

# DENMARK 2019 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

## Executive Summary

The constitution guarantees the right of individuals to worship according to their beliefs. It establishes the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) as the national church, which has privileges not available to other religious groups. Other religious groups must register with the government to receive tax and other benefits. A state-funded institute reported Christian converts and practitioners at Muslim-majority asylum centers were at risk in potential conflict situations the government could not control. The government revoked the registration of nine religious groups during the year. Parliament again took up consideration of, but did not vote on, a citizen's petition that would legislate a ban on the circumcision of minors. Additional provisions of the government's action plan against "vulnerable neighborhoods," which included Muslim-majority areas, entered into force on July 1. The plan included education of Christian holiday traditions in mandatory daycare for children of families receiving government benefits. The country's largest Muslim school closed in December 2018 after the government ceased funding it amid what it stated were concerns about the school leadership's handling of finances and quality of education. The Stram Kurs Party, which advocated deporting all Muslims and banning Islam, garnered enough signatures to run candidates for parliament in June elections and held demonstrations in which it burned the Quran; it received 1.8 percent of the vote, short of the threshold to enter parliament. Muslim candidates in those elections reported significant harassment from other Muslims. The government added eight new persons to a list of foreign preachers it banned from the country and removed five, bringing the total on the list to 13 persons.

Police reported 112 religiously motivated crimes in 2018, the most recent year for which data were available, 21 percent fewer than in 2017. There were 63 incidents against Muslims and 26 against Jews. Most incidents involved harassment, hate speech, and vandalism, including desecration of cemeteries. Separately, the Jewish community reported 45 anti-Semitic incidents in 2018, 50 percent more than in 2017, including assault, physical harassment, threats, vandalism, discrimination and hate speech. There were also reports of anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim incidents during the year. Jewish and Muslim community leaders stated most victims did not report incidents because they believed police would not follow up. In September a man operating a city bus in Norrebro drove the vehicle into a group of marching Muslims while shouting, according to witnesses, "Go home." There were no injuries. Prosecutors charged the driver with willful endangerment.

According to a European Commission (EC) survey, 61 percent of respondents believed discrimination on the basis of religion or belief was widespread in the country. Another EC survey found 43 percent of residents believed anti-Semitism was a problem in the country, and 50 percent said it had increased over the previous five years.

U.S. embassy officials met with national police representatives to discuss religiously motivated hates crimes and upcoming programs to combat them, and separately engaged with staff from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Freedom of Religion Unit. The Ambassador and other embassy officials regularly met with religious groups, including Jews, Muslims, and Christian groups, as well as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), to discuss their concerns and stress the importance of religious tolerance and diversity.

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

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 5.8 million (midyear 2019 estimate). According to an October estimate by Statistics Denmark, a government entity, 74.7 percent of all citizens are ELC members.

The University of Copenhagen's Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies estimated in January there are 320,000 Muslims, 5.5 percent of the population. Muslim groups are concentrated in the largest cities, particularly Copenhagen, Odense, and Aarhus. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimates other religious groups, each constituting less than 1 percent of the population, include, in descending order of size, Roman Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, Serbian Orthodox Christians, Jews, Baptists, Buddhists, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Pentecostals, the Baha'i Faith, and nondenominational Christians. According to a survey released in October by the Ministry of Immigration and Integration, approximately 11 percent of the population does not identify as belonging to a religious group or identifies as "atheist." Although estimates vary, the Jewish Society (previously known as Mosaiske) stated there are approximately 7,000 Jews, most of whom live in the Copenhagen metropolitan area.

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

#### **Legal Framework**

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

The law prohibits hate speech, including religious hate speech, and specifies as penalties a fine (amount unspecified) or a maximum of one year's imprisonment. If a religious leader disseminates the hate speech, the penalties increase to a fine or a maximum of three years' imprisonment.

The ELC is the only religious group that receives funding through state grants and voluntary taxes paid through payroll deduction from its members. Members receive a tax credit for their donations to the ELC. Voluntary taxes account for an estimated 86 percent of the ELC's operating budget; the remaining 14 percent is provided through a combination of voluntary donations by congregants and government grants. Members of other recognized religious communities cannot contribute via payroll deduction but may donate to their own community voluntarily and receive an income tax credit. The ELC and other state-recognized religious communities carry out registration of civil unions, births, and deaths for their members.

The Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs is responsible for granting official status to religious groups, besides the ELC, through recognition by royal decree (for groups recognized prior to 1970) or through official registration. The law requires individual congregations within a religious community to formally register with the government to receive tax benefits. According to the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs, there are 448 religious groups and congregations the government officially recognizes or that are affiliated with recognized groups: 338 Christian groups, 66 Muslim, 16 Buddhist, seven Hindu, three Jewish, and 18 other groups and congregations, including the Baha'i Faith, the Alevi Muslim community, and followers of the indigenous Norse belief system Forn Sidr.

Recognized religious groups have the right to perform legal marriage ceremonies, name and baptize children with legal effect, issue legal death certificates, obtain

residence permits for foreign clergy, establish cemeteries, and receive tax-deductible financial donations and various value-added tax exemptions. The law allows only religious communities recognized before 1970 to issue birth, baptismal, and marriage certificates. This privilege will expire for all religious communities except the ELC in 2023. Members of other religious communities or individuals unaffiliated with a recognized religious group may have birth and death certificates only issued by the health authority.

Groups not recognized by either royal decree or the government registration process, such as the Church of Scientology, are entitled to engage in religious practices without any kind of public registration. Members of those groups, however, must marry in a civil ceremony in addition to any religious ceremony. Unrecognized religious groups are not granted full tax-exempt status, but contributions by members are tax-deductible.

The law codifies the registration process for religious communities other than the ELC and treats equally those recognized by royal decree and those approved through registration. A religious community must have at least 150 adult members, while a congregation, which the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs considers a group within one of the major world religions (Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam), must have at least 50 adult members to be eligible for approval. For congregations located in sparsely populated regions, such as Greenland, the government applies a lower population threshold, varying according to the total population of the region.

Religious groups seeking registration must submit to the Faith Registry in the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs a document on the group's central traditions; a description of its most important rituals; a copy of its rules, regulations, and organizational structure; an audited financial statement (which they must submit annually); information about the group's leadership; and a statement on the number of adult members permanently residing in the country. Groups also must have formal procedures for membership and make their teachings available to all members. The Ministry of Justice makes the final decision on registration applications after receiving recommendations from a group consisting of a lawyer, religious historian, sociologist of religion, and nonordained theologian. Religious groups that do not submit the annual financial statement or other required information may lose their registration status.

The law prohibits masks and face coverings, including burqas and *niqabs*, in public spaces. Violators face fines ranging from 1,000 to 10,000 Danish kroner (\$150-\$1,500). The maximum fine is for those who violate the law four or more times.

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

A law enacted in 2018 that came into effect on January 1 requires persons to shake hands during their naturalization ceremonies to obtain Danish citizenship.

All public and private schools, including religious schools, receive government financial support. The Ministry of Education has oversight authority of private schools, which includes supervision of teaching standards, regulatory compliance, and financial screening. The Board of Education and Quality conducts systematic monitoring and has authority to issue directives to individual institutions, withhold grants, and terminate financial support. Public schools must teach ELC theology. The instructors are public school teachers rather than persons provided by the ELC. Religion classes are compulsory in grades 1-9, although students may be exempted if a parent presents a request in writing. No alternative classes are offered. The ELC course curriculum in grades 1-6 focuses on life philosophies and ethics, biblical stories, and the history of Christianity. In grades 7-9, the curriculum adds a module on world religions. The course is optional in grade 10. If the student is aged 15 or older, the student and parent must jointly request the student's exemption. Private schools are also required to teach religion classes in grades 1-9, including world religion in grades 7-9. The religion classes taught in grades 1-9 need not include ELC theology. Collective prayer in schools is allowed, but each school may regulate religious activities in a neutral, nondiscriminatory manner. They may consist of ELC, other Christian, Islamic, or Jewish prayers, and students may opt out of participating.

