

CANADA 2020 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution guarantees freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, expression, and the right to equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination based on religion. The government does not require religious groups to register, but some registered groups may receive tax-exempt status. In November, the Quebec Court of Appeal reduced the sentence of a man to 25 years before eligibility for parole after he pled guilty in 2018 to six counts of first-degree murder for the 2017 killing of six worshippers at the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec. In November and December, a Quebec court concurrently heard challenges by four groups of plaintiffs, including the National Council of Canadian Muslims, Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the English Montreal School Board, a Quebec teachers union, and individuals to strike down as unconstitutional a provincial law prohibiting certain categories of government employees from wearing religious symbols while exercising their official functions. The law remained in force through year's end. Provincial governments imposed societal restrictions on assembly, including for all faith groups, to limit the transmission of COVID-19, but some religious communities said provincial orders and additional measures were discriminatory. Quebec authorities imposed a temporary mandatory COVID-19 quarantine on a Hasidic Jewish community in a suburb of Montreal that some members said was discriminatory because it applied only to Jews, although the religious community had initiated the quarantine voluntarily. Some members of Hutterite colonies in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta said they experienced societal discrimination outside their communities due to provincial governments publishing outbreaks of COVID-19 in Hutterite communities. In January, Quebec Education Minister Jean-Francois Roberge announced plans to abolish the province's ethics and religious culture course, compulsory in all Quebec schools since 2008 and taught from grades 1 to 11, with the exception of Grade 9. In May, Public Schools of Saskatchewan filed an application with the Supreme Court to appeal a March ruling by the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal that the provincial government continue to fund non-Catholic students attending Catholic schools. The public school plaintiffs stated the case had national implications, including for publicly-funded Catholic schools in Alberta and Ontario, and that conflicting judgments from lower courts required clarity from the country's top court. In August, the Alberta Human Rights Commission ruled again in favor of two Muslim students barred in 2011 from praying at their nondenominational private school after the Supreme Court

returned the case to the commission for a new hearing. The school said it would appeal the second finding of discrimination

Reports continued of anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic incidents, including cases of violence, hate speech, harassment, discrimination, and vandalism. In December, Statistics Canada released hate crime statistics for 2019 showing the number of police-reported religiously motivated hate crimes was 608 incidents, approximately 7 percent lower than in 2018. The B'nai B'rith League Canada for Human Rights recorded 2,207 reports of anti-Semitic incidents in 2019, compared with 2,041 in 2018. On September 18, police charged a male suspect with first-degree murder in the September 12 killing of a congregant in the parking lot of the International Muslim Organization of Toronto mosque in Rexdale, a Toronto neighborhood. Media reports linked the male suspect to white supremacist postings online. Toronto Police Services continued its investigation through December and did not rule out bringing additional hate crime charges. Unidentified individuals damaged statues outside Buddhist temples in Montreal in a series of attacks in February and March, including lion statues symbolizing protection smashed on two different occasions with a sledgehammer at the Quan Am Temple. In January, an unidentified individual pelted the National Holocaust Monument in Ottawa with eggs days after the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Embassy, consulate, and other U.S. government officials raised respect for religious freedom and diversity with the government. Embassy officials discussed strategies to combat religious intolerance through engagement with religious leaders, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and minority religious groups. The embassy sponsored and participated in public programs and events encouraging interfaith dialogue and freedom of religion. It funded two grants to Liberation75, organizations formed to mark the 75th anniversary of the Holocaust, combat anti-Semitism, and promote education and remembrance. In January, the Consul General in Quebec City hosted an event with representatives of One World Strong, an NGO that offers peer-to-peer support to survivors of terrorism, and the survivors of the 2017 attack at a Quebec City mosque. On September 24, the Consul General hosted 11 Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Muslim, Jewish, and indigenous animist faith leaders at an interfaith breakfast in which they discussed religious freedom and the impact of COVID-19 on their communities. The embassy and consulates amplified activities and policy content from senior Department of State officials in Washington through social media.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 37.7 million (midyear 2020 estimate). According to the 2011 census, which has the most recent data available on religion, approximately 67 percent of the population self-identifies as Christian. Roman Catholics constitute the largest Christian group (38 percent of the total population), followed by the United Church of Canada (6 percent), Anglicans (5 percent), Baptists (1.9 percent), and Christian Orthodox (1.7 percent). Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Pentecostal groups each constitute less than 2 percent of the population. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints estimates its membership at 199,000. The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (FLDS Church) estimates its membership at 1,000. The Hutterites, or Hutterite Brethren, numbering approximately 35,000, are an Anabaptist ethnoreligious group living primarily in Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan Provinces. Approximately 3 percent of the population is Muslim, and 1 percent is Jewish. Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, Scientologists, Baha'is, and adherents of Shintoism, Taoism, and aboriginal spirituality together constitute less than 4 percent of the population. Approximately 24 percent of the population lists no religious affiliation.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution provides for freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, and expression. Every individual is equal under the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination based on religion. The law imposes “reasonable limits” on the exercise of these religious rights only where such restrictions can be “demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.” The law permits individuals to sue the government for violations of religious freedom. Federal and provincial human rights laws prohibit discrimination on the grounds of religion. Civil remedies include compensation and/or changes to the policy or practice responsible for the discrimination.

