

# HUNGARY 2022 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

## Executive Summary

The Fundamental Law, the country's constitution, provides for freedom of religion, including freedom to choose, change, or manifest religion or belief, cites "the role of Christianity" in "preserving nationhood," and values "various religious traditions." The constitution prohibits religious discrimination and speech violating the dignity of any religious community and stipulates the autonomy of religious communities. There are four tiers of religious groups, all of which may receive income tax allocations from taxpayers and may conclude cooperation agreements with the state. The two highest categories are also eligible for state subsidies supplementing the income tax allocations, and religious groups in the highest tier may offer religious education classes in schools.

National Tax Authority (NAV) officers raided the offices of the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship (MET) and its Oltalom Charity Association to investigate allegations of tax fraud. Investigations against the Church of Scientology (COS) for tax fraud and abuse of personal data by the NAV and the National Bureau of Investigation were ongoing at end of year. Senior government officials, including Prime Minister Viktor Orban, continued to make statements in defense of what they called a "Christian Europe" and against Muslim immigration. In August, Orban said in a speech delivered in Romania that "we are willing to mix with one another, but we do not want to become mixed race," which prompted reactions from Jewish leaders and groups. In August, the far-right opposition party Mi Hazánk unveiled a bust of interwar leader regent Miklos Horthy (responsible for the country's active role in the Holocaust) in the parliamentary office of Deputy Speaker Dora Duro.

In April, unknown persons vandalized approximately 25 graves in a Jewish countryside cemetery. In May, witnesses recorded four young men giving Nazi salutes and vandalizing the Dohany Street synagogue in Budapest. In August, unknown persons painted a swastika on the wall of a synagogue in Budapest. A Budapest man arrested for the crime confessed to writing the abbreviations "SS" and monogram "AH" in the elevator of the building. Muslim leaders said that physical assaults against Muslims were rare, but that verbal insults in public spaces were frequent. In April, the Budapest-based nongovernmental

organization (NGO) Tom Lantos Institute issued the results of its regional antisemitism survey, which concluded that 49 percent of 1,849 respondents ages 18-74 in the country could be classified as moderately or strongly antisemitic.

In meetings and discussions with the government, including officials from the Prime Minister's Office in charge of religious issues, U.S. embassy representatives advocated for compensation for heirless Jewish property seized during the Holocaust and discussed provisions of the religion law, including the registration process for religious groups. In July, the Chargé d'Affaires hosted an interfaith lunch with religious leaders and discussed the importance of interfaith cooperation and of raising their voices in defense of religious freedom. In September, the Ambassador hosted a reception in the Carl Lutz room in the embassy, named after the Swiss diplomat responsible for saving the lives of over 62,000 Hungarian Jews. Members of the Jewish community attended the event, in which the Ambassador highlighted the importance of tolerance and religious freedom. The embassy maintained regular contact with leaders of various religious communities, including the four religious groups considered as "historical" (the Roman Catholic, Reformed, and Lutheran Churches and Jewish congregations), Muslims, the COS, and religious groups that lost incorporated church status in 2011, such as MET and Sim Shalom, to understand their concerns. During these discussions, embassy officials discussed the effects of the religion law, antisemitism, and anti-Muslim rhetoric.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 9.7 million (midyear 2022). According to the 2011 national census, which included an optional question on religious affiliation, of the 73 percent of the population that responded, 51 percent identified as Roman Catholic, 16 percent as Hungarian Reformed Church (Calvinist), 3 percent as Lutheran, 2 percent as Greek Catholic, and less than 1 percent as Jewish; 23 percent reported no religious affiliation; and 2 percent said they were atheists. Other religious groups together constituting less than 5 percent of the population include Greek Orthodox, the Faith Congregation (a Pentecostal group), the COS, Russian and other Orthodox Christian groups, other Christian denominations, Buddhists, Muslims, and the Hungarian Society for Krishna Consciousness. The Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship (MET or the Hungarian Evangelical Brotherhood) has approximately 8,500 members, according

to a 2013 news report, and the Hungarian Pentecostal Church approximately 9,300 members, according to the 2011 census. Local Jewish organizations estimate approximately 100,000 citizens with Jewish heritage live in the country, primarily in Budapest. Other religious groups practice throughout the country.