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

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

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

By law, the Ministry of Immigration and Integration may prevent foreign religious figures who do not already have a residence permit from entering the country if it determines their presence poses a threat to public order. In such cases, the ministry places the individuals on a national sanctions list and bars them from entry into the country for two years, a period which it may extend.

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

### **Government Practices**

An April report from the independent, but state-funded Danish Institute for Human Rights on “Religious Freedom in Danish Asylum Centers” stated Christian converts, atheists, women, and LGBTI residents constituted a vulnerable group in asylum centers with a Muslim majority. According to the report, these groups were particularly at risk for religiously motivated harassment or negative social pressure, and the centers lacked the resources to manage potential conflicts. It also stated religiously motivated harassment at asylum centers of Christian converts and the other vulnerable groups was underreported. On May 9, in response to an earlier question by parliament’s Integration and Immigration Committee requesting her reaction to the report, then-minister for immigration, integration and housing Inger Støjberg declined to comment, citing the forthcoming general election.

The Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs announced on December 18 it had revoked official recognition of nine religious communities for not providing required information to the Faith Registry. The ministry revoked the status of the following six groups for failing to report information on their religious beliefs, rituals, or bylaws as required by a law that came into force in 2018: the Congregation of Christians in Denmark in the Name of Jesus, the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Sree Abirami Amman Temple, the Sikh Community Foundation of Denmark, the Jesus is Lord Church, and the Korean Church of Denmark. Loss of recognition entailed the loss of rights to conduct marriages and of tax benefits. The ministry revoked recognition of the other three religious groups, the Worldwide Church of God, the Danish Muslim Center, and the Majlis Khuddam-ul-Ahmadiyya, for not reporting required annual financial statements for 2018.

The total number of registered religious communities and congregations increased from just over 300 in 2018 to approximately 450 following full implementation of a 2018 law codifying the registration process for religious groups other than the ELC, as well as a government decree later that year requiring individual congregations within a religious community to register to receive tax benefits. According to a press release from the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs, the increase came as religious congregation structures were clarified and some newly recognized faith groups were added to the list.

On October 3, members of parliament (MPs) of all major political parties except for the ruling Social Democrats and the leading opposition Venstre Party reintroduced a 2018 citizen proposal to ban full or partial circumcision of boys and girls under the age of 18. If adopted, the resolution, which called for a criminal penalty of up to six years in prison for violators, would require the government to introduce legislation banning circumcision of minors. In November the governing Social Democratic Party announced it would not support a ban on circumcising male children. Representatives from the Muslim and Jewish communities said they remained staunchly opposed to the proposal. Henri Goldstein, the chairman of the Jewish Society and a physician, said in an interview with the *Kristeligt Dagblad* newspaper that the Jewish community continued to see the proposed ban as a very serious matter. At year's end, parliament had tabled the resolution pending a review by the Danish Health Authority. Parliament debated the ban in 2018-19 but did not vote on it, and the proposal expired with the formation of a new government following elections in June.

From August 2018 to August 2019, the first 12-month period after the law banning masks and face coverings went into effect, authorities reported filing preliminary

charges for violations of the law in 39 cases, of which 22 involved wearing of the burqa or *niqab*; of the 39 cases, authorities ultimately fined 23 persons.

The final provisions of the previous government's action plan to eliminate "parallel societies," which the government said emerged from what it called "ghetto" communities or "vulnerable neighborhoods," went into effect on July 1. Media widely interpreted the concept of "vulnerable neighborhoods" to mean Muslim-majority communities. The government identified 30 districts across the country that it labeled "ghettos." The government's definition of "ghetto" community was an area with more than 1,000 residents and where the share of immigrants and their descendants from non-Western countries was more than 50 percent.

To be deemed a "vulnerable neighborhood" and included on the "ghetto list," two of the following criteria must also be met: the share of residents aged 18-64 who were unemployed or not enrolled in a formal education program exceeded 40 percent over the previous two years; the share of residents convicted of breaking the criminal code, the weapons or drug laws was at least three times greater than the national average over the previous two years; the share of residents aged 30-59 with only a basic education exceeded 60 percent; and the average gross income for taxable 15-64-year-olds (excluding those seeking education) was less than 55 percent of the average gross income for the same age group in the region.