The law does not require religious groups to register, but the government grants tax-exempt status to religious groups that register as nonprofit organizations with the Charities Directorate of the Canada Revenue Agency. Nonprofit status provides such organizations with federal and provincial sales tax reductions, rebates, and exemptions. To gain and retain tax-exempt status, a group must be nonpolitical and undergo periodic audits. Charitable status also grants members of the clergy various federal benefits, including a housing deduction under the tax code and expedited processing through the immigration system. The term “clergy”

includes persons whose communities have licensed, ordained, or otherwise formally recognized them for their religious leadership and authority to perform spiritual duties and services within their religious organization. Individual citizens who donate to tax-exempt religious groups receive a federal tax receipt entitling them to federal income tax deductions.

The criminal code prohibits the practice of polygamy, which is an indictable offense subject to imprisonment of up to five years.

A Quebec government law passed and implemented in 2019 prohibits certain provincial government employees from wearing religious symbols while exercising their official functions. The law defines a religious symbol as “any object, including clothing, a symbol, jewelry, an adornment, an accessory, or headwear, that (1) is worn in connection with a religious conviction or belief; or (2) is reasonably considered as referring to a religious affiliation.” Among categories included in the law are president and vice presidents of the national assembly; administrative justices of the peace; certain municipal court employees; police, sheriffs, and deputy sheriffs; certain prosecutors and criminal lawyers; and certain principals, vice principals, and teachers, among others. The law also requires anyone seeking certain provincial government services to do so with “face uncovered.” The law invoked the “notwithstanding clause” of the federal constitution, which permits a province to override specific constitutional protections for a period of five years to prevent citizens from bringing challenges to the law based on the federal constitution. The religious symbols ban applies to public school teachers, government lawyers, judges, prison guards, and police officers, among others. It exempts provincial employees working prior to the implementation of the law, but they lose their right to wear religious symbols upon changing jobs or receiving a promotion.

Government policy and practices regarding education, including regulation of religious schools, fall under the purview of the provincial, rather than federal, governments. Six of the 10 provinces provide full or partial funding to some religious schools.

Catholic and Protestant schools in Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan retain the federal constitutionally protected right to public funding they gained when those provinces joined the federation. Other provinces either had no legally recognized denominational schools that qualified for such protection at the time of federation or accession, or they subsequently secured a federal constitutional amendment to terminate religious education funding rights and introduce an exclusively secular

publicly funded education system. Federal statutory protection for Catholic and Protestant publicly funded minority education exists in the Yukon, Nunavut, and Northwest Territories, which do not have provincial status. Constitutional or federal statutory protection for public funding of religious education does not extend to schools of other religious groups, although British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Quebec offer partial funding to religious schools of any faith that meet provincial scholastic criteria. The laws permits parents to homeschool their children or enroll them in private schools for religious reasons.

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

Government Practices

In November, the Quebec Court of Appeal reduced the sentence of a Quebec man to 25 years before eligibility for parole from 40 years after he pled guilty in 2018 to six counts of first-degree murder for killing six worshippers at the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec in 2017. Twenty-five years without parole eligibility is both the minimum term for first-degree murder and the customary maximum. The court ruled the original 40-year term was “grossly disproportionate” and struck down the law permitting consecutive maximum 25-year life sentences without parole as unconstitutional. The court stated its decision pertained to the constitutionality of the law and the arbitrary nature of the sentencing judge’s calculation of the sentence, not to the gravity of the crime. The original sentencing judge had rejected the prosecution’s recommendation for consecutive sentences for the six victims for a total of 150 years as constituting cruel and unusual punishment under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Both the convicted man and the prosecution had appealed the 40-year sentence.

