

# GERMANY 2016 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

## Executive Summary

The Basic Law (the constitution) prohibits religious discrimination and provides for freedom of faith and conscience and the practice of one's religion. Some state governments continued not to recognize the Church of Scientology (COS) and other religious groups, which made these groups ineligible for tax benefits. The federal and some state offices for the protection of the constitution (OPC) continued to monitor the activities of some groups, including certain Muslim groups and the COS, which the offices said they suspected of furthering extremist goals. Certain states banned or restricted the use of the full-face veil and headscarves for teachers and courtroom officials, and a public pool banned the "burqini." Senior government leaders condemned anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment; politicians from the Alternative for Germany (AfD) Party made anti-Islamic and anti-Semitic statements. In June President Joachim Gauck attended an iftar in Berlin, the first time a president of the country had participated in such an event.

On December 19, in what authorities labeled a terrorist attack, a man drove a truck into a crowd at a Christmas market in Berlin, killing 12 people and injuring 56. Physical and verbal attacks against those perceived to be Jews, Christians, or Muslims continued. Bombs exploded at a Sikh temple and a mosque. There were reports some Muslim women wearing headscarves faced employment discrimination. The Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) continued to oppose the COS publicly and used "sect commissioners" to warn the public of what they characterized as dangers from some religious groups. Some Jewish leaders expressed growing fears in the Jewish community of rising anti-Semitism and there were reports of multiple incidents of anti-Semitic violence. Thousands of supporters of PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West) and similar groups expressed anti-Muslim sentiments at weekly demonstrations in Dresden and elsewhere, but the number of participants declined significantly from 2015. Members of civil society and government held public rallies against intolerance and extremist violence, and promoted tolerance programs and efforts to improve Muslim integration. There were reports of vandalism of Jewish and Muslim property. Muslim groups held public rallies against extremist violence.

The U.S. embassy and consulates general closely monitored the government's responses to incidents of religious intolerance, and expressed the U.S.

government's concern about anti-Semitic acts and discrimination against Muslims. In various meetings throughout the year, embassy and consulate representatives encouraged direct dialogue between government, law enforcement, and minority groups. The embassy and consulates general engaged religious communities through public outreach, exchanges, and other programs to promote religious understanding within and between communities and maintained a dialogue with religious groups and human rights NGOs to promote tolerance and communication among religious groups.

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

The U.S. government estimates the population at 80.7 million (July 2016 estimate). Unofficial estimates and figures provided by religious groups indicate approximately 30 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, while 28 percent belongs to the EKD – a confederation of Lutheran, Reformed (Calvinist), and United (Prussian Union) Protestant regional Churches. Other Protestant denominations (New Apostolic Church, Baptist communities and other nondenominational Christians) combined account for less than 1 percent of the population. Orthodox Christians represent 2 percent of the population.

According to government estimates, approximately 5 percent of the population is Muslim, of which 65 percent is Sunni, 12.5 percent Alevi, and 5.6 percent Shia. According to the Ministry of the Interior, Muslims accounted for approximately 70 percent of the 890,000 refugees and asylum seekers that entered the country in 2015. In 2016, 280,000 refugees and asylum seekers arrived. Estimates of the Jewish population vary widely, between 100,000 and 250,000. Groups that together constitute less than 1 percent of the population include Buddhists (270,000); Hindus (100,000); Jehovah's Witnesses (222,000); The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) (40,000); COS (5,000-10,000); Sikhs, and Yezidis. Approximately 33 percent of the population either have no religious affiliation or are members of unrecorded religious groups.

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

#### **Legal Framework**

The Basic Law, which fulfills the role of the constitution, prohibits discrimination on the basis of religious opinion and provides for freedom of faith and conscience and the freedom to profess a religious or philosophical creed and to practice one's religion. The Basic Law also prohibits a state church. It stipulates people shall not

be required to disclose their religious convictions or be compelled to participate in religious acts. The Basic Law states religious instruction shall be part of the curriculum in public schools and parents have the right to decide whether children shall receive religious instruction. It recognizes the right to establish private denominational schools. The Basic Law guarantees the freedom to form religious societies and states groups may organize themselves for private religious purposes without constraint. It allows registered religious groups with “public law corporation” (PLC) status to receive public subsidies from the states and to provide religious services in the military, at hospitals, and in prisons.

Religious groups wishing to qualify as nonprofit associations with tax-exempt status must register. State-level authorities review registration submissions and routinely grant tax-exempt status; if challenged, their decisions are subject to judicial review. Religious groups applying for tax-exempt status must provide evidence through their statutes, history, and activities that they are a religious group.