Parliamentary initiatives enacted as part of the "ghetto package" included doubling of penalties for crimes committed in communities police designated as high crime (a provision that entered into force on January 1) and mandatory enrollment of children in daycare (effective on July 1). According to media reports, members of the Muslim community criticized the compulsory daycare program – which included instruction on "Danish values," Christmas customs, and Easter traditions – for interfering in their ability to raise their children. Samiah Qasim, a social worker and mother of two living in Copenhagen, told TV2 News in July that she "felt excluded from the community" since she was not allowed to control what happened to her children. She said the rules were "very unreasonable" and that she did not believe daycare enrollment had anything to do with integration into Danish society. Rulla el-Ali, a mother of an 18-month-old son living in Slagelse, told the *Berlingske* newspaper in July that the law was "decidedly cruel," stating it was not fair "to discriminate and take away our rights because we live in a ghetto." El-Ali added she thought the program was "definitely a human rights violation." The teachers' union said the law created distrust between parents and educators.

According to the *Information* newspaper, only eight children had begun compulsory daycare as of November (four months after the law came into force). *Information* reported that a teacher's trade magazine stated the low numbers were due to focused outreach efforts by the Copenhagen and Odense municipal governments aimed at convincing families in vulnerable housing areas to voluntarily enroll their children in daycare. Both compulsory and voluntary daycare have the same basic content, although the compulsory program is a separate 25-hour-per-week program as set out in a section of the Daycare Law. Voluntary daycare is available to all residents and is typically available 50 hours per week.

According to a *Deutsche Welle* article, four young women from one of the so-called ghettos, Tingbjerg, wrote an open letter to Housing Minister Kaare Dybvad, protesting the annual "ghetto list." With NGO ActionAid Denmark, the women launched a petition signed by more than 9,000 persons urging the minister to put an end to the list. Amina Safi, one of the initiators of the letter and a Danish-born daughter of Afghan immigrants, stated, "The ghetto list stigmatizes us." She called the criteria for the list discriminatory and said it made residents "feel like second-class citizens." In December, a few days after the government issued its most recent list, Dybvad responded to the four women, writing, "I am sorry you feel stigmatized... The ghetto list is a tool to reduce the difference between the vulnerable residential areas and the more well-functioning residential areas."

In December 2018, the country's largest Muslim private school, Iqra Privatskole, located in Copenhagen's Northwestern District, lost the financial support of the government and closed, affecting more than 500 children. The Agency for Education and Quality stated the school's positions were incompatible with the country's democratic values and that there were problems with the school's finances, the quality of its teaching, and other issues. The Agency for Education and Quality ordered the school to repay 16 million kroner (\$2.4 million) in state grants it had received, ultimately resulting in the school's closure.

On April 28, Rasmus Paludan, lawyer and founder of the political party Stram Kurs (Hard Line), which cited in its platform "the unacceptable behavior exhibited by Muslims" and what it described as the need to deport all non-Western residents, qualified to run for parliament by collecting more than 20,000 signatures. Paludan organized protests against Muslims and Quran-burning demonstrations throughout the year in Muslim-majority immigrant neighborhoods across the country, citing freedom of speech. At one Quran-burning demonstration in Nørrebro on April 14, there were approximately 200 counterdemonstrators, some of whom attacked

Paludan, whom police escorted away, and engaged in riots, burned cars, and rock-throwing. Police arrested 23 persons. The party received 1.8 percent of the vote in the June elections and won no seats in parliament.

