, a group shouted and spat at a bus containing Jews who were celebrating Hanukkah. The phrase the Jewish individuals uttered in Hebrew, which the BBC reported as being an ethnic slur, actually translated to "Call someone; it is urgent." On December 30, board president van Der Zyl published an op-ed in which she stated the reporting error

“raises serious questions about deep-seated biases within the BBC towards Israelis, and towards Jews in general.”

CST’s annual report recorded 2,255 antisemitic incidents during the year, the highest annual total since CST began its tracking in 1984 and a 34 percent increase from 2020 and a 24 percent increase from 2019. According to CST, the record volume was “due to anti-Jewish reactions to the escalation of conflict in Israel and Palestine,” with incidents in May (661) at the height of the conflict and June (210) accounting for 39 percent of the total 2,255 incidents. CST stated, “It is possible that the relaxing of [COVID-19] regulations, coinciding with a trigger event as emotive as renewed war between Israel and Hamas, provided the opportunity and impetus for a mass release of lockdown-induced frustration.”

CST recorded 173 violent antisemitic assaults during the year, a 78 percent increase from the 97 reported in 2020. CST stated that “in a year during which public interactions were less impacted by pandemic regulations, physical altercations were more common.” Three additional incidents were classified by CST as involving “extreme violence,” meaning the incident involved potential grievous bodily harm or a threat to life, the same number as recorded in 2020. There were 82 incidents of damage and desecration of Jewish property; 1,844 incidents of abusive behavior, including verbal abuse, graffiti, antisemitic social media posts (552 incidents), and hate mail; 143 direct antisemitic threats; and 10 cases of mass-mailed antisemitic leaflets or emails. Of the 82 incidents of damage and desecration of Jewish property, 38 involved damage to the homes and vehicles of Jewish people and 17 to Jewish businesses and organizations. There were 90 incidents glorifying the Holocaust and 17 examples of Holocaust denial. Forty-nine antisemitic incidents contained discourse relating to Islam and Muslims, compared with eight reported in 2020, while 20 of these showed what CST characterized as “evidence of Islamist extremist ideology.” CST stated, “These increases are once again indicative of the distinction between the volume and content of antisemitic expression in the UK when there is an eruption of war in the Middle East, and when no such trigger event occurs.” Approximately two-thirds of the 2,255 antisemitic incidents were recorded in the Greater London and Greater Manchester administrative regions – home to the two largest Jewish communities in the country. CST recorded 1,254 anti-Semitic incidents in Greater London, an increase of 33 percent compared with 2020. CST recorded 284 antisemitic incidents in Greater Manchester, an increase of 86 percent compared with 2020. Elsewhere in the country, CST recorded at least one antisemitic incident in 42 of the 43 national police regions, Suffolk being the exception. Several of the incidents were reported to CST by police under a national data-sharing agreement.

CST stated conspiracy theories regarding Jewish influence over global politics, media, finance, and other walks of life continued to drive some antisemitic incidents.

According to CST's annual report, there were 182 antisemitic incidents during the year at schools across the country, a 59 percent increase over the 54 such incidents in 2020. Ninety-five of these incidents occurred in May at the height of the Israel-Palestine conflict. There were 128 antisemitic incidents at universities across the country, a 191 percent increase over 44 such incidents in 2020. On November 15, CST told *The Times* that in one incident, a Glasgow University student was told to "go gas herself." In another, a student was sent a digitally altered picture of her head severed by a guillotine. The University of Bristol and University of Warwick each witnessed 11 incidents – the highest total for any single school. Ten incidents occurred at University College London, nine at the University of Oxford, and eight at the University of Birmingham, where a Jewish student was assaulted in a residence hall. CST told *The Times* the fact that antisemitic incidents at universities rose for the fourth consecutive year "should ring alarm bells for everyone in the higher education sector."

Media reported coronavirus conspiracy theorists compared the pandemic to the Holocaust. During an antivaccine rally in London on July 24, Kate Shemirani, a former nurse whom British media describe as a prominent COVID-19 conspiracy theorist, told the crowd to send her the names of doctors and nurses who administered vaccinations. She said, "At the Nuremberg trials, the doctors and nurses stood trial and they hung." The Royal College of Nursing said Shemirani's comments were "reprehensible and could put nursing staff at risk." Metropolitan Police investigated the incident. Shemirani had previously referred to the National Health Service as the "new Auschwitz." Media reported that on February 3, police in Southwark arrested Piers Corbyn, brother of former Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, and another man for distributing flyers showing the gates of Auschwitz, with the Nazi slogan "Arbeit macht frei" ("Work makes you free") changed to "Vaccines are [the] safe path to freedom." Police charged the two men with "malicious communication and public nuisance."