A special partnership exists between the states and religious groups with PLC status, as outlined in the Basic Law. Any religious group may request PLC status, which – if granted – entitles the group to levy tithes (averaging 9 percent of income tax), which each state collects on its behalf, separately from income taxes, but through the state’s tax collection process. PLCs pay fees to the government for the tithing service, but not all groups utilize the service. PLC status also allows for tax exemptions (larger than those given to groups with nonprofit status), representation on supervisory boards of public television and radio stations, and the right to special labor regulations, for example requiring that employees of a religious group working, for example, in hospitals, kindergartens, or NGOs run by the group be members of that group. State governments subsidize institutions with PLC status providing public services, such as religious schools and hospitals.

According to the Basic Law, the decision to grant PLC status is made at the state level. Individual states base PLC status decisions on a number of varying qualifications, including an assurance of the group’s permanence, size, and respect for the constitutional order and fundamental rights of individuals. An estimated 180 religious groups have PLC status, including the EKD, the Catholic Church, the Jewish community, Mormons, Seventh-day Adventists, Mennonites, Baptists, Bahais, Methodists, Christian Scientists, and the Salvation Army. Fifteen of the 16 federal states have granted the Jehovah’s Witnesses PLC status. Ahmadi groups have obtained PLC status in Hesse and Hamburg; no other Muslim communities have PLC status. The COS does not have PLC or nonprofit status in any state.

According to a ruling by the Federal Constitutional Court, headscarf bans for teachers at public schools are a violation of religious freedom, but implementation is left to the states. For example, the state of North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW) changed its laws to enable headscarf-wearing women to work as teachers, whereas Bavaria and Saarland render decisions on a case-by-case basis.

Some federal and state laws affect religious practices. Federal animal protection laws prohibit the killing of animals without anesthesia, including when part of halal and kosher slaughter practices, although some exceptions exist. For example, a federal administrative court decision from 2006 allows for slaughter without anesthesia if trained personnel conduct the slaughter in a registered slaughterhouse under observation of the local veterinary inspection office, and the meat is for consumption only by members of religious communities requiring slaughter without anesthesia.

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

The federal criminal code prohibits calling for violence or arbitrary measures against religious groups or their members or inciting hatred against them. It also prohibits assaulting the human dignity of religious groups or their members by insulting, maliciously maligning, or defaming them. The federal criminal code prohibits disturbing religious services or acts of worship. Infractions are punishable by up to five years in prison and a fine. The law bans Nazi propaganda, Holocaust denial, and fomenting racial hatred.

All states offer religious instruction and ethics courses in public schools. Religious communities with PLC status (or a special agreement with the state that grants them this right despite the lack thereof) appoint religious teachers and work with the states to set the basic curriculum in line with the basic law; the states pay for the teachers’ salaries. Most public schools offer the option of Protestant and Catholic religious instruction in cooperation with those churches, as well as instruction in Judaism if enough students (usually 12, although regulations vary state to state) express an interest. The states of Bavaria, Baden-Wurtemberg, Hesse, Lower Saxony, NRW and Rhineland-Palatinate also offer some religious classes on Islam. Students who do not wish to participate in religious instruction may opt out; in some states those who opt out may substitute ethics courses. State

authorities generally permit religious groups to establish private schools as long as they meet basic curriculum requirements. Schooling is constitutionally-mandated, and homeschooling is prohibited, including for religious reasons.

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

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

### **Government Practices**

State governments continued not to recognize the COS as a religious group, which made it ineligible for tax benefits. NRW did not recognize the Jehovah’s Witnesses as a religious group. The government continued to investigate COS and Muslim groups for reported constitutional violations. COS continued to report instances of government criticism and discrimination, such as the use of “sect filters” to block them from public sector employment. Some senior government officials condemned anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment; other politicians used anti-Islamic and anti-Semitic rhetoric.

According to federal and state OPC reports and COS members, the federal and state OPCs in Baden-Wurttemberg, Bavaria, Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg, Lower Saxony, NRW, and Thuringia monitored the activities of the COS, reportedly by evaluating Scientology publications and members’ public activities to determine whether they violated the Basic Law. At least four major political parties (the Christian Democratic Union, Christian Social Union, Social Democratic Party, and Free Democratic Party) continued to exclude Scientologists from party membership.

Federal and state OPCs continued to monitor a number of Muslim groups. The website of the NRW OPC states the Muslim Brotherhood “rejects democracy”. According to the federal OPC, the Muslim Brotherhood had 1,040 members in the country. The federal OPC annual report also stated the Milli Gorus Islamic

Community, an organization of the Turkish diaspora, “sought to achieve its interpretation of an Islamic order.” The report estimated there were tens of thousands of Milli Gorus supporters, including as many as 10,000 militant supporters, in the country.

The Federal Prosecutor’s Office indicted four individuals in the Higher Regional Court in Munich on January 14 for creating and belonging to what the court labeled a terrorist group, the “Old School Society,” and for planning a bomb attack against Salafists and refugees. The trial began in April and was ongoing at year’s end.