In June newspaper *Kristeligt Dagblad* reported that Muslim politicians experienced increased threats and other harassment, primarily from other Muslims, while campaigning for the June 5 general election. According to the newspaper, one threat was from a man “with a Kurdish background” who called the daughter of MP Halime Oguz and said her mother “would be held up against a rain of gunfire,” and in another, a man accused a politician of “working for a Zionist,” and told the politician’s campaign manager in person outside the politician’s home that he was watching everything she was doing. The article also cited “constant threats” against Muslim politicians from supporters of Turkey’s president and said Muslim youth on neighborhood streets called Muslim politicians “traitors” for holding views that were perceived as contradictory to Islam. Social Democrat MP Lars Aslan Rasmussen called the election “the worst I have experienced. The smear campaigns and harassment from certain Muslim groups have become systematic.” Socialist People’s Party MP Halime Oguz stated she had received death threats and harassing messages, and Ali Amini, a candidate for the Conservative Party said, “Verbal attacks from Muslim minority communities have unfortunately become part of my everyday life.” The *Kristeligt Dagblad* article stated Muslim politicians were subjected to “double pressure” since they received harsh criticism from both right-wing anti-Islamic groups and from Muslim communities.

Critics, who included several parliamentarians and political commentators, of the new law requiring new citizens to shake hands during their naturalization ceremony said it targeted Muslims, who might decline on religious grounds to shake hands with members of the opposite sex. According to DR (Danish Broadcasting Corporation) News, several mayors, for example Thomas Andresen, the mayor of Aabenraa, protested the law by refusing to participate in the mandatory naturalization ceremonies, instead sending another official. Andresen said the law reminded him of Nazism in that one must show “devotion to a particular political ideology” by extending the right hand. One municipality, Hedensted, adopted a modified ceremony in which applicants could shake hands with either the male mayor or a female city council member. In Tønder, another municipality, Bent Paulsen, the deputy mayor and Danish People’s Party member, said, “We know that there are some Muslims who will not shake hands, but if one wants to live in Danish society – and the law requires it – then they must shake hands to become a citizen.” The Danish Institute for Human Rights 2019 report to parliament stated, “the handshake requirement may create indirect differences in

the treatment of applicants based on their religious beliefs...” and cited the “potentially serious consequences of noncompliance with the requirement.”

During the year, the immigration service added eight new persons, including two U.S. citizens, to a national sanctions list for religious preachers that barred them from entering the country. The Ministry of Immigration and Integration stated these individuals threatened the nation’s public order. The service removed five persons from the list without explanation, bringing the total number of preachers on the list to 13, of whom three were U.S. citizens. Entry bans remained in force for two years from the date of issuance and could be extended. Foreign nationals holding a residence permit, along with European Union (EU) nationals and residents, could not be placed on the sanctions list. The chairman of a mosque in Aarhus said the process for adding individuals to the sanctions list was opaque.

The government continued to provide armed security, consisting of police and military personnel, for Jewish sites it considered to be at high risk of terrorist attack, including Copenhagen’s synagogue, community center, and schools, along with the Israeli embassy and ambassador’s residence.

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

According to police statistics released in late October, there were 112 religiously motivated crimes in 2018, the most recent year for which statistics were available, 21 percent fewer than the 142 reported in 2017. In 2018, there were 63 religiously motivated hate crimes against Muslims (67 in 2017), 26 against Jews (38), 14 against Christians (30) and 9 against other religions (seven in 2017, not 37, as incorrectly stated in a previous report). Police did not provide a precise breakdown of religiously motivated crimes by type of incident. Sixteen crimes, most frequently vandalism, occurred at gravesites or religious institutions; 37 in public settings such as supermarkets, parks, or buses; 31 on the internet; 20, typically involving graffiti, at private residences; and five in the workplace or schools. There were three religiously motivated hate crimes at an asylum center. Examples of religiously motivated hate crimes highlighted in the police report included a swastika carved onto the hood of a Jewish woman’s vehicle and a face-to-face death threat made against a member of the Jehovah’s Witness community.

Representatives of Copenhagen’s Jewish Society reported 45 anti-Semitic incidents in 2018, 50 percent more than in 2017. The incidents included four cases of assault and physical harassment, one threat, three cases of vandalism, 35 cases of anti-Semitic statements, one case of discrimination, and one case of

uncategorized harassment. Jewish community leaders from the Jewish Society stated Muslims were primarily responsible for anti-Semitic behavior.