A new census took place in October and November (postponed from 2021 because of COVID-19) with an optional question on religious identity; results have not yet been published. The Central Statistical Office consulted with churches and religious communities and noted the usefulness of gaining an accurate picture “of the social presence of individual churches and religious communities.”

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

### **Legal Framework**

The Fundamental Law, the country’s constitution, provides for freedom of conscience and religion, including freedom to choose or change religion or belief, and freedom – alone or in community with others and in public or in private – to manifest religion or belief through religious acts or ceremonies, or in any other way, in worship, practice, and observance. It prohibits religious discrimination, as well as speech “aimed at violating the dignity” of any religious community.

The constitution’s preamble states, “We recognize the role of Christianity” in preserving the nation and “value the various religious traditions” in the country. The constitution stipulates separation between religious communities and the state, as well as the autonomy of religious communities. According to the constitution, the state may, at the request of religious communities, cooperate with them on community goals. A 2020 constitutional amendment states that children must be guaranteed an “upbringing based on values stemming from our country’s constitutional identity and Christian culture.”

Per a 2019 amendment to the 2011 law on religion, the law establishes a four-tier system of, in descending order, “established (or incorporated) churches,” “registered churches” (also called “registered II”), “listed churches” (also called “registered I”), and “religious associations.” The term “church” in the law refers to any religious community, not just Christian ones, and religious groups in any category may use “church” in their official names. All previously incorporated

religious groups retained their status in the first tier of the system as established churches. Parliament must approve recognition of churches as established. The Budapest-Capital Regional Court has jurisdiction to rule on applications for registration within the other three categories. Religious groups in all four tiers have legal personality, which grants them legal rights, such as the right to own property.

Religious entities that do not apply for legal status in one of the four tiers are still able to function and conduct worship but are not eligible to receive state funding or income tax contributions from taxpayers. The law states constitutional protection of freedom of religion also applies to unregistered groups.

To qualify for established church status, a religious group must first have registered status and then conclude a comprehensive cooperation agreement with the state for the purpose of accomplishing community goals. The government submits the comprehensive agreement to parliament, which must approve it by a two-thirds majority vote. A registered church becomes an established church from the day parliament approves the comprehensive agreement. Established churches are eligible to benefit from significant state subsidies for the performance of public service activities.

To qualify for registered church status, a religious group must have received tax allocations from an average of 4,000 persons per year in the five-year period prior to the application. This status also requires that the group either have operated as a religious association for at least 20 years in the country, or at least 100 years internationally, or have operated as a listed church for at least 15 years in the country or at least 100 years internationally.

To qualify for listed church status, a religious group must receive tax allocations from an average of 1,000 persons per year in the three-year period prior to the application for status and have operated as a religious association for at least five years in the country or for at least 100 years internationally.

To qualify for religious association status, a religious group must have at least 10 members.

The law allows the government to negotiate individual cooperation agreements with all four tiers of religious groups for the performance of public service activities and support of faith-based activities. The agreements' duration depends on the status of the religious community, ranging from a five-year maximum for religious associations to 10 and 15 years for listed and registered churches, respectively, and unlimited duration for established churches. These agreements may be renewed.

The law allows taxpayers to allocate 1 percent of their income taxes to any religious community in any of the four tiers, starting with the 2020 tax year. Religious groups may use these funds as they wish. Only established and registered churches (the two highest tiers) are eligible to receive a state subsidy supplementing the 1 percent tax allocations.

Religious groups that agree not to seek state (including personal income tax allocations) or EU funding for their religious activities may qualify as registered or listed churches without fulfilling the requirement regarding the number of personal income tax allocations. The applicant religious community must perform primarily religious activities and may not be a criminal defendant or have been convicted of a crime during the previous five years, under sanction for "repeated violation of accounting and management rules," or considered a national security threat. The court decides whether to grant status as a registered or listed church based on an examination of the criteria above. In reviewing these applications, the court may consult church law, church history, or ecclesiastical or academic experts, and may also seek the opinion of the national security services.