Provinces temporarily banned in-person religious gatherings or imposed restrictions limiting the number of persons permitted to gather to stem transmission of COVID-19 that varied by province. Restrictions fluctuated during the pandemic, based on local conditions. For example, in March, Ontario temporarily banned gatherings of more than five persons for any purpose, including for religious assembly, and then in May, the province loosened some rules, including allowing drive-in worship services, after religious leaders of multiple faiths signed a joint letter to the Premier of Ontario asking for changes for religious groups due to the impact of these limits on religious assembly. Ontario permitted spaces of worship to reopen in June, subject to a 30 percent cap of the capacity of their room or structure. Ontario then tightened regulations on gatherings for any purpose as of September 30 due to an increase in COVID cases in the province, limiting them to

50 persons or fewer in indoor licensed facilities or to 10 individuals or fewer in private facilities, but permitted spaces of worship to retain their ability to host up to a 30 percent cap of capacity indoors and a maximum of 100 persons outdoors. On December 21, Ontario announced additional restrictions on gatherings effective December 26, which included a limit of 10 persons at religious services, funerals, and weddings, whether they occurred indoors or outdoors. Other provinces, such as British Columbia and Alberta, allowed religious gatherings of up to 50 persons as long as physical distancing could be maintained; however, in November, British Columbia prohibited in-person religious services, except for time-sensitive events such as funerals, marriages, or baptisms, with a limit of 10 persons due to a rise in COVID-19 case numbers. Separately, in May, four Toronto-area Orthodox rabbis sent a letter to the Premier arguing the province's cap on gatherings of five persons prevented Orthodox Jews from meeting their religious obligation for a quorum of 10 males to pray.

In September, Quebec reduced the number of persons who could gather in public places, including places of worship, to 25 to 250 persons in specific regions of the province calibrated to the number of cases of COVID-19 locally, although where settings involved little talking or singing the higher cap of 250 persons applied. In September, a group of Quebec leaders representing various faiths issued a public statement asking for all places of worship to be subject to the 250-person limit. Quebec faith leaders said the province did not consult with religious groups before imposing limits on assembly for religious observance and that the lower limits applied to religious compared to some nonreligious venues constituted discrimination. In November, the Quebec government proposed a "Christmas reprieve" allowing limited social gatherings for Christmas celebrations. Leaders of other faith groups said the decision discriminated against their faiths because the province had not lifted public health restrictions during the year for celebrations of their religious holidays. In December, the government reversed its decision, citing a surge in COVID-19 cases. Also in December, an Alberta judge dismissed an emergency application by two Southern Baptist churches and individuals for a temporary injunction to suspend provincial restrictions to allow for in-person religious and seasonal celebrations of Christmas pending a hearing of their suit, filed earlier the same month, to strike down the restrictions as undemocratic and as a violation of constitutional rights to religious freedom. The judge ruled the public interest outweighed the restrictions of rights and that the application did not meet evidentiary benchmarks to grant an injunction. The court did not hear the suit by year's end.

In April, some members of the Kiryas Tosh Hasidic Jewish community in Broisbriand, a suburb of Montreal, said they faced police and societal discrimination after local police enforced a mandatory quarantine on the 4,000-member community in response to a significant outbreak of COVID-19 cases among its members. The Kiryas Tosh community had initiated a voluntary self-quarantine that the local municipality made mandatory in late March and applied to “the Jewish community” rather than a geographical area. The quarantine confined residents to their homes except to buy food at community stores or in case of medical emergency. Religious gatherings were initially cancelled per an order by the Quebec government that extended to all faith groups across the province. Some residents said public officials and police singled out Jews in applying the local quarantine order and that the lockdown was disproportionate, and they expressed concern that local authorities and media stigmatized and inaccurately portrayed the Jewish community as responsible for transmitting COVID-19. Local media reported incidents of community members disregarding public health regulations. Other Hasidic community members said police acted appropriately, that the quarantine was imposed in coordination with community leaders, and that the restrictions did not prompt widespread concerns within the Hasidic community.

In October, the federal Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) reversed a policy that had assigned its officers who wear religiously-mandated beards to desk duty during the COVID-19 pandemic. Representatives of the World Sikh Organization (WSO) in September said the RCMP had failed for six months to respond to its complaint that the police force discriminated against its officers who wear religiously mandated beards. RCMP policy required active duty officers to wear respirator masks during the pandemic, and the force stated that facial hair prevented the masks from forming an effective seal. The WSO said other police forces in the country had made an accommodation for religiously-mandated facial hair, but the RCMP stated that as a federal police force, it was uniquely subject to the federal labor code and federal health and safety regulations requiring a clean-shaven face for proper use of the masks. Opposition parties raised the issue in the federal parliament. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and federal Minister of Public Safety Bill Blair said the RCMP mask policy was discriminatory and directed the RCMP to find an “appropriate accommodation” to allow officers to serve their communities while practicing their faith. The RCMP permitted bearded officers to respond to operational calls wearing the facemasks in cases where supervisors determined the risk of exposure to COVID-19 was low or where multiple responding officers were present. The RCMP said it continued to work to procure a facemask that met operational and health and safety requirements without discriminating against members.