In one example the Jewish Society reported from 2018, a Jewish high school student who wore a necklace with a Star of David reported three incidents of anti-Semitic behavior. The first incident took place at a party at his high school north of Copenhagen, where a fellow student noticed the necklace after the two bumped into each other. The other student, whom the society described as an “ethnic Dane,” grabbed the necklace and yelled, “you [expletive] Jewish pig.” The same Jewish student reported two similar incidents of harassment against him involving men of “Middle Eastern appearance” at nightclubs in Copenhagen.

Although there were no statistics on religiously motivated crimes during the year, there were reports from various sources of anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic incidents. Both Jewish and Muslim community leaders continued to state victims did not report most incidents because they believed police would not follow up or prosecute perpetrators.

In September a driver operating a city bus drove into a Muslim group marching in Norrebro while security guards attempted to stop him. There were no injuries. Witnesses heard the driver shouting “Go home” to the marchers. The prosecutor’s office subsequently charged the driver with willful endangerment, and his trial was scheduled for 2020. The bus company also reportedly dismissed the driver.

In March, May, and October an unidentified man broke into the residence of a senior diplomat of the Israeli embassy. In October the man confronted the diplomat’s partner and shouted anti-Semitic slurs. The diplomat reported the incidents to police, who did not make any arrests.

On November 9, the 81st anniversary of the Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass) pogrom against Jews in Germany, police reported there were incidents of harassment and vandalism against Jews in five cities in the country. In a statement, police said neo-Nazi groups were implicated in the incidents. Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and several other public officials publicly condemned the acts.

In one incident on that date, at a Jewish graveyard in Randers, Ostre Kirkegard, vandals covered more than 80 tombstones in green paint. Police arrested two persons and charged them with vandalism and, preliminarily, with a hate crime under the “racism clause” for “abusing a certain population group based on their

religion.” In another incident in Silkeborg, Jutland, unknown persons glued a yellow star with the word “Jew” on a mailbox belonging to Lars Bjorn Helm Nielsen, the Chairman of the Northern Jutlanders Friends of Israel association, a group that disseminates information on Israeli culture. The star resembled those Jews were required to wear on clothing during the Nazi era.

In other incidents on the Kristallnacht anniversary, unknown persons wrote “Jew” in large, black letters on one of the walls at a Jewish cemetery in Aalborg. In Vestegnen, just outside Copenhagen, unknown persons painted a Star of David and the word “Nordfront” (The Northern Front), the name of a neo-Nazi group, outside the home of a Jewish family. Police were investigating the incidents at year’s end.

In May vandals spray-painted “Death to Israel” in Swedish at the Nordhavn train station. Police took down the message after two months and made no arrests.

On July 21, a man spray-painted the number “666” on 87 tombstones at Hadsund Church Cemetery in North Jutland. Three days later police arrested and charged the man with vandalism. On September 27, he was convicted and sentenced to psychiatric treatment for a maximum of five years. He was also ordered to pay restitution to the parish council that manages the cemetery.

In August unknown vandals defaced the Muslim World League’s (MWL) building by painting the word “terrorists” on it. MWL Director Basri Kurtis reported the incident to the police, who made no arrests.

On March 26, the City Court of Copenhagen sentenced pan-Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir-linked Imam Mundhir Abdallah to a suspended sentence of six months prison, in the first conviction under the law prohibiting hate speech in religious preaching, popularly known as the “imam law.” During a 2017 sermon in the Masjid Al-Faruq in Norrebro, the imam had quoted Islamic scriptures allegedly calling for the killing of Jews. The court also convicted Abdallah of racism for his statements.

On June 18, the newspaper *Berlingske* published an editorial criticizing the decision by the Copenhagen Municipality to allow the Hovedstadens swimming club in Tingbjerg to segregate swimming lessons for children and teenagers by gender. The initiative was part of a municipality-funded integration project. The newspaper said municipalities should insist on a society characterized by gender equality instead of bowing to religious demands for gender separation. The editorial added it could not support that Muslims and non-Muslims should swim

separately and cited the father of a six-year-old girl who objected to the segregation and to not being allowed to watch his daughter swim. The municipality told the father to find another pool, according to the newspaper, which described the policy as “a perverted logic that sexualizes children’s bodies” and supported norms of social control that did not belong in a society of gender equality.

In November the Anti-Defamation League released the results of a survey on anti-Semitic views of the country’s residents. The survey cited stereotypical statements about Jews and asked respondents whether they believed such statements were “probably true” or “probably false.” The proportion agreeing that various statements were “probably true” was: 41 percent that Jews are more loyal to Israel than to Denmark; 19 percent that Jews have too much power in the business world; and 28 percent that Jews talk too much about the Holocaust.

In May the EC carried out a study in each EU member state on perceptions of discrimination and published the results in September. According to the findings, 61 percent of respondents believed discrimination on the basis of religion or belief was widespread in Denmark, while 35 percent said it was rare; 71 percent would be comfortable with having a person of different religion than the majority of the population occupy the highest elected political position in the country. In addition, 89 percent said they would be comfortable working closely with a Christian, and 85 percent said they would be with an atheist, 86 percent with a Jew, 85 percent with a Buddhist, and 84 percent with a Muslim. Asked how they would feel if their child were in a “love relationship” with an individual belonging to various groups, 90 percent said they would be comfortable if the partner were Christian, 84 percent if atheist, 81 percent if Jewish, 79 percent if Buddhist, and 66 percent if Muslim.

In January the EC issued a Special Eurobarometer survey of perceptions of anti-Semitism based on interviews it conducted in December 2018 in each EU-member state. According to the survey, 43 percent of residents believed anti-Semitism was a problem in Denmark, and 50 percent believed it had increased over the previous five years. The percentage who believed that anti-Semitism was a problem in nine different categories was as follows: Holocaust denial, 37 percent; on the internet, 42 percent; anti-Semitic graffiti or vandalism, 38 percent; expression of hostility or threats against Jews in public places, 38 percent; desecration of Jewish cemeteries, 34 percent; physical attacks against Jews, 42 percent; anti-Semitism in schools and universities, 25 percent; anti-Semitism in political life, 23 percent; and anti-Semitism in media, 25 percent.

According to a 2019 citizen survey by the Ministry of Immigration and Integration based on a sample size of 2,660 persons, 35 percent of “non-Western” immigrants said there should be restrictions placed on newspapers to protect religions. For descendants of immigrants “with non-Western origin” that number was 39 percent, while for those of “Danish origin” it was 13 percent. Just under 20 percent of “ethnic Danes” said criticism of religion should be banned, while 42 percent of immigrants and 48 percent of their descendants agreed. Commenting on the results, daily newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* wrote that Danish democratic freedom was under pressure when so many immigrants supported a ban on religious criticism.

An official of the Jewish Society in Denmark and a representative from the Muslim World League said the two communities worked well together in forming an interreligious working group to lobby government leaders against the proposed ban on circumcision.

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

U.S. embassy officials met with national police representatives, who report to the Ministry of Justice, to discuss religiously-motivated hates crimes and upcoming programs to combat them, and separately engaged with staff from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Freedom of Religion Unit to review religious freedom efforts.

Embassy officials met with religious leaders from the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities throughout the year. They met with representatives from the Muslim World League and the Center for Danish-Muslim Relations to discuss challenges for Muslim residents in the country and with Jewish Society and Zionist Federation representatives to discuss anti-Semitism and the perspectives of Jewish community member on religious freedom. Embassy officials also met with Christian groups, including representatives from the European Association of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

On November 20, the Ambassador participated in a panel discussion sponsored by the Zionist Federation, the principal Jewish political group in the country. During the discussion the Ambassador cited the importance of freedom of religion, highlighted recent anti-Semitic incidents in the country, discussed U.S. efforts to advocate and monitor religious freedom in the country, and emphasized that everyone must be permitted to practice their faith without fear of reprisal. She

stated it was an absolute moral imperative to fight to ensure “each person is free to believe, free to assemble, and free to teach the tenets of his or her own faith.”

In April the embassy sponsored the visit of an imam from the United States to speak in Copenhagen about religious tolerance, community engagement, the importance of interfaith dialogue, and preventing parallel societies. The imam spoke with government officials, board members from five mosques, various civil society organizations, and representatives from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious organizations.