In April, media reported the Westminster Magistrates' Court convicted Alison Chabloz under the 2003 Communications Act of spreading antisemitic materials denying the Holocaust and sentenced her to 18 weeks in prison. She became the first person in the country to be imprisoned for Holocaust denial. Stephen Silverman, director of Investigations and Enforcement at the Campaign Against Antisemitism, which was involved in the trial, said of the outcome, "[This] verdict

and sentence finally give the Jewish community justice and protection from someone who has made a vocation out of denying the Holocaust and baiting Jews. It also sends a clear message to those who might be tempted to go down the same path.”

In December, media reported the Manchester Crown Court sentenced Richard Hesketh to four years in prison for posting hundreds of antisemitic videos online between 2018-2020 in what a Greater Manchester Police spokesperson called “a campaign of abuse towards the Jewish community.”

Media reported that on May 4, five worshipers were “pelted with eggs” outside the Ilford Islamic Centre in East London. Ilford Islamic Centre director and secretary Ahmad Nawaz said no persons were injured in the “unnerving” attack, but that the community was “always fearful of something like this. This sentiment exists.” Police made no arrests, but they reportedly augmented patrols in the local area.

On May 16, police arrested Abderrahman Brahim and Souraka Djabouri and charged them with “wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm, robbery, and religiously aggravated criminal damage” for their attack on Rabbi Rafi Goodwin, who required treatment in a hospital for cuts to his head and around one eye. On May 17, police said that officers were engaging with local Jewish communities to provide reassurance and updates following the incident.

Media reported that on May 16, London police arrested four men suspected of participating in racially aggravated public order offenses, based on a video appearing to show the men and others in a convoy standing up through sunroofs, waving Palestinian flags, and shouting obscenities and antisemitic insults. The incident, which took place in a Jewish community in North London, followed a 100,000-person march in London on May 15 that culminated in large crowds gathering outside the Israeli Embassy calling for immediate action to de-escalate the situation in the Middle East. Prime Minister Johnson and Labour Leader Starmer condemned the incident. Prime Minister Johnson stated, “There is no place for antisemitism in our society. Ahead of Shavuot, I stand with Britain's Jews who should not have to endure the type of shameful racism we have seen today.” Starmer said that “there must be consequences” for those involved. Authorities released the men on bail, “pending further inquiries.”

On November 16, religious leaders gathered in Liverpool and urged solidarity in the wake of anti-Muslim attacks that were believed to be in response to a suspected suicide bombing on November 14 when a car exploded outside Liverpool

Women’s Hospital. Reports included incidents of attackers pulling off women’s hijabs. Dr. Crispin Pailing, the rector of Liverpool, said the car bombing had “shocked people of every faith – and those of no faith – across the city.” He added, “Terrorism is an indiscriminate act against people of all faiths and backgrounds. It seeks to destroy our lives of peaceful coexistence and disrupt the functioning of society.” Leyla Mashjari, an associate director of Al-Ghazali Multicultural Centre, representing Liverpool’s Muslim community, said, “At this difficult time let us remember that there is more that unites than divides us.” Local police and firefighters distributed leaflets from the group Stop Hate UK that said, “Faith is welcome – hate is not.”

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

Embassy and consulate staff engaged with government officials and political parties on religious freedom issues. In December, embassy officers discussed with Conservative MP Bruce, the Prime Minister’s Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion for Belief, the country’s plans to deliver concrete improvements for those persecuted for their faith or belief and to offer support for the United Kingdom-hosted Ministerial to Promote Freedom of Religion or Belief, planned for July 2022.

Embassy officials met regularly with representatives from a wide variety of religious groups and organizations to broaden understanding of and advocacy for freedom of religion and belief. In meetings with the Board of Deputies of British Jews and CST, embassy officers discussed antisemitism in the UK and abroad, as well as the Labour Party’s newly adopted rules on antisemitism. Embassy officers also engaged with organizations in the Jewish Orthodox Charedi community. In meetings with Humanist UK, embassy officers discussed the lack of legal recognition of belief marriage ceremonies in England and Wales, the place of religious teaching in schools, and the provision of nonpastoral care in prisons and hospitals. Staff from the consulate general in Belfast continued to engage with all religious communities in Northern Ireland to discuss ongoing challenges in the region, such as sectarianism and religious intolerance.

In January, the Charge d’Affaires took part in the #LightTheDarkness virtual Holocaust Memorial Day campaign. In May, the Charge also gave remarks at a virtual interfaith iftar the embassy hosted with the Naz Legacy Foundation and recorded a video for a Yom HaShoah event in April. In December, embassy staff attended the London Nativity Exhibit, an event organized by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The embassy highlighted each engagement on social

media. To mark the U.S. National Religious Freedom Day in January, the embassy posted messages on Twitter highlighting the U.S. commitment to the promotion of religious freedom. The embassy also posted messages on Twitter on religious holidays throughout the year, including Diwali, Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Nowruz, Passover, Hannukah, and Easter. Collectively, these messages reached approximately 110,0000 persons.