In August the government of NRW suspended its negotiations regarding PLC status with four Islamic organizations, including the Turkish Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB) and the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD). According to media reports, the suspension of the negotiations was linked to the government’s concern about DITIB’s ties to Turkey. The suspension took place despite ZMD adopting structural reforms to meet the legal requirements for PLC status in March. NRW had earlier agreed to an advisory council as a temporary workaround solution that would allow these organizations to provide input on Islamic religious instruction in the state. The workaround agreement is expected to end at the end of 2018.

In May the Dusseldorf Higher Regional Court allowed the prosecution of eight members of a self-declared “Sharia Police” group to move forward, overruling a local court’s 2015 decision that the group did not violate a ban on wearing uniforms. The “Sharia Police” group staged patrols in Wuppertal, NRW in September 2014 to counter “non-Muslim behavior,” including alcohol consumption, gambling, and smoking and to pressure youth to convert to Islam. On November 21, the local court in Wuppertal, NRW acquitted seven of the members. Proceedings for the eighth member of the group were suspended, pending the conclusion of a separate trial in which he was a defendant on an unrelated terrorism charge.

The wearing of headscarves by public schoolteachers and courtroom officials generated significant debate about religious freedom and requirements that civil servants refrain from displaying religious symbols. On November 28, the Federal Constitutional Court ruled in favor of a Muslim kindergarten educator in Baden-Wuerttemberg who had challenged a written warning from her employer after she refused to take off her headscarf at work.

Berlin-based NGO Network against Discrimination and Islamophobia reported a teacher was rejected in 2014 from a position at a Berlin elementary school because she wore a headscarf at work. In April the Berlin city labor court ruled against her and in favor of the Berlin state neutrality law which prohibits public employees from wearing headscarves or other religious symbols.

In August the Social Democratic Party (SPD) Mayor of Luckenwalde in the state of Brandenburg, terminated a woman's internship because she refused to remove her headscarf while working in the city hall. According to the mayor, the wearing of a headscarf in the city hall was a violation of the constitutional neutrality law.

In December the federal cabinet approved a draft law, which, if approved by parliament, would prohibit civil servants and soldiers from wearing a full-face veil. The draft law further specifies that faces must be visible during identity checks. The draft law was scheduled to be submitted to parliament for debate and a vote in early 2017.

Speaking at the International Parliamentarians' Conference of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU) Parties in Berlin on September 14, Chancellor Merkel said, "Although some religiously-motivated behavior may seem strange, we must always keep the high value of religious freedom in mind." She referred to the full-face veil as "a great obstacle in integration" and stated there should be "precise plans of action for places where a full-face veil is not warranted," such as in the public sector or in court. At a CDU conference on December 6, Chancellor Merkel called for a partial ban on full-face veils and stated, "The full-face veil is not acceptable in our country. It should be banned wherever legally possible."

Interior Minister de Maiziere supported the partial ban on full-face veils, specifying that it was important to introduce a legal requirement to show one's face in public "where it is necessary for social coexistence – at the wheel, at public offices, at the registry office, in schools and universities, in the civil service, in court." De Maiziere stated integration meant that German values and the limits of tolerance towards cultural practices that conflicted with those values must be made clear to new arrivals.

On June 30, Augsburg District Court in Bavaria ruled in favor of a law student who brought a complaint against the state for prohibiting her from wearing a headscarf at public court appearances while in training. The judge found there was no legal basis for the ban and "no formal law that obliges legal interns to promote a

religiously neutral worldview.” The Bavarian justice minister said he would appeal the ruling. Following this ruling, the NRW justice minister stated that female Muslim judges and prosecutors in NRW must observe neutrality and were not allowed to wear a headscarf.

Media reported in June that a public pool in Neutraubling, Bavaria banned swimmers from wearing burqinis, a full-body swimsuit some Muslim women wear. The Bavarian integration commissioner stated the burqini case in Neutraubling was the first one he had heard of and that a decision about burqinis should be left to the municipalities. City councils in other cities, including Konstanz and Munich, publicly declared burqinis were allowed.

The Federal Constitutional Court ruled in December that Muslim girls were required to participate in co-ed swimming classes at school despite the argument by the parents of an 11-year-old Muslim student that their daughter should be allowed an exception. The girl stated that even if she were permitted to wear a burqini rather than a swimsuit, it would violate Islamic dress code.

In June the interior ministers of the 16 federal states announced at the conclusion of a session that “Islamophobia” would be listed as a separate category of hate crime within the criminal statistics collected by police, effective January 1, 2017.

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

On November 11, the federal government announced that in 2017 it would provide six million euros (\$6.3 million) and 2.5 million euros (\$2.6 million), respectively, in support of the Augsburg and Luebeck Synagogues and two million euros (\$2.1 million) for the enlargement of the Jewish educational center Chabad Lubawitsch Berlin.