Religious groups that agree not to seek government or EU funding but accept financial support at a later stage must report it to the court within 15 days of the disbursement of the aid. To avoid losing its status or a reclassification to the lower association tier, the religious group has eight days to declare to the court that it has returned the funds, requested cancellation of its religious registration status, or complied with the individual tax allocation requirement to become a registered or listed organization. The religious group or prosecutor's office may appeal the court's decision on the status of the group to the Budapest-Capital Court of Appeal.

The law stipulates the minister responsible for church issues, based on information received from the court, shall manage an electronic database of religious groups with legal status, accessible to the public free of charge. The database is publicly accessible at the government's central webpage, *kormany.hu*.

According to the law, the Budapest-Capital Regional Court may dissolve a religious community with legal status with the exception of established churches if its activities conflict with the constitution or law or if the court rules its registration should have been denied. Parliament may dissolve an incorporated church if the Constitutional Court finds it is operating in violation of the constitution. If a religious community is dissolved without a legal successor, its assets, after satisfying creditors, become the property of the state and shall be used for public interest activities.

Thirty-two churches have established (previously known as "incorporated") status. These include the Roman Catholic Church; a range of Protestant denominations; a range of Orthodox Christian groups; other Christian denominations such as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Seventh-day Adventists, and the Salvation Army; three Jewish groups, the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities, Unified Hungarian Jewish Congregation, and the Hungarian Autonomous Orthodox Jewish Community; two Muslim organizations; a Buddhist umbrella organization; and the Hungarian Society for Krishna Consciousness, the sole Hindu group registered as a church.

By law, the state may neither operate nor establish any institution for controlling or monitoring religious groups. Their doctrines, internal regulations, and statutes are not subject to state review, modification, or enforcement. Copyright law protects their names, symbols, and rites, while criminal law protects buildings and cemeteries.

The constitution establishes a unified system for the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights (ombudsperson). The ombudsperson investigates cases related to violations of fundamental rights – including religious freedom – and initiates general or specific measures for their remedy. These measures do not have the force of law.

Treaties with the Holy See regulate relations between the state and the Roman Catholic Church, including financing of public services and religious activities and settling claims for property seized by the state during the Communist era. These treaties serve as a model for regulating state relations with other religious groups, although there are some differences in the rights and privileges the state accords to each of the religious groups with which it has agreements. The state has also concluded formal agreements with the Hungarian Reformed Church, Hungarian Lutheran Church, Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities (Mazsihisz), and four Orthodox churches.

According to the law, established, registered, and listed churches may perform pastoral services in prisons and hospitals. Other laws indicate religious associations may also have the right to provide services at these facilities.

Military and law enforcement personnel may freely practice their religion in private and also at their workplaces if their religious practice does not violate their mandatory service duties. The Roman Catholic, Reformed, and Lutheran Churches, and Jewish congregations (which the government generally calls “historical churches”) may provide chaplain services to the military without seeking permission. Other religious groups must seek permission to offer such services.

Penitentiaries generally allow inmates free practice of religion and provide them with special diets, such as kosher, vegetarian, and pork-free meals. Historical churches may provide pastoral services in prisons without special permission, but other religious groups may do so only within official visiting hours as outlined in individual agreements and with permission from the penitentiary. Similarly, historical churches receive automatic access to patients in hospitals to provide pastoral services, while other groups may do so only under certain conditions, such as providing services only during visiting hours.

One hour per week of education in faith and ethics or general ethics is mandatory through the first eight grades of public school. Parents and students choose between the faith and ethics class offered by an established church of their choosing or a secular ethics course taught by public school teachers. Other religious groups are not entitled to provide religious education as part of the mandatory curricula in public schools but may offer extracurricular, optional

religious education in public schools at the request of parents or students. Private schools are not required to offer faith and ethics or general ethics classes.

All religious groups registered in one of the four categories have the right to open their own schools. The state provides a subsidy, based on the number of students enrolled, for employee salaries at all such schools. Only established churches automatically receive a supplementary subsidy for the schools' operating expenses. Other religious groups may apply for a supplementary operational subsidy, and the Ministry of Human Capacities (MHC) may sign an individualized contract with them to cover these costs.