In November and December, the Quebec Superior (general trial) Court concurrently heard separate challenges by four groups of plaintiffs, including the National Council of Canadian Muslims, Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the English Montreal School Board, a Quebec teachers union, and individuals, to strike down as unconstitutional a provincial Quebec law prohibiting certain categories of government employees from wearing religious symbols while exercising their official functions. The Supreme Court, the country's highest court of appeal, previously had declined to hear a request for an injunction to suspend the law passed in 2019. The law remained in force through year's end. The plaintiffs stated a subnational government could not infringe on the fundamental and federally guaranteed constitutional rights granted to all citizens. Although the law applied to the wearing of religious symbols of all faiths, according to press reports, the legislation primarily excluded religious minorities whose religion mandates the wearing of religious symbols or dress from positions of authority, including in education and law enforcement. The press also said the legislation unfairly targeted Muslim women in the province who wear hijabs or other head coverings.

The National Council of Canadian Muslims, Canadian Civil Liberties Association, and an individual plaintiff contested the constitutionality of the law, stating that only the federal government could limit rights to religious observance and that the same principle should apply to a law that attempted to regulate religious nonobservance. The plaintiffs said the law discriminated against faith communities by limiting their ability to access public institutions, and the law's definition of "religious symbols" was so vague it could not be applied consistently and was therefore discriminatory. The plaintiffs also challenged portions of the law prohibiting individuals from receiving certain government services with their faces covered. The three other organizations that filed separate challenges to the law were a multifaith organization on behalf of three teachers – a Catholic and two Muslims – who wore religious symbols; the English Montreal School Board, the largest English language school board in Quebec; and a Quebec teachers union representing 45,000 teachers. The English Montreal School Board applied for, and was granted, funding for its case through a publicly-funded federal court challenges program. The program was administered independently from the federal government by the University of Ottawa, which selected recipients for program funding based on the human rights significance of their case, but the Premier of Quebec declared the use of federal money to sue the Quebec government an "insult" to Quebec. In February, the Montreal English School Board decided not to accept the funding but continued with its suit.

In September, a Quebec judge who declined to hear a Muslim woman in court in 2015 unless she removed her hijab provided a written apology to complainant Rania El-Alloul. The apology was the result of a negotiated settlement that also terminated related disciplinary proceedings against the judge.

According to media reports, in April, the city of Mississauga, Ontario granted an exemption to its noise bylaws to permit local mosques to broadcast daily calls to prayer outdoors during the month of Ramadan to facilitate religious observance for persons unable or unwilling to worship indoors due to COVID-19. A Facebook group called “Mississauga Call to Prayer on LoudSpeaker Unconstitutional,” which included some self-identified secular Muslims and had 10,445 members as of August, objected to the allowance of the prayer in public spaces. The group launched a crowdfunding drive for a constitutional challenge to the exemption, but did not file suit by the end of the year. Hindu Forum Canada, a Mississauga-based nonprofit advocacy group, opposed the exemption on the grounds that Canada is a multifaith society. The call to prayer was the first time the broadcast was permitted publicly in the country. Other Ontario cities, including Toronto, Brampton, Hamilton, Windsor, and Ottawa, as well as Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta, and Vancouver, British Columbia, issued similar noise bylaw exemptions for Ramadan. Hindu Forum Canada subsequently reversed its opposition and sought and received a similar exemption from the Mississauga City Council for Hindu temples. The city granted an exemption for Hindu temples to broadcast hymns during three major Hindu festivals every evening at 7:00 p.m. for five minutes between August 11 and September 1.

In August, the Alberta Human Rights Commission ruled for the second time in favor of two Muslim students barred from praying at their nondenominational private school. The school had accommodated the boys’ request for prayer space briefly after enrolment in 2011 but withdrew permission on the basis that it contravened the school’s secular character. When the boys continued to pray, the school expelled them. The Alberta Human Rights Commission ruled the school had discriminated on the basis of religion and ordered the school to pay a 26,000 Canadian dollar (\$20,400) fine in 2015. The school appealed, and the Alberta Court of Appeal overturned the commission’s finding and ordered a new hearing before the Alberta Human Rights Commission. The commission appealed the order to the Supreme Court, which declined to hear the case, returning it to the commission, which renewed its original finding of discrimination. According to media reports, the school said it would appeal the second finding of discrimination, stating the decision set a “dangerous precedent” in contravening its right to welcome students of all faiths, or no faith, in a secular environment and ignored

the human rights of other students. In news reports, Imam Syed Soharwady of the Islamic Supreme Council of Canada said the school was demonstrating “arrogance and ego” and doing the wrong thing by “dragging on” the case, and should apologize and accept the decision.