In an April interview with daily newspaper *Berliner Zeitung*, CDU/CSU Caucus Chairman Volker Kauder argued for increased state oversight of mosques. In the same interview, Kauder stressed Islam should not be feared; he rejected a call by CSU Secretary General Andreas Scheuer for imams to preach only in German.



Media reported that in March, the Bavarian branch of the Alternative for Germany party (AfD) called for a ban on the construction and operation of mosques. The plan was articulated in a policy document, which stated “Islam does not belong in Germany” and that mosques led to “the spread of Islamic teachings directed towards the removal of our legal order.” The AfD did not include the proposed ban in its national policy platform document.

At a national convention in May, the AfD called minarets and Muslim calls for prayer “symbols of Islamic power that inhibit coexistence with other religions”. The AfD also declared support for a ban on headscarves in public service professions and schools, and a ban on full-face veils in all public places.

CSU Secretary General Scheuer called for an “Islam law” to prevent foreign financing of mosques and kindergartens. He stated all imams intending to work in Germany should be trained in Germany and “share our fundamental values.” Scheuer stated that refugees who did not properly integrate into society should be deported.

Unlike Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish groups, the Muslim community did not have one sole representative body to work with states to plan the curriculum for religious classes. Some states, such as Baden-Wurtemberg, formed advisory councils with representation from several Muslim groups to assist in planning the curriculum for Islamic classes. The Alevi community continued to offer separate religious lessons in schools in seven federal states for approximately 1,500 students.

In July the Berlin state government announced it would fund a new academic center in Islamic theology – headed by a chairperson at the city’s Humboldt University – to train imams and religious teachers as of 2018. Humboldt would become the sixth university in the country with a chair in Islamic theology.

COS continued to report instances of governmental discrimination. “Sect filters,” signed statements by potential employees to confirm they had no contact with COS, remained in use in the public and private sectors. Firms owned or operated by COS members reportedly also suffered discrimination. According to COS, some of its members who suffered discrimination refrained from taking legal action because they felt a trial would be time-consuming and because they feared stigma and loss of business contracts.

According to press reports, there were an estimated 1,600 Muslims serving in the military. In September Minister of Defense Ursula von der Leyen emphasized in media interviews the need for Muslim soldiers in the army. In November the minister stated she was open to the idea of establishing Muslim military chaplains.

On July 5, the Baden-Wurttemberg State Parliament caucus of the AfD split over a disagreement about an AfD state parliament member. The state parliament member refused to disassociate himself from his anti-Semitic publications comparing Holocaust deniers to Chinese dissidents and stating “Talmudic ghetto Jews” were internal enemies of the Christian West. The two AfD factions reunited after four months. The state parliament member recused himself from the AfD caucus on July 5, hours after the split, but remained in parliament as an independent member.

On February 7, an AfD board member posted an anti-Semitic cartoon on his Facebook page. The post was deleted shortly thereafter.

In January police arrested two men on charges they had incited racial hatred by operating a neo-Nazi internet portal, “Altermedia Deutschland.” The government banned the website for inciting violence against foreigners, spreading anti-Semitic material, and denying the Holocaust.

At an inter-parliamentary conference on anti-Semitism in March Chancellor Merkel condemned any form of anti-Semitism, stating everyone who lived in the country, whether long-established or newly-arrived, must be aware there was no room for anti-Semitism in the country. Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said anyone who entered the country must reject anti-Semitism. He further stated “there is and can be no place for anti-Semitism” in “a free, democratic and tolerant Germany.” Federal Parliament President Norbert Lammert called upon Germans to resolutely fight anti-Semitism, adding hostility towards Jews is “totally unacceptable”.

During a press conference in April Chancellor Merkel stated, “In Germany, we have freedom of religion that is guaranteed by our basic law. This of course also applies to Muslims in our country... the majority of [whom] follow their religion within the framework of the Basic Law.”

During a CDU/CSU conference on religious tolerance in September Chancellor Merkel stated that many refugees came from countries with limited religious

freedom where anti-Semitism is widespread. She called for religious tolerance and freedom.

In September Interior Minister de Maiziere chaired the German Islam Conference, a forum that began in 2006 to foster dialogue about Muslim intergration among federal and state government representatives, Islamic organizations, and prominent Muslims. De Maiziere criticized outside influence on domestic Muslim organizations and called for an intensified debate on security issues. Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble called for tolerance of new immigrants and the development of a “German Islam” based on liberalism and tolerance.

On July 28, the Turkish Consulate in Stuttgart requested the Baden-Wurttemberg state government examine clubs, schools, and organizations affiliated with the religious and social Gulen movement led by Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen. The Baden-Wurttemberg minister-president said the state government would not do this and that the request was “highly disconcerting” and an inappropriate attempt by the Turkish government to influence German politics.

The government’s first International Report on Freedom of Religion and Belief was adopted by the cabinet on June 8 and submitted to parliament. The 72-page report, published on June 14, is organized by topic and includes input from 93 German embassies and the MFA on religious issues, including anti-Semitism, protection of religious freedom and refugees in Germany.