The law also affords all religious groups with legal status the right to assume operation of public schools if more than 50 percent of the parents and adult students enrolled at the school sign a petition to do so and the MHC approves the change. In these cases, the state may continue to fund the schools. Whether newly established or converted from public status, religious schools are free to conduct their own religious teaching without government input and to make faith education mandatory and not substitutable with an ethics class. The state inspects both religious and public schools every two years to ensure they conform to legal standards.

The constitution prohibits speech that violates the dignity of any religious community. The law prohibits both incitement to violence and incitement to hatred against a religious community or its members, punishable by up to three years' imprisonment. The law provides a maximum punishment of three years in prison for impeding others through violence or threats from freely exercising their religion or abusing individuals because of their religious affiliation.

An assault motivated by the victim's actual or presumed religious affiliation is a felony punishable by one to five years in prison. Violence against a member of the clergy is classified as violence against an "individual providing public service" and is also punishable with a prison sentence of one to five years. Any person who engages in preparation for the use of force against any member of a religious community is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment not exceeding two years.

The law prohibits public denial, expression of doubt, or minimization of the Holocaust, genocide, and other crimes against humanity committed by the National Socialist or Communist regimes, punishing such offenses with a maximum sentence of three years in prison. The criminal code makes wearing, exhibiting, or promoting in public the swastika, the logo of the Nazi SS, or the symbol of the Arrow Cross – a fascist, antisemitic party that allied with Nazi Germany – in a way that harms the human dignity or the memory of Holocaust victims a misdemeanor, punishable by five to 90 days' detention.

The law provides for the lifting of official immunity of a member of parliament (MP) who incites hatred against religious groups or publicly denies crimes of the Communist or National Socialist regimes. No MP has been the subject of such a proceeding.

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

### **Government Practices**

In February, NAV officers raided the offices of the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship (MET) and its Oltalom Charity Association, led by Pastor Gabor Ivanyi, for alleged tax fraud. Ivanyi called the raid a political action and his followers gathered in front of MET during the raid as a show of support. Ivanyi had earlier admitted MET owed social security payments on employee payrolls. He said MET would be able to settle its outstanding debts if the government paid the organization remaining financial compensation stemming from MET's loss of established church status following the adoption of the religion law in 2011.

Works of writers widely viewed as antisemitic, including members of the Arrow Cross Party, Jozsef Nyiro, and convicted war criminal Albert Wass, remained mandatory reading material in elementary and secondary public schools.

In July, the Supreme Court upheld the judgment of the Metropolitan Court of Appeal, which found that by publishing a caricature in April 2020 that satirized the attempt to minimize the number of COVID-19 deaths by using a drawing of Jesus on the cross, the daily news publication *Népszava* violated the plaintiff's right to protection of human dignity and ordered the defendant to pay 400,000 forints (\$1,100) in damages.

In September, Russian Orthodox Church Metropolitan Hilarion awarded Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjen with the Second Degree of the Order of Glory and Honor of the Russian Orthodox Church as “a sign of gratitude for the attention he showed to the needs of the Russian Orthodox Church’s Diocese of Budapest-Hungary.” The government had blocked EU sanctions against Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill stemming from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, citing concerns about religious freedom.

The COS reported that several of its members wrote to the Data Protection Authority (DPA) requesting the return of religious files seized by the DPA, NAV, and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) following raids in the past five years. These raids were related to an investigation into the COS’s alleged criminal abuse of personal data and alleged tax fraud. The COS filed two lawsuits concerning the DPA seizure in 2021 and 2022 at the European Court of Human Rights that remained pending at year’s end. The NBI and NAV investigations were ongoing.

The COS also reported that its members did not want to mention their religious affiliation in the census due to concerns of a perceived hostile climate.

A list of religious associations and listed churches was available at a dedicated webpage maintained by the PMO. Court decisions regarding the registration process for registered churches, listed churches, and religious associations were available at the central website of the courts, *birosag.hu*.

In September, the Budapest-Capital Regional Court reclassified MET from a listed to a registered church following its appeal from the previous year. MET was the only religious group classified as a registered church.

The Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (HCLU), an NGO that represented some religious groups deregistered following the 2011 adoption of the religion law, reported it did not pursue domestic legal challenges after the Constitutional Court in 2020 rejected its petition that the amended religion law was discriminatory.

The HCLU continued the monitoring of, and international advocacy for, the enforcement of the 2014 European Court of Human Rights ruling that the religion law violated freedom of religion and caused monetary damages to the deregistered churches. The 2014 judgment required the government to reach an

agreement with applicant churches on the restoration of their status and on just compensation for any damages. The HCLU also provided legal representation in individual cases concerning freedom of religion and belief.

In September, local media reported that the Ministry of Interior, which took over social, health care, and educational issues from the now-defunct Ministry of Human Capacities following parliamentary elections, suspended MET's public debts related to its social work until April 2023.

Local media reported that established churches received 53 state properties during the year valued at three billion forints (\$8 million) in total. Since 2010, the state relinquished its right to church properties worth at least 28.7 billion forints (\$76.6 million) in favor of churches. Speaker of Parliament Laszlo Kover stated in August at the inauguration of the Saint Pio community house of the St. Peter and Paul Parish in Paka that churches received 1.2675 trillion forints (\$3.4 billion) worth of support, and that 814.5 billion (\$2.1 billion) forints of it was available for the Catholic Church.

According to statistics published by the tax authority on September 9, 146 churches and religious groups received 1 percent of personal income tax allocations during the year. As in previous years, the churches receiving the most allocations were the Roman Catholic Church, with 767,673 persons contributing 5.08 billion forints (\$13.5 million); the Hungarian Reformed Church, with 327,621 persons contributing 2.2 billion forints (\$5.9 million); and the Lutheran Church, with 86,598 persons contributing 607 million forints (\$1.6 million). The Hungarian Society for Krishna Consciousness ranked fourth, with 77,874 persons contributing 553 million forints (\$ 1.5 million). MET, which collected 1 percent of personal income tax allocations for the second time since the 2011 modification of the religion law, ranked fifth, with 51,813 persons contributing 454 million forints (\$1.2 million), closely followed by the Hungarian Baptist Church with 51,704 persons contributing 369 million forints (\$985,000). Among Jewish groups, MAZSIHISZ received the largest allocation.

During the year, the government repeated its position that its 2007 settlement with the WJRO represented "a definitive satisfaction of compensation claims." The WJRO disagreed with the government's position and requested that the

government resume negotiations, but by year's end, the government had not responded to the WJRO's request for a follow-up meeting.

According to the COS, the Csongrad County government office again failed to act on a certificate of occupancy application by the COS for its headquarters in Budapest. The application had remained pending since 2017, despite a 2017 Budapest Administrative and Labor Court ruling that the county office process the COS's application by March 2018. The COS said it had received no explanation for the continued delay. An extant court order allowed the COS to continue to use the building.

The Organization of Muslims in Hungary (OMH) reported that the issue of limited cemetery space for Islamic burials remained unresolved. In the capital, the municipality-owned Budapest Funeral Institute provided cemetery space for Muslims, but Islamic burials required a permit issued by the Hungarian Islamic Community, the other Muslim organization. OMH members expressed concerns about this practice. Other than in the capital, OMH reported there was a limited amount of cemetery space in the city of Pecs.

The restoration of the state-owned Yakovali Hasan Mosque in Pecs, ongoing since 2019, ended during the year. According to reports, the building will serve touristic purposes (museum and exhibition) and not as a place of worship for the Muslim community.

According to the OMH, Muslims serving prison sentences experienced humiliation and physical abuse by staff and other inmates. OMH reported that on one occasion, someone threw an Arab prisoner's Quran and called it "toilet paper."

OMH also said that third-country Muslim refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine did not receive the same level of assistance from state authorities as non-Muslim refugees, and that they had lower priority for boarding trains carrying refugees, only being allowed to board after all white, non-Muslim refugees.