In January, Quebec Education Minister Jean-Francois Roberge announced plans to abolish the province’s ethics and religious culture course, compulsory in all Quebec schools since 2008 and taught from grades 1 to 11, with the exception of Grade 9. He said the government believed there was “too much” religion in schools and the revision was “part of the government’s desire to offer students a modern citizenship education course” focused on secular “21st century themes” such as democracy, citizen engagement, legal education, sexuality, and ethics. In February, the government held consultations to solicit public comment on content for the new course. The government planned to test the new curriculum in some schools during the 2021-2022 school year and implement it in all Quebec schools in September, 2022. Observers stated the change aligned with the government’s wider vision of a “secular” Quebec, and was consistent with its passage of legislation prohibiting the wearing of religious symbols by provincial public employees.

In May, Public Schools of Saskatchewan filed an application with the Supreme Court to appeal a March ruling by the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal that the provincial government continue to fund non-Catholic students attending Catholic schools. The application remained pending through year’s end. The provincial appeal court unanimously overturned a 2017 lower court ruling that public funding for non-Catholic students to attend Catholic schools discriminated against secular schools and those of other religious groups in favor of Catholic education. The provincial government and the Saskatchewan Catholic School Boards Association welcomed the court of appeal ruling, but the public school plaintiffs stated the case had national implications, including for separate schools in Alberta and Ontario, and the conflicting judgments required clarity from the country’s top court.

In December, the Quebec Superior Court dismissed a request from a Jewish couple for a binding judgment that the province had failed to regulate schools and should provide a remedy to ensure children who attend private religious schools in the province receive an education compliant with the provincial curriculum. The court acknowledged past problems with the schools, but it ruled provincial education authorities acted in accordance with laws in place at the time. It stated the provincial government addressed challenges in 2017 by tightening regulations granting the province broader powers to close illegal schools or to intervene in

cases where a child's education was being neglected, and by allowing ultra-Orthodox children to register for home schooling with the secular curriculum to supplement their religious education. The provincial government further strengthened the regulations in 2019. The court stated the home schooling agreement for ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities was a success. The president of Quebec's Jewish Association for Homeschooling said parents tried to balance the preservation of their faith with satisfying provincial educational requirements. A significant number of parents had signed home schooling agreements with the provincial education ministry since 2017 that included permitting their children to take provincial tests, and at least one religious school helped prepare its students for such exams.

According to the CanAm Hutterite Colony in southwest Manitoba, in July, provincial governments' publication of COVID-19 outbreaks in Hutterite communal living settings led to cultural and religious profiling. Media reported that some Hutterites in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta were denied service in commercial stores outside their colonies. The country's chief public health officer and premiers of the three provinces stated publicly that surrounding communities should not stigmatize Hutterite colonies. The premiers and public health authorities said Hutterites were cooperating with testing, and were working with health officials to try to limit the spread of the virus. Some colonies adopted the wearing of masks and/or voluntarily restricted travel into and out of the colonies. In July, at the request of the CanAm Hutterite Colony and responding to the colony's intention to file a human rights complaint, Manitoba ceased publicly identifying colonies where members had tested positive. Also in July, the Hutterian Safety Council wrote to the Saskatchewan government requesting the same discretion and questioning why Hutterite colonies were identified in case updates in press reports where the virus risk was contained, given that no other societal group was identified with specific outbreaks. Saskatchewan's chief medical health officer said it was important to inform the public where new cases occurred. The province published updates on outbreaks by region, community name, known source of infection, and case status on its public COVID-19 dashboard, but not by societal or cultural group.

Eight lawsuits by religious and other organizations filed in 2018 that sought to reverse denial of their grant applications by the federal government under the Canada Summer Jobs Program remained pending before the Federal Court, with no hearing scheduled as of the end of the year. The federal government had denied their applications after the recipients would not sign an attestation the government imposed as a condition of receiving funding. The attestation required recipients to

confirm that their core mandate and the summer jobs for which they planned to use the federal funds respected the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as other rights and associated case law, including the right to abortion, reproductive and sexual health services, gender equality, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression. The plaintiffs stated the attestation infringed on their rights to freedom of religion and of expression.