On June 13 in Berlin, Joachim Gauck became the first president in the country’s history to attend an iftar, organized by local religious and civil society organizations.

The government continued to subsidize some Jewish groups. Based on an agreement between the federal government and the Central Council of Jews, the federal government continued to provide 10 million euros (\$10.5 million) annually to help maintain Jewish cultural heritage, restore the Jewish community, and support integration and social work. In addition, the federal government provided financial support to the Institute for Jewish Studies in Heidelberg, the Rabbi Seminar at the University of Potsdam, and the Leo Baeck Institute.

Within the framework of the country’s Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) chairmanship, the MFA organized and hosted a number of events on anti-Semitism and Holocaust remembrance, such as a conference in June

on combating anti-Semitism and an event in November to discuss Holocaust crimes and their present-day relevance.

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

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

In what authorities labeled a terrorist attack, in December a Tunisian man hijacked a truck and drove it into a crowd at a Christmas market in Berlin, killing 12 people and injuring 56. There were anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian incidents, including physical and verbal attacks against religious minorities, attacks against religious property, and statements appearing in the media. Authorities attributed the incidents to adherents of the extreme right as well as to some Muslims.

On December 19, a Tunisian man killed a Polish truck driver and drove his truck at high speed through a Christmas market on Breitscheidplatz in Berlin. The attack killed 12 persons and injured 56. ISIS claimed responsibility and, in a video which surfaced on the internet after the attack, the accused attacker pledged allegiance to ISIS. Four days after the attack, he was killed in a shootout with police near the Italian city of Milan. Chancellor Merkel, Interior Minister de Maiziere, police, and the public prosecutor all condemned and labeled the incident as a terrorist attack. In her annual New Year's address, Merkel said "It is particularly bitter and sickening when terror attacks are committed by people who claim to seek protection in our country." At the same time, she defended her government's decision to accept refugees, stressing the importance of helping those in need of protection.

According to the 2015 OSCE report (the most recent available) on hate crimes, published in November, police authorities recorded 192 anti-Semitic hate crimes and 339 crimes based on religiously-motivated bias against Christians and members of other religious groups. In the same year, according to the OSCE, 11 local civil society groups reported 134 anti-Semitic incidents consisting of 58 violent attacks, 10 threats, and 66 attacks against property; five anti-Muslim incidents consisting of two violent attacks, one threat, and two attacks against property; and 26 incidents against Christians and members of other religious groups consisting of six violent attacks, three threats, and 17 attacks against property.

According to a report from the Ministry of Justice, there were 2,083 criminal investigations of anti-Semitic incidents in 2015 committed by right-wing attackers, compared to 773 in 2014. According to the ministry, due to an error, the 2014 figures did not include statistics from Berlin. In addition, the ministry used a different methodology than the police in compiling its statistics.

According to the most recent federal OPC report, authorities categorized 29 violent incidents in 2015 as manifestations of anti-Semitism motivated by right-wing extremism (down from 31 in 2014).

Federal authorities generally investigated offenses that were reported as anti-Semitic. Government officials stated it was sometimes difficult to classify reported incidents as anti-Semitic because the motivation of the perpetrators was not always clear. Nonviolent incidents, including verbal assaults on, and harassment of, Jews occurred in public places, such as public transportation, sports events, and school grounds. NGOs and members of Jewish communities stated many anti-Semitic incidents, especially among youth in and near schools, were not reported.

According to two surveys by the evangelical NGO Open Doors Germany, there were 743 cases of religiously-motivated criminal acts against Christian refugees in asylum centers between January and September, and the number of incidents accelerated over the period. Incidents included sexual and other violent assaults as well as death threats. Respondents reported fellow Muslim refugees were among those responsible in 91 percent of the incidents. An NGO and several media questioned the methodology and accuracy of the surveys, stating that two thirds of respondents came from a single parish in Berlin, that the motivation of some respondents may have been to move to more comfortable accommodations, and that many incidents in overcrowded shelters may not have been religiously motivated.

The CDU/CSU parliamentary caucus hosted an expert workshop in April on the issue of religious freedom and violence against Christians in refugee shelters in the country. The experts concluded that, while religious persecution of Christians existed, it was difficult to quantify and to separate acts of religious discrimination from other criminal acts.

On January 1, in Nuremberg, an intoxicated man shouted at another man that he smelled bad and that he was Jewish. The man pushed the victim onto the subway tracks, stamping on the victim's head and fingers to prevent him from getting back

onto the platform. A subway employee blocked the tracks for trains until police subdued the perpetrator. In October the man was sentenced to five years in prison.