In August, Prime Minister Orbán said in a speech delivered in Romania that "we [Europeans] are willing to mix with one another, but we do not want to become mixed race," which prompted criticism from Jewish leaders and groups because it evoked Nazi racial ideology. The president of the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities (MAZSIHIS) noted that the speech was in sharp contrast to the

government's provision of security to the Jewish community. Chief Rabbi of the Unified Hungarian Jewish Congregation Slomo Koves said it was “an expressly unfortunate use of words to speak about races and mixing of races.” Following the speech, posters appeared in Budapest with the logo of MAZSIHISZ and the text, “There are only two races: Jewish and Goyim.” MAZSIHISZ said it had nothing to do with the posters and would file a complaint. The Central European branch of the American Jewish Committee said the Prime Minister’s words resembled “dangerous ideologies in history.”

In August, the political party Mi Hazank (Our Homeland), generally viewed as far right, unveiled a bust of interwar leader regent Miklos Horthy in the parliamentary office of its MP and Deputy Speaker Dora Duro. At the unveiling, Duro praised the Horthy era as an “economic, cultural, and educational success story” and added, “What he did for Hungarians is more important than, say, how he related to the Jews.” MAZSIHISZ stated, “There is no place for a statue of a man whose reign deprived hundreds of thousands of people of their basic human rights, who was responsible for the tragic deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, and who steered our country into one of the greatest disasters in its history.”

Government officials continued to make statements referencing the “defense of a Christian Europe” and criticizing Muslim immigration. In July, at a ministerial conference on the freedom of religion or belief in London, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijarto said Christianity faced the challenge of aggressive secularization and massive persecution. In September, Serbian Orthodox Patriarch Porfirije awarded Prime Minister Orban with the Order of the Saint Sava in Budapest for his efforts to defend Christianity in Hungary and Europe. Accepting the award, PM Orban said, “We are peaceful people, we want peace, but there is indeed a war for the soul of Europe, and without Christian unity – including Orthodoxy – we cannot win this battle.”

In May, a court ruled in favor of Gaspar Bekes, a member of the Hungarian Atheist Society, who had stated his employer, the city of Budapest, had dismissed him in 2021 for practicing his right to freedom of religion and belief and freedom of expression and thought. In January 2021, the Christian online site *vasarnap.hu* made accessible articles about Bekes. The articles stated he had offended religious sensibilities by sharing memes in closed Facebook groups dedicated to

political satire and asserted that Bekes would ban baptism. The higher court ruled that the decision unlawfully dismissed Bekes's claim and ordered its reinstatement. The Budapest city administration appealed this ruling.

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

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

In April, unknown persons vandalized approximately 25 graves in the Jewish cemetery in Budakeszi, with many of the tombstones missing or damaged. Pest County police investigated the case and MAZSIHISZ organized the restoration work with local volunteers. In June, media reported that the perpetrators were two 13-year-olds and the police closed the case without criminal charges. In May, witnesses recorded four young men Nazi saluting, screaming "Heil Hitler," throwing garbage, and urinating on the Dohany Street Synagogue in Budapest. Media reported that prosecutors charged all four perpetrators and requested a sentence of manual street labor.

In August, soccer fans sang about "Jewish crime" following the Magyar Testgyakorlók Köre Budapest soccer club's match with the Szeged soccer team.

Also in August, authorities arrested a Budapest man who confessed to painting a swastika on the wall of a synagogue in Budapest, as well as the abbreviations "SS" and the monogram "AH" in the elevator of the building.

In October, the Counterterrorism Center identified, and police arrested, a 16-year-old student who had threatened to kill his chat room classmate, a member of a minority religious community.

Muslim organizations stated they did not collect statistical data because, according to one member, they lacked the capacity to do so. OMH reported, however, that while physical assaults were rare, verbal insults were frequent, in particular, against persons wearing headscarves or who had darker skin and spoke a foreign language. For example, according to OMH, a man intentionally spilled beer on a female student from Africa who was wearing a headscarf on public transportation in April during Ramadan and told her, "Happy Ramadan."

During the year, as in previous years, domestic and international extremist and neo-Nazi groups marked the anniversary of the breakout attempt by Hungarian and German troops on February 11, 1945, during the Soviet army's siege of Budapest. Under a ruling of the Supreme Court banning hate speech and extremist group events, the police halted the "Day of Honor" event planned for February 12, arguing that the presence of extremists could impact public order and harm World War II survivors and their descendants. Despite the court action, members of the Hungarian Principles Movement and Rockers Klan Hungaria, a white nationalist group, reportedly held a commemoration at a private, undisclosed location on February 11. Also on the evening of February 11, a group of approximately 100-150 members of Legio Hungaria and Hungarian Hammerskins dressed in black took part in a commemoration of the "Day of Honor."