In February, a Quebec real estate broker asked the Quebec government to formally strike anti-Semitic clauses from archaic certificates of location and deeds of sale that prohibited sales of such property to “persons of Jewish origin.” The Supreme Court invalidated these covenants decades ago, but some remained on paper for older properties. A spokesperson for the Quebec Minister of Justice acknowledged the clauses were discriminatory and said the government “needs to do a more comprehensive legal analysis to assess what would be the best collective remedy.” The spokesperson advised owners who have the clause in their covenants to invalidate them in court or decline to apply them during the sale, but the real estate broker who brought the complaint said the responsibility lay with the government, not property owners. The broker said the government should enact legislation requiring notaries to strike the clauses from documents.

In November, Prime Minister Trudeau appointed the country’s first Special Envoy for Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Anti-Semitism. The Special Envoy was designated to lead the country’s delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and work domestically to promote Holocaust education, remembrance, and research. B’nai B’rith said it had advocated for the appointment of a Special Envoy as part of its “Eight-Point Plan to Tackle Anti-Semitism,” and it described the appointment as “a major step forward in the fight against anti-Semitism” in the country. On January 27, Prime Minister Trudeau issued a statement on International Holocaust Remembrance Day in which he said the country would continue to address a resurgence of anti-Semitism domestically and abroad. He said the government had adopted the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism in its anti-racism strategy; recommitted to the principles of the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust; and had supported the adoption of the 2020 IHRA ministerial declaration as part of these efforts. He also reaffirmed the country’s commitment to Holocaust remembrance and education. Also in January, the Governor General, the country’s vice-regal representative, attended the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland, and the Fifth World Holocaust Forum, “Remembering the Holocaust: Fighting Anti-Semitism,” in Jerusalem.

The National Holocaust Remembrance Ceremony in Ottawa scheduled for April 21 was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Prime Minister Trudeau issued a statement on Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, in which he urged citizens to observe the day through virtual or other means and stated, “Sadly, acts of anti-Semitic violence are still frequent today, and it is our solemn duty to stand united and vigilant against all forms of anti-Semitism, hatred, and discrimination. We must be clear: attacks against the Jewish community are attacks against all of us. Today – and every day – we stand with Jewish communities here in Canada and around the world to vow, ‘Never Again’.”

In October, Ontario became the first province to adopt the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, following its adoption by the federal government in 2019. Elsewhere, debate on the IHRA continued throughout the year. In January, Montreal Mayor Valerie Plante did not support a city council motion for the city to adopt the IHRA definition, stating to media that she was “absolutely not” rejecting the motion, but rather was suggesting Montreal formulate its own definition. Gail Adelson-Marcovitz and Reuben Pouplo, national President of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) and cochair of CIJA-Quebec, respectively, issued a joint communique, stating, “We are deeply disappointed that Montreal Mayor Valerie Plante did not support the adoption of the most widely accepted definition of anti-Semitism. The mayor failed to seize the opportunity and show leadership on International Holocaust Remembrance Day to demonstrate that the City of Montreal is committed to combating anti-Semitism, which is rapidly increasing around the world.” Expressing support for the mayor’s position, members of the NGO Independent Jewish Voices (IJV) stated the IHRA definition was “designed to silence criticism of Israel and Zionism by equating this criticism with anti-Semitism and the wrong way to counter anti-Semitism.” In February, the Canadian Federation of Students endorsed IJV’s position on IHRA, stating the IHRA “infringes on both freedom of expression and academic freedom in post-secondary education campuses.” Other city councils, including the city council of Westmount, a Montreal suburb, and the city council of Vaughan in the Toronto area, endorsed the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism.

According to B’nai B’rith Canada, petitions sponsored by the organization prompted the city council of Ajax, Ontario in August to vote to rename a street in a new subdivision that commemorated the German battleship *Admiral Graf Spee*, and in November to vote to rename another street that commemorated the ship’s captain, Hans Langsdorff. The vessel and its crew fought for Germany in World War II. In July, B’nai B’rith Canada issued a joint call with the Canadian Polish

Congress for the removal of monuments in Edmonton, Alberta and Oakville, Ontario, which the two organizations said honored Nazi collaborators.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were reports of physical violence, vandalism, hate speech, and harassment directed at religious groups, in particular against Jews and Muslims. In December, Statistics Canada released hate crime statistics for 2019 that showed a 7 percent decline in the number of police-reported religiously motivated hate crimes, from 657 in 2018 to 608 in 2019.