On April 16, a bomb exploded at the entrance of the Sikh temple in Essen, NRW. Three persons were hurt, one of them seriously. On April 21, police classified the attack as an act of terror. Police arrested five people. In July one person involved in the attack received a 20-month suspended sentence, 100 hours of community service, and mandatory participation in an Islamic de-radicalization program. On December 8, another person involved in the attack received a prison sentence of 2.5 years. The trial against the remaining three defendants began on December 7 and was continuing at year's end.

In June a 27-year-old man shouted anti-Semitic slurs at a 75-year-old man near a subway station in Berlin and broke a glass bottle on his head, injuring him. Police arrested the perpetrator and released him shortly after.

On December 16, a 12-year-old boy was held on suspicion of an attempted bomb attack in a Christmas market in Ludwigshafen. Prosecutors said he left a backpack with explosives in a Christmas market in Ludwigshafen on November 26 and then placed another explosive device near the town hall on December 5; both explosives failed to detonate. The public prosecutor's office in Frankenthal did not bring the case to trial because the boy was underage.

On September 26, a bomb exploded at a mosque in Dresden. There were no reported injuries, and no one claimed responsibility. On December 9, the police detained a 29-year-old man suspected of having carried out the attack. The daily newspaper *Bild* reported the man had spoken at a PEGIDA rally in the summer of 2015 about "criminal foreigners" and "lazy Africans." According to the police, the suspect was acting alone.

On January 12, the offices of the Central Council of Muslims had to be evacuated under police protection after receiving a threatening letter according to the head of the council. After the incident, he expressed concerns about Muslims being used as scapegoats for criminal incidents throughout the country.

Daily newspapers *FAZ*, *Die Welt*, and *Die Zeit* reported some refugees had chosen to convert to Christianity. The newspapers stated reliable numbers on this issue were not available. *Die Zeit* reported a church in Berlin baptized approximately 850 Iranians from 2011- 2016. The spokesperson of the Baptist Church in Germany stated their congregation baptized approximately 700 Afghans and

Iranians in 2015 and 2016. He noted a “clear increase, especially among Iranians.” *Frankfurter Allgemeine* reported on refugees from Iran who chose Christianity out of protest against the Islamic lifestyle in their country.

According to NGO Network against Discrimination and Islamophobia, there were reports of discrimination against women wearing headscarves during the job application process, partly because job resumes in Germany often include photos of the applicants. A study by the research institute Bonn Institute of Labor Economics reported in September that women who wear headscarves have to apply to four times the number of jobs as women who do not wear headscarves in order to gain employment.

In February the Dortmund Technical University closed its nondenominational meditation space after Muslim students turned it into a prayer room with a separate space for women and laid out Qurans and prayer rugs. When more than 40 students complained about the closure, the university leadership published an open letter stating the university had an obligation to maintain gender-equal treatment and the space was neither intended to be gender-separated nor to be converted into a Muslim prayer room. The Technical University (TU) of Berlin and the University of Essen Duisburg also closed their prayer rooms. The president of TU Berlin stated higher education and religion should be kept separate, while the University of Essen Duisburg stated in an official letter that with over 130 nations represented at the university, rooms could not be offered for every religion and culture.

On June 28, the head of the Munich Forum for Islam (MFI) and former Mayor of Munich Christian Ude declared the temporary suspension of the construction of an Islamic Center in downtown Munich due to lack of funding. The project was unable to raise the 4.5 million euros (\$4.7 million) needed to secure the designated property from the Munich government. Ude said he would continue to pursue a “scaled-down version” of the center which he hoped would facilitate integration of Muslims in Germany.

On August 24, the Dusseldorf Jewish community opened the “Albert Einstein Gymnasium,” the first Jewish high school in NRW and the second in the country. Starting with 37 enrolled students, the school’s goal was to increase the student body to 500, from all religious backgrounds, in coming years. The school included Hebrew instruction and mandatory Jewish religion classes. The Dusseldorf Jewish community also operated a primary school in the city.

The Catholic Church and the EKD continued to oppose COS publicly. “Sect commissioners” of the EKD and the Catholic Church investigated “sects and cults” and publicized what they considered to be the dangers of these groups. EKD “sect commissioners” warned the public about what they said were the dangers posed by the COS, the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (Unification Church), Bhagwan-Osho, Transcendental Meditation, and Universal Life. “Sect commissioners” produced print and internet literature portraying these groups unfavorably.

In October according to media reports, a waiter refused to serve coffee to an Israeli tourist at a fast-food restaurant in Berlin. The waiter stated, “I don’t serve Jews.” Police were investigating the case at year’s end.

A November 2015 Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency study published in March found that 80 to 90 percent of approximately 1,500 respondents living in the country held positive or very positive attitudes towards Jews, Buddhists, Christians, and those who have no religion, while 64 percent held positive or very positive attitudes towards Muslims. A third of respondents saw the growth of religious plurality as positive, while 50 percent were concerned it could lead to conflicts. Almost half of the respondents (47 percent) approved of easing restrictions on new non-Christian religious buildings such as mosques, while just over half of respondents rejected the display of religious symbols by teachers at school – such as the wearing of crosses or headscarves.