In July, a study by the Hungarian political research institute Policy Solutions indicated that 63 percent of Fidesz voters, 51 percent of party coalition opposition voters, and 60 percent of Our Homeland voters would not want to have Muslim or Roma neighbors. Of these respondents, 55 percent would feel "very bad" or "bad" if they had a Muslim neighbor.

In April, the Budapest-based NGO Tom Lantos Institute issued the results of its study of antisemitic prejudice in the four Visegrad countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia), based on survey data collected in June 2021. According to the study, 49 percent of 1,849 survey respondents ages 18-74 in Hungary could be classified as moderately or strongly antisemitic. The study cited stereotypical statements regarding Jews and asked survey respondents the degree to which they fully agreed, rather agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, did not know, rather disagreed, or fully disagreed. The proportion who responded they "fully agree" or "rather agree" with the following statements were: "Jews have too much influence in Hungary" (25 percent); "Jews seek to extend their influence on the global economy" (40 percent); "Jews are more inclined than others to use shady practices to achieve their goals" (18 percent); "it would be reasonable to limit the number of Jews in certain occupations" (13 percent); and "it would be best if Jews left this country" (9 percent). Conversely, the proportion who responded they "fully agree" or "rather agree" with the following statements were: "More should be taught in school about the Holocaust and the persecution of the Jews so that this does not happen again"

(50 percent); “We should defend the Jews of our country against the antisemites” (55 percent).

In January, MAZSIHISZ introduced a new digital platform in which visitors could take virtual tours of what the advertisement describes as the country’s finest synagogues. The platform also included a unique crowdfunding element displaying donation goals, projects, and opportunities to help protect the Hungarian-Jewish heritage and its spiritual legacy.

In November, the Christian-Jewish Council, an informal platform for discussion among Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, and Baptist Churches and Jewish groups, held a conference on some of the Christian and Jewish lessons related to the creation and preservation of peace and the rights of nations.

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

In meetings and discussions with the government, including officials from the Prime Minister’s Office in charge of church and Jewish issues, embassy representatives advocated compensation for heirless Jewish property seized during the Holocaust and discussed provisions of the religion law, including the requirements for the registration process for religious groups by the court.

In May, embassy representatives and a visiting U.S. official met with the PMO and religious groups to discuss their efforts to provide assistance to refugees fleeing Ukraine, to discuss religious freedom issues in the framework of the religion law, and to inquire about the MET and COS cases.

In July, the Chargé d’Affaires hosted an interfaith event with high-level leaders of religious groups in which participants discussed the importance of interfaith cooperation and of raising their voices in defense of religious freedom. The embassy highlighted the event on social media.

In September, the Ambassador hosted a reception in the Carl Lutz room in the embassy named after Swiss vice consul Carl Lutz, who operated out of the building between 1942 and 1945 and who is responsible for saving the lives of more than 62,000 Hungarian Jews. In his remarks, the Ambassador highlighted the importance of Holocaust remembrance. Members of the Jewish community

attended the event, which the embassy also highlighted on its social media accounts. The reception followed the exhibition of the Carl Lutz Society opened in partnership with the U.S. Department of State as part of the Budapest Jewish Festival program. The Ambassador attended various celebrations with the local Jewish community, events highlighted on social media as a show of tolerance and inclusion.

In November, the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues held discussions with the PMO and Jewish groups and delivered remarks in the Rumbach synagogue supporting accurate and factual Holocaust commemoration and education and the importance of countering Holocaust distortion and denial.

The embassy maintained regular contact with leaders of various religious communities, including the four historical groups, Muslims, the COS, and religious groups that lost incorporated church status in 2011, such as MET and Sim Shalom, to understand their concerns. During these discussions, embassy officials discussed the effects of the religion law, antisemitism, and anti-Muslim rhetoric.