In 2019, the most recent year for which there were statistics, the B'nai B'rith Canada League for Human Rights reported 14 cases of anti-Semitic violence, compared with 11 in 2018; there were 182 reports of vandalism, including the painting of swastikas and threatening messages on buildings, and 2,011 reports of harassment, compared with 221 and 1,809, respectively, in 2018. The league received 2,207 reports of anti-Semitic cases in 2019, compared with 2,041 reports of anti-Semitic cases in 2018, and 1,752 cases in 2017. More than 90 percent of the occurrences (2,011) involved harassment. Eighty-three percent of all incidents reported in 2019 occurred online or had an online component; the physical location and identities of those posting the online messages were unknown. Occurrences of in-person, compared to online harassment, nearly doubled between 2018 and 2019, rising from 8.6 percent to 16.8 percent, with 238 recorded incidents of bullying of Jewish students by their peers at primary and secondary schools. In 2019, while overall incidents increased across the country, there were significant reductions in all provinces except for Quebec and Ontario, which have the largest Jewish communities in the country. Ontario experienced the greatest increase (62.8 percent) in incidents between 2018 and 2019, from 481 in 2018 to 783 in 2019. Quebec had the largest total number of incidents for a second consecutive year, rising from 709 in 2018 to 796 (up 12.3 percent) in 2019.

According to media reports, on September 18, police charged a male suspect with first degree murder in the killing of a congregant in the parking lot of the International Muslim Organization of Toronto mosque in Rexdale, a Toronto neighborhood, on September 12. The mosque's security video captured the attack. In the recording, an intruder approached and slashed the neck of the male victim, who was also the mosque's volunteer caretaker, as he sat alone outside the entrance of the building controlling access to it to comply with pandemic health regulations. Paramedics pronounced the victim dead at the scene. Media reports linked the male suspect to white supremacist postings online. The chief executive

of the National Coalition of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) called for police to file hate crime charges and to take stronger steps to dismantle white supremacist organizations, including the creation of a national strategy to counter extremism and hate. The accused remained in custody. Toronto Police Services said it continued the investigation as of December and did not rule out filing additional hate crime charges.

According to media reports, in October, the NCCM publicized violent messages sent by unidentified persons to a Toronto-area mosque, including a threat, “We have the guns to do a Christchurch all over again,” referring to attacks on two mosques in New Zealand in 2019 in which a gunman killed 52 persons. The NCCM declined to identify the mosque for safety purposes, but police confirmed they had opened an investigation of the messages that remained pending through year’s end. The Prime Minister said the threats were “unacceptable” and that Islamophobia and extremism had no place in the country, and separately tweeted that he was “deeply disturbed” by the messages.

According to media reports, a Quebec man pled guilty in June to one charge of inciting hatred in social media posts in 2019. The posts included hate speech against Muslims and Jews, and promoted Aryan supremacy. The court stayed a second charge of inciting hatred and one charge of advocating genocide, and released the man after five months in custody. The court ordered three years probation and prohibited him from using social media during that period.

In September, B'nai B'rith reported several anti-Semitic acts occurring over the Rosh Hashanah holiday, including in Ottawa, where a man spat at worshipers at an outdoor service and called them “dirty [expletive] Jews” as he drove by. On September 18, a man harassed a Jewish father and his son outside a synagogue in Thornhill, a community north of Toronto, yelling, “You’re a piece of [expletive], you’re Jewish, you run the [expletive] world.”

According to B'nai B'rith Canada, the Polish-language newspaper *Glos Polski* blamed the COVID-19 pandemic on a Jewish plot in an article published in March and republished in April. The article also said Jews created and controlled ISIS, described Israel as “the cause of all the world’s woes” and “an emanation of the Devil himself,” and stated Jews sought to take over Poland. B'nai Brith asked police to open a hate crime investigation. By year’s end, police had not opened an investigation.

According to B'nai B'rith Canada, police in June arrested the publisher of the Polish-language publication *Goniec*, based in Mississauga, Ontario, for disseminating articles with anti-Semitic content in 2019. The articles accused Jews and Zionists of having “terrorism in their blood,” stated Jews were spying on individuals through the WhatsApp cell phone application, said certain foreign governments were controlled by Jews, and urged readers “to stand up to the Jews.” Police released the man without charge, but cautioned him that they would file charges if he continued to promote hatred against Jews. The news outlet removed the content from its website.

In October, the Privy Council Office (PCO) that serves the Prime Minister confirmed it had opened an internal investigation into social media posts by an employee that allegedly contained anti-Semitic content. The posts reportedly disparaged the genetic heritage of Jews and claimed Jews participated in or enabled Nazi atrocities. The CIJA and the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre brought the complaint. The posts were removed and the PCO issued a statement in which it expressed shock and disappointment with the content. The two organizations said they were gratified the PCO took the complaint seriously.

According to media reports, unknown individuals damaged statues outside Buddhist temples in Montreal in a series of incidents in February and March. Vandals smashed lion statues symbolizing protection with a sledgehammer at the Quan Am Temple on two separate occasions, and damaged statues at two other temples. Vandals also painted crosses on and defaced with graffiti lion statues at the gate of the Chinatown district. Police opened a hate crime investigation, but by year's end made no arrests in the case.