In June the president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany warned of rising Jewish fears of new cases of anti-Semitism as a result of recent immigration. He stated many Arab immigrants had grown up in environments where anti-Semitism and hostility towards Israel was common. He also stated, “Jews in Germany are afraid that, if unchecked, this anti-Semitism rooted in Arab culture and politics could grow rapidly.”

The director of the Berlin American Jewish Committee said in a press statement in March that many Jews felt increasingly insecure because of growing attacks and anti-Semitic hostility. According to the director, who said she had observed anti-Semitism in the country for 30 years, “Fewer Jewish people identify themselves in public as being Jewish.”

According to British newspaper *The Daily Mail*, on the anniversary of the 1938 anti-Jewish pogrom Kristallnacht on November 9, the neo-Nazi group Free Forces Berlin Neukoelln posted on Facebook a map of the names and addresses of 70



Jewish-owned business, kindergartens, and cemeteries. The Berlin State Protection Office was investigating the case at year's end.

In February a Bavarian blogger was sentenced to eight months of probation and fined 15,000 euros (\$15,806) for posting a video referring to a rail workers union as “vermin” who “should be gassed”. He further said, “You know how Jews were transported to Auschwitz? That’s where these train drivers should be taken. I’ll drive the train... for free.” He posted images of Auschwitz prisoners alongside the video link.

In March protesters stood outside of the screening of an anti-Zionist documentary film about the occupation of Palestine in Berlin. When the film ended, film attendees shouted, “Jews to the gas!” at the protesters.

The PEGIDA movement continued to organize weekly demonstrations in Dresden. Amid calls to curb immigration, PEGIDA supporters regularly expressed anti-Muslim sentiments during the rallies. Journalists reported being pushed and threatened when reporting on the demonstrations. The number of participants at PEGIDA marches decreased to approximately 2,500 protesters per rally, down from 5,000-10,000 protesters per event in 2015, according to several media reports. Similar, smaller groups, such as “Thuegida” in Thuringia and “LEGIDA” in Leipzig, held protests in several towns and cities across the country.

In February deputy leader of PEGIDA Tatjana Fersterling called for refugees to be shot and for Europeans to “forget about decency” in fighting mass immigration. She also stated headscarves should be banned and radical mosques should be closed. “We need to make life uncomfortable for them,” she said.

During the height of PEGIDA demonstrations, thousands of counterdemonstrators gathered throughout the country to support tolerance. On April 18, 200 integration officers from the federal, state and local levels, who help integrate migrants, joined the anti-PEGIDA protesters in Dresden. In advance of a planned right-wing demonstration in Berlin on July 30, Berlin Mayor Michael Mueller called for counterprotests to demonstrate tolerance and inclusion.

An atheist man in Muenster was fined 500 euros (\$527) in February for breaking the blasphemy law. A court ruled the anti-Christian slogans painted on his car defamed Christianity.

Approximately 85,000 copies of the republished edition of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* were sold during the year. Since 1948, the copyright had been with the state of Bavaria which prohibited publishing of the book. The copyright ended in December 2015 and on January 8, the Munich Institute for Contemporary history presented an annotated edition stating, "The edition unmask's Hitler's false allegations, his whitewashing and outright lies." Opinion was divided among the Jewish community. Some Jewish community leaders said the "anti-Semitic diatribe" should not be republished while the President of the Central Council of Jews said he welcomed the publication of the annotated version as it would serve to "undo the myth of this book" and show how "completely wrong and ridiculous Hitler's theories" were.

Muslim groups condemned the use of terror and violence via press statements that were also published on their homepages. The Central Council of Muslims published its "strong condemnation" of the attacks in Brussels, Nice, and Munich; DITIB declared "shock" about the attack in Munich; and the Association of Islamic Cultural Centers strongly condemned the Brussels attack and called the Nice attack "a cowardly act of inhumanity."

In April the archbishop of Cologne spoke out against anti-Muslim hatred, specifically by the AfD. He said, "Anyone who denigrates Muslims, as the AfD leadership does, should realize prayer rooms and mosques are equally protected by our constitution as our churches and chapels."

Civil society representatives spoke out against anti-Semitism. The Amadeu Antonio Foundation and the Anne Frank Center organized the "Weeks of Action against Anti-Semitism," consisting of four weeks of workshops, concerts, and youth exchanges dedicated to fighting anti-Semitism. Referencing the forthcoming 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's posting of his 95 Theses, the EKD assembly condemned Luther's anti-Semitism and stated a special responsibility to oppose any type of hatred toward Jews.

On April 24, a ceremony on the 71st anniversary of the liberation of the Brandenburg-Görden Prison recognized the persecution and extermination of Jehovah's Witnesses during the Holocaust. More than 200 guests attended the ceremony. The Brandenburg state secretary for finance delivered remarks commemorating the victims.

In March in Hanover, an annual dialogue on anti-Semitism took place between representatives of the Jewish community, Catholic bishops, and Protestant church

leaders. The Protestant church collaborated with the Coordinating Council of Muslims on a mutual manifesto to “support the encounter between Christians and Muslims in Germany.

In April DITIB reported 99 attacks on mosques in 2015 (up from 73 in 2014). There were seven cases of arson, nine of threatening letters, 21 of burglary and vandalism, 13 of incitement to hatred, one of an extremist flyer, and three of graffiti.

In October a pig’s head was found in front of Brandenburg’s only mosque. The imam blamed the incident on the “Islamophobic AfD,” which had protested in front of the mosque two days earlier.

On January 27, Holocaust Memorial Day, unknown perpetrators overturned six headstones in the Jewish cemetery in Kropelin.

According to the Amadeo Antonio Foundation NGO, the incidence of Jewish cemetery desecrations, previously one of the most common anti-Semitic acts, had decreased substantially in recent years. In contrast, anti-Semitic threats and hate speech, much of it online, have become relatively more common.

On February 5, the walls of a Jewish community nursing home in Frankfurt-Bornheim were defaced with Nazi symbols. At year’s end, police had made no arrests.

On November 7, the mayor of Frankfurt condemned anti-Semitic graffiti at a Holocaust memorial in the city and stated the city of Frankfurt would continue to fight anti-Semitic acts.

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

The U.S. embassy and five consulates general continued to closely monitor the government’s responses to incidents of religious intolerance. Embassy and consulate general representatives expressed U.S. government concern about discrimination, anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic acts, and the safety of asylum seekers to state and federal officials, including at the Federal Commission for Integration, Migration, and Refugees, as well as at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Interior.

In various meetings throughout the year with government officials, members of parliament, and religious groups, embassy and consulate general representatives continued to encourage direct dialogue between the government, law enforcement, and minority religious groups and engaged in activities to promote positive attitudes toward minority religious groups, including the Muslim community.

In January the Ambassador hosted a gathering of religious and ethnic community leaders to discuss interreligious tolerance and understanding. The Ambassador encouraged the approximately 170 guests to continue their condemnation of anti-Semitism and their efforts to promote religious tolerance. In addition to government leaders, guests included members and representatives from various levels of the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities. In addition, German, Turkish, and Arab leaders in business, politics, and civil society were included, as were minority youth leaders. Participants stated it was the only event of its kind in the country where such a diverse group of religious leaders felt comfortable discussing common challenges.

In September the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom addressed the “2nd International Parliamentarians’ Conference – An Embattled Right: Protecting and Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief,” hosted by the CDU/CSU parliamentary caucus. He also met with various political interlocutors and representatives of the COS and Yezidi communities to discuss challenges they faced in the country. The COS listed government monitoring and discrimination in the workplace as challenges. Yezidis expressed appreciation of the country’s political support and efforts – particularly in the state of Baden-Wurtemberg – to provide refuge for Yezidis persecuted in their countries of origin. At the same time, they asked that more be done to increase awareness of the plight of Yezidi refugees. The Ambassador-at-Large met with the Coordination Council of Muslims, who raised animal slaughtering, lack of prayer rooms, and lack of clarification on headscarves as topics of concern.

In September the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues met with government officials to discuss Holocaust commemoration and compensation issues, including art confiscated by the National Socialists Party.

Embassy and consulate general representatives met with members and leaders of numerous local and national religious and civil society groups about their issues of concern related to religious freedom, including the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches; the Bahai Faith, Jehovah’s Witnesses; the Konrad Adenauer Foundation; the Central Council of Muslims; the Association of Islamic Cultural Centers; the

Coordination Council of Muslims in Germany; the Central Council of Yezidis; the Central Council of Jews; the COS; the Alevi; and human rights NGOs. Some groups, such as the Bahais in Berlin, reported they did not encounter discrimination based on their beliefs. Others, such as the Alevi community in Cologne, stated that they felt well-integrated – they were recognized as a religion in 10 of 16 states – but they reported some Muslims within the country did not recognize them as a religion.

On June 20, the U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism attended an OSCE conference on combating anti-Semitism hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The purpose of the conference was to share best practices and discuss the working definition of anti-Semitism. The Special Envoy emphasized the value of the working definition of anti-Semitism as a useful tool in the effort to combat anti-Semitism. He also stressed the role of civil society in combating anti-Semitism.

The embassy helped fund a Muslim Jewish Conference in August in Berlin, where 140 young Muslims and Jewish leaders from 40 countries debated various issues related to religious freedom and identity. The U.S. Special Adviser for Global Youth Issues spoke at the conference opening and gave remarks about religious tolerance. Embassy representatives also participated in the conference.