According to media reports, police released security camera footage in January in an attempt to identify a male suspect in the defacement of the National Holocaust Monument in Ottawa. An unidentified individual pelted the monument with eggs days after the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Police opened a hate crime investigation, but by year's end, made no arrests in the case.

In March, according to media reports, an unidentified individual painted a yellow swastika on a garbage can outside the Chevra Mishnayas Synagogue in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The synagogue previously had been targeted with similar vandalism. Police opened an investigation, but by year's end made no arrests in the case.

In May, police cautioned three teenagers, informed their parents, and counselled the teens after they dumped a metal suitcase painted with a swastika and containing

a dead skunk at the side of a road in Innisfil, Ontario in February. The area is home to two synagogues. Police opened a hate crime investigation, but determined the incident constituted an “immature prank” and not an anti-Semitic incident.

In June, according to media reports, police charged a Barrie, Ontario man with nine counts of mischief for painting swastikas and pro-Nazi and Holocaust references at multiple locations in downtown Barrie, including on buildings and on children’s playground equipment in a park. The graffiti included the names of Hitler, Goebbels, and Anne Frank. The vandalism occurred hours before the Barrie City Council voted to create an antiracism task force.

According to B’nai B’rith Canada and the CIJA, in July, high school student protestors in Mississauga, Ontario led and responded to chants in Arabic of “Palestine is our country and the Jews are our dogs” at a rally organized by student organization Sauga for Palestine in opposition to proposed Israeli government annexation of territory in the West Bank. Spokespersons for Sauga for Palestine said the chanting occurred after the protest had concluded and that rally organizers intervened to stop it; the organization also published an apology on its Facebook page. Jewish witnesses said the rally organizers did not stop the chants. The mayor of Mississauga issued a statement that she stood with the Jewish community “in strongly condemning these hateful and disturbing anti-Semitic comments,” and said the right to peaceful protest excluded promotion of hatred against individuals or groups. B’nai B’rith filed a complaint to police to open a hate crime investigation. By year’s end, police had not opened an investigation.

In June, according to media reports, police closed a hate crime investigation and determined it was a case of vandalism after unidentified individuals in May drew a swastika and the words “all heil Hitler” in chalk on the exterior walls of a school in Toronto. The area has a sizeable Jewish population and some of the school’s staff and students are Jewish.

In February, the Pew Research Center published findings on attitudes towards democratic principles, such as regular elections, free speech, and free civil society, as well as religious freedom, in 34 countries, based on interviews it conducted during its *Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey*. According to the findings, 65 percent of Canadian respondents considered religious freedom to be “very important,” ranking it among the lowest of their priorities for democratic principles among the nine tested.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

Embassy, consulate, and other U.S. government officials raised respect for religious freedom and diversity with the national and provincial governments. They also raised how we might better support individuals persecuted for their religion and counter rising threats to religious freedom. Embassy and other U.S. government officials met with representatives from Global Affairs Canada's Office of Diversity and Inclusion to discuss issues of religious freedom in the country, including issues raised in this report.

Embassy and consulate officials conducted outreach to religious leaders, NGOs, and religious groups to discuss strategies for combating religious intolerance and promoting inclusion. The embassy funded two grants to Liberation75 to combat anti-Semitism and in support of a Liberation75 international event in May and June in Toronto to mark the 75th anniversary of liberation from the Holocaust. The latter event was postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On January 20, the Consul General in Quebec City hosted an event with representatives of One World Strong, an NGO that offers peer-to-peer support to survivors of terrorism, and the survivors of the attack at a Quebec City mosque in 2017. The discussion at the event included promotion of religious freedom.

In March, April, and July, the Consul General in Quebec City met with Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, and Jewish faith leaders to reiterate the U.S. government's commitment to religious freedom. On September 24, the Consul General hosted 11 Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Muslim, Jewish, and indigenous animist faith leaders at an interfaith breakfast in which they discussed religious freedom. They also discussed the impact of COVID-19 on their communities and restrictions on their ability to congregate for worship and religious expression, how to foster hope and resilience during the pandemic, and best practices to promote tolerance, diversity, and inclusion. On November 24, the consulate in Quebec City hosted a webinar with a panel of U.S. and Quebec speakers, including survivors of the Boston Marathon bombing, of the Quebec City mosque shooting in 2017, a former member of Al-Qaeda, and a former member of a right-wing extremist group. A survivor of a white supremacist attack described how his attacker targeted him because of his Islamic faith, and the panelists discussed the importance of promoting religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue.