

# GERMANY 2018 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

## Executive Summary

The constitution prohibits religious discrimination and provides for freedom of faith and conscience and the practice of one's religion. The country's 16 states exercise considerable autonomy on registration of religious groups and other matters. Unrecognized religious groups are ineligible for tax benefits. The federal and some state offices of the domestic intelligence service continued to monitor the activities of certain Muslim groups. Authorities also monitored the Church of Scientology (COS), which reported continued government discrimination against its members. Certain states continued to ban or restrict the use of religious clothing or symbols, including headscarves, for some state employees, particularly teachers and courtroom officials. While senior government leaders continued to condemn anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment, some members of the federal parliament and state assemblies from the Alternative for Germany (AfD) Party again made anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim statements. The federal and seven state governments appointed anti-Semitism commissioners for the first time, following a recommendation in a parliament-commissioned 2017 experts' report to create a federal anti-Semitism commissioner in response to growing anti-Semitism. The federal anti-Semitism commissioner serves as a contact for Jewish groups and coordinates initiatives to combat anti-Semitism in the federal ministries. In July the government announced it would increase social welfare funding for Holocaust survivors by 75 million euros (\$86 million) in 2019. In March Federal Interior Minister Horst Seehofer said he did not consider Islam to be a part of the country's culture, and that the country was characterized by Christianity. In May the Bavarian government decreed that every public building in the state must display a cross in a clearly visible location near its entrance.

There were numerous reports of anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian incidents. These included assaults, verbal harassment, threats, discrimination, and vandalism. Most anti-Christian incidents involved actions by Muslim migrants against migrant converts. Jews expressed security concerns after several widely publicized anti-Semitic attacks, coupled with reports of anti-Semitic bullying in schools. Final federal crime statistics cite 1,799 anti-Semitic crimes during the year, including 69 involving violence, an increase of 20 percent compared with 1,504 anti-Semitic crimes, of which 37 were violent, in 2017. The federal crime statistics attributed 93 percent of the 2017 crimes to the far right. A study covering 2007-2017 by the Technical University of Berlin found online anti-Semitism was at its highest level ever recorded. There were demonstrations expressing anti-

Muslim and anti-Islamic sentiment and protests against what participants described as radical Islam. The Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) continued to make public statements opposing the COS.

The U.S. embassy and five consulates general monitored the government's responses to incidents of religious intolerance and expressed concerns about anti-Semitic, anti-Christian, and anti-Muslim acts. Embassy representatives met regularly with the newly appointed federal government anti-Semitism commissioner at the Ministry of Interior. The embassy and consulates general maintained a dialogue with a broad spectrum of religious communities and human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) on their concerns about religious freedom and on ways to promote tolerance and communication among religious groups.

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

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 80.5 million (July 2018 estimate). Unofficial estimates based on the census and figures provided by religious groups indicate approximately 29 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, and 27 percent belongs to the EKD – a confederation of Lutheran, Reformed (Calvinist), and United (Prussian Union) Protestant regional churches. Other Protestant denominations, including the New Apostolic Church, Baptist communities, and nondenominational Christians, combined account for less than 1 percent of the population. Orthodox Christians represent 2.4 percent of the population.

According to government estimates, approximately 6.3 percent of the population is Muslim, of which 75 percent is Sunni, 13 percent Alevi, and 7 percent Shia; the remainder identifies simply as “Muslim.” According to the Ministry of Interior, approximately 25 percent of Muslims are recent immigrants; between 2011 and 2015, an estimated 1.2 million refugees arrived from predominately Muslim countries. Estimates of the Jewish population vary widely; the Central Council of Jews estimates it at 200,000. The Central Welfare Office for Jews in Germany reported that Jewish communities had approximately 100,000 members at the end of 2017. According to Religious Studies Media and Information Service (REMID), a secular, religious studies NGO, groups that together constitute less than 1 percent of the population include Buddhists (270,000); Jehovah's Witnesses (222,000); Hindus (100,000); Yezidis (100,000); The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Church of Jesus Christ) (40,000); Sikhs (15,000); and COS (5,000-10,000). All of REMID's estimates are based only on members who have

registered with a religious group. According to the nonprofit Research Group Worldviews Germany, approximately 36 percent of the population either has no religious affiliation or belongs to religious groups not counted in the government's statistics.

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

### **Legal Framework**

The constitution (also known as the basic law) prohibits discrimination based on 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 constitution also prohibits an official state church. It stipulates no one shall be required to disclose his or her religious convictions nor be compelled to participate in religious acts. The constitution states religious instruction shall be part of the curriculum in public schools and that parents have the right to decide whether their children shall receive religious instruction. It recognizes the right to establish private denominational schools. The constitution 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 provide religious services in the military, at hospitals, and in prisons.

The federal criminal code prohibits calling for violence or arbitrary measures against religious groups or their members or inciting hatred against them. Violations are punishable by up to five years in prison. It also prohibits "assaulting the human dignity of religious groups or their members by insulting, maliciously maligning, or defaming them," specifying a maximum penalty of five years in prison, although prison sentences are rare. The prohibition and the penalties apply equally to online speech. The federal criminal code prohibits disturbing religious services or acts of worship, with violators subject to a fine or imprisonment for up to three years. The law bans Nazi propaganda, Holocaust denial, and fomenting racial hatred, specifying a penalty of up to five years' imprisonment.

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 ruled the government must remain neutral towards a religion and

may 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.

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 constitution. Any religious group may request PLC status, which, if granted, entitles the group to levy tithes on members (averaging 9 percent of income tax) that 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 with PLC status 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 employees in hospitals, kindergartens, or NGOs run by a religious group to be members of that group. State governments subsidize institutions with PLC status providing public services, such as religious schools and hospitals. Due to historic “state-church contracts” dating back to before the Weimar republic, all state governments except for Bremen and Hamburg subsidize the Catholic Church and the EKD with different yearly amounts.

According to the constitution, 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 Catholics, the EKD, Baha’is, Baptists, Christian Scientists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Jews, Mennonites, Methodists, the Church of Jesus Christ, the Salvation Army, and Seventh-day Adventists. Ahmadi Muslim groups have PLC status in the states of 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, general headscarf bans for teachers at public schools are a violation of religious freedom, but

implementation is left to the states, which may determine if special circumstances apply. Bavaria, North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW), and Saarland render decisions on a case-by-case basis. Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, and Bremen do not prohibit headscarves for teachers. Hesse permits teachers to wear headscarves as long as doing so does not impair “school peace” or threaten perceptions of state neutrality. A law in Berlin bans visible signs of religious affiliation for police, lawyers, judges, law enforcement staff, and primary and secondary public school teachers. The Berlin law permits teachers at some categories of institutions, such as vocational schools, to wear headscarves. Other states have laws that restrict religious attire in certain circumstances.

In April the Bavarian Parliament amended its legislation to prohibit judges, prosecutors, and judicial trainees from wearing religious symbols in court.

Citing safety reasons and the need for traffic law enforcement, federal law prohibits the concealment of faces while driving. Infractions are punishable by a 60 euro (\$69) fine.

Some federal and state laws affect religious practices. Federal animal protection laws prohibit the killing of animals without anesthesia, including as part of halal and kosher slaughter practices. However, there are exceptions. Pursuant to a Federal Administrative Court decision, trained personnel may kill animals without anesthesia in a registered slaughterhouse under observation of the local veterinary inspection office if the meat is for consumption only by members of religious communities whose beliefs require slaughtering animals 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.

All states offer religious instruction and ethics courses in public schools. Religious communities with PLC status (or without such status that have concluded a special agreement with the state that grants them this right) appoint religion teachers and work with the states to set the curriculum for religious education in line with the constitution; the states pay 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-Wuerttemberg, Berlin, Hesse, Lower Saxony, NRW, Rhineland-Palatinate,

Saarland, and Schleswig-Holstein also offer some religious instruction in Islam, with the teachers provided by the religious community or by the government, depending on the state. In Bavaria and Schleswig-Holstein, the state provides this instruction; in the other federal states, Muslim communities or associations do. In Hamburg and Bremen, nondenominational religious instruction for all students is offered by the Protestant Church and the state, respectively.

In Bavaria, teachers provide Islamic instruction to approximately 15,000 students in 219 primary schools and 118 middle and secondary schools under a pilot program expiring in 2019. In the fall, NRW began providing Islamic religious instruction in 20 occupational (vocational) schools.

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, including for religious reasons, is prohibited in all the states.

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

### **Government Practices**

In January the federal government created the new position of commissioner for Jewish life in Germany and the fight against anti-Semitism. The new commissioner, Felix Klein, started work in May. The appointment followed federal parliament enactment of a resolution entitled “Resolutely Combating Anti-Semitism” on January 18. The resolution called for creation of an anti-Semitism commissioner and expressed appreciation for the government’s 2017 decision to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA’s) working definition of anti-Semitism. It also called for deportation of foreigners that incite anti-Semitic hatred, “determined” countering of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, continued punishment for persons who denied or trivialized the Holocaust, and further financing – including with Muslim organizations and mosques – for projects to combat anti-Semitism, as well as continued financial support for Jewish communities and memorials of the Holocaust. A 2017 report on anti-Semitism in the country by independent experts had also called for the appointment of a federal commissioner on anti-Semitism, as well as improved documentation and punishment of anti-Semitic crimes and better advisory services for those affected by anti-Semitism.

In October Klein announced that he planned to implement a nationwide system of recording anti-Semitic incidents below the threshold of criminal offenses. During a visit to Israel, he announced cooperation with the Israeli government in encouraging third party states to apply the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism and to develop codes of conduct for governments' interactions with social media companies to combat online anti-Semitism. On December 20, Klein announced the 2019 launch of a nationwide online platform for reporting anti-Semitic incidents. The platform will be run by the Research and Information Center for Anti-Semitism (RIAS), a nonprofit organization that receives some federal and state funding. The Ministry of Interior also announced it would establish a separate anti-Semitism department and add experts on Jewish life to the religious department. Klein repeatedly encouraged the federal states to establish their own anti-Semitism commissioners.

Rhineland-Palatinate, Baden-Wuerttemberg, Hesse, Bavaria, Saarland, Saxony-Anhalt and NRW established anti-Semitism commissioners. The responsibilities and functions of the position varied by state, but generally included developing contacts with the Jewish community, collecting statistics on anti-Semitic incidents, and designing education and prevention programs. In November the federal and state level anti-Semitism commissioners met for the first time to discuss best practices and identify areas of cooperation.

In November Baden-Wuerttemberg opened an anti-discrimination office. The state government said it would serve as a point of contact for those experiencing any form of discrimination, including religious discrimination.

In March NRW Minister-President Armin Laschet advocated granting PLC status to Muslim organizations. In January the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat requested PLC status in NRW, and the application was pending at year's end.

In November Rhineland-Palatinate announced it was planning to sign a state agreement with the Muslim Alevite community. According to the state chancellery, the agreement would outline conditions for Alevi holidays and religious instruction in schools. At year's end, four Rhineland-Palatinate elementary schools offered Alevi religious instruction. The government was scheduled to sign the agreement in March 2019.

In August the state of Rhineland-Palatinate announced it would stop negotiations to establish a "religion treaty" with the Turkish Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB) and three other Islamic organizations, Schura Rheinland-Palatinate,

Ahmadiyya, and the Association of Islamic Cultural Centers. Such an agreement would have been a precondition for introducing state-wide Islamic religious education in public schools, but the state followed two expert opinion reports that had questioned DITIB's independence from the Turkish government and the organizations' "constitutional adequacy" as official partners for the state. State authorities also classified DITIB and Schura as "suspicious."

In December media reported the Hesse State criminal police office started an investigation of a possible neo-Nazi network in Frankfurt's police force after a group of police officers allegedly sent a threatening letter to a German lawyer of Turkish origin. In August investigators said they had found police officials used a work computer to look up the lawyer's personal information without an official reason, and also found a group of five police officers had been sharing neo-Nazi images and content. Authorities suspended the five officers from duty, and the case remained under investigation at year's end.

According to reports from the federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (OPC) – the domestic intelligence service – and state OPCs and COS members, the federal and state OPCs in Baden-Wuerttemberg, Bavaria, Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg, Lower Saxony, NRW, and Thuringia continued to monitor the activities of the COS, reportedly by evaluating Scientology publications and members' public activities to determine whether they violated the constitution. In September following the opening of new representational COS offices in Stuttgart, a Baden-Wuerttemberg state OPC spokesperson said state and national COS membership had decreased by one third since 1997, and suggested that the OPC's monitoring of the COS deterred membership. COS leadership disputed the state OPC's statement that membership had declined. At least four major political parties (the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the Christian Social Union (CSU), the Social Democratic Party (SPD), and the Federal Democratic Party (FDP)) continued to exclude Scientologists from party membership.

Federal and state OPCs continued to monitor a number of Muslim groups, including Salafist movements, ISIS, Hezbollah, Hamas, Turkish Hezbollah (TH), Hizb ut-Tahrir, Tablighi Jama'at, Millatu Ibrahim, the Islamic Center Hamburg (IZH), the Muslim Brotherhood, and Milli Gorus. The website of NRW's OPC stated the Muslim Brotherhood "rejects democracy."

Groups under OPC observation continued to say their status as meriting OPC scrutiny implied they were extremist and constrained their ability to apply for publicly funded projects.



In January the Hamburg Regional Court acquitted 12 alleged members of the banned Salafist group Millatu Ibrahim. The Hamburg state attorney's office charged that the men had, among other offenses, stormed a mosque in Luebeck, Schleswig-Holstein in 2013 and threatened to kill those who did not adhere to Millatu Ibrahim's convictions. The state attorney's office stated it was convinced of the defendants' guilt but that it had failed to prove the allegations.

In July Hamburg began to record hate crimes in a more detailed manner. Hamburg Justice Senator (the city-state's minister of justice) Till Stefen told the newspaper *Welt* in June the statistics would improve sentencing and make sociopolitical developments more visible. Stefen added, "We need new sources to make anti-Semitic crimes visible." Hamburg State Attorney General Jorg Frohlich stated that collecting the new statistics would require significant additional work but that "every progress is worthwhile" when combating hate crime.

In September Bavaria established a hotline for reporting anti-Semitic incidents, according to the state's anti-Semitism commissioner. Bavarian authorities said the hotline would begin operations in spring 2019.

In May federal statistical data on the number of anti-Muslim and anti-Christian hate crimes became available for the first time. Police had added the categories to their criminal statistics in 2017. Anti-Semitism was already a category of hate crime in federal crime statistics.

In February Baden-Wuerttemberg announced the state would start organizing training for Muslim chaplains at correctional facilities, rather than rely on outside organizations to conduct the training. In the same month media reported the state OPC had barred three of 16 imams who were graduates of a third-party training course from serving as prison chaplains because of what the OPC said were the imam's contacts with radical Islamist organizations.

In May Bavarian Minister-President Markus Soeder announced a decree requiring public offices to display a cross in a visible place at the entrance area of the building where they were located. According to Soeder, the decree was intended to highlight Bavaria's cultural and historical roots.

In March the Federal Constitutional Court dismissed the suit of a woman who wanted to drive wearing a *niqab*. The court stated the woman had not sufficiently

demonstrated how the law prohibiting driving with a face covering restricted her religious freedom.

In March the Koblenz police district completed a disciplinary review of a male Muslim police officer who in 2017 refused to shake the hand of a female colleague, citing religious reasons. Police officials disciplined the officer, and ordered him to pledge his allegiance to the constitution in writing and pay a fine of 1,000 euros (\$1,100). They also instructed the officer, on penalty of dismissal, not to refuse to shake the hands of women in the future when acting in an official capacity.

In May the Berlin Labor Court ruled against a teacher in Berlin who had sued the school system in 2017 for transferring her from a primary school to a school for older children because state law barred women who wore a headscarf from teaching younger children. The court decided the state administration had the right to transfer its teachers to any other post of the same salary level.

In November the State Labor Court of Berlin and Brandenburg awarded approximately 5,000 euros (\$5,700) to a job applicant in compensation for discrimination on the grounds of religion. The job applicant, trained in information technology, said the school where she applied to work as a teacher had rejected her because she wore a headscarf. In May the local labor court had ruled that, because teachers served as a model for young students, the school was justified in limiting her religious freedom and asking her to teach without a headscarf. The state court, however, saw no indication that a teacher wearing a headscarf would have threatened “school peace,” and quoted the Federal Constitutional Court’s 2015 decision that such a threat was a necessary condition for prohibiting teachers from wearing headscarves.

In April the NRW integration ministry announced it would examine legal requirements for a headscarf ban for girls younger than 14, the age of so-called “religious majority.” The state integration minister stated in an interview that wearing a headscarf was a personal decision, but children lacked the self determination to decide and should not be pressured. Critics of the proposed ban, including some teachers, asked how the ban would be enforced. The federal integration commissioner and the chairwoman of the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency spoke against the ban while federal FDP Party Chair Christian Lindner and CDU Party Vice Chair and federal Minister of Agriculture Julia Kloeckner supported it. By year’s end, the NRW state government had not decided on the

proposed ban and said it expected to continue debating the issue through the end of 2019.

In April a Muslim woman wearing a *niqab* left a reception by Heiner Bernhard (SPD Party), the mayor of Weinheim in Baden-Wuerttemberg, after she refused a request by a town employee to show her face. The mayor stated he wished “to greet all citizens of his town face to face,” and that he considered it a “citizen’s duty” to show one’s face in a democratic state. Shortly before the incident, the municipality had refused to process a pending passport application for the woman’s child because, according to Mayor Bernhard, the mother declined to show her face for identification purposes, as required by law, while applying for the passport on behalf of her child. Bernhard told the newspaper *Welt*, “For identity verification, we had to see the woman’s face. She could have gone to a separate room in our town hall.”

In September the city of Pforzheim announced it had reversed a regulation requiring Muslim women wishing to wear a headscarf in their driver’s license photograph to present evidence of their faith through a certificate from their mosque or religious community. Earlier in the year, a Muslim woman’s tweet about the requirement had generated strong criticism of it on social media. The new policy required certificates of faith only in cases where there was reasonable doubt about the religious motivation of those seeking to wear a headscarf in the photograph.

In February the AfD put forward a motion requesting the government to introduce legislation in parliament to prohibit full-face veils in public. Citing the individual rights of Muslim women, the AfD motion stated that wearing a full-face veil was “an expression of the oppression of women” and of conscious distancing from “Western liberal society.” At year’s end parliament was still debating the motion in committee.

In March the Bavarian Administrative Court rejected the complaint of a judicial trainee in Augsburg who in 2014 had sued to contest a Bavarian Ministry of Justice rule denying judicial trainees the right to wear a headscarf in court. A lower court had previously sided with the plaintiff in 2016.

In July a majority of the citizens of Kaufbeuren, Bavaria voted in a referendum against leasing (for a symbolic fee) municipal real estate to the local DITIB organization on which to build a mosque.

In March the Higher Administrative Court in Muenster, NRW ruled that an event venue owner could not rent his venue for a Muslim circumcision celebration scheduled for Good Friday. The ruling reaffirmed a December 2015 ruling by the Administrative Court in Cologne. The circumcision itself had taken place several weeks before the scheduled celebration and the court ruled that the jubilant nature of the event contradicted the quiet nature of the Christian Good Friday observance, which several federal states, including NRW, legally enforced.

In February the Gelsenkirchen Administrative Court in NRW banned outdoor amplification of the call to prayer via speakers by a local mosque. Following legal action by nearby residents in 2015, the Muslim community had to stop amplifying the prayer call outside of the mosque's premises pending a court decision. The court justified its decision in this specific case with the lack of citizen involvement and dialogue in the city's first decision to grant the permit for the call to prayer but did not prohibit the call to prayer altogether. In March the city announced it would appeal the decision prohibiting the amplification. The city's lawyer compared the call to prayer with the ringing of church bells and said the court had not respected the religious freedom of the Muslim community.

In October the Federal Labor Court ruled on new guidelines for the rights of religious communities as employers, ruling on a case in which the EKD-owned charity organization *Diakonie* denied employment to a social worker because she was not a member of a religious community. Although the job description required applicants to belong to a Christian church, the court ruled that *Diakonie* could not deny her employment solely on that basis. The court's decision stated religious communities could no longer require applicants to belong to a religious community as a condition of employment unless religious communities could demonstrate that membership was required to perform the job.

In March the European Court of Human Rights unanimously held that the country's courts' decisions in 2013 to take Twelve Tribes Church children living in Bavaria into state care because of reports that Church members punished their children by caning had not violated Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

In March Foreign Minister Heiko Maas condemned rising anti-Semitism at schools after Muslim immigrant children bullied a Jewish girl at a Berlin elementary school. The bullying reportedly included death threats.

In May the NRW Ministry of Schools and Education distributed resources on countering anti-Semitic bullying in schools to all schools and education authorities in the state. The action followed reports indicating that bullying of Jewish students rose in 2017. Politicians from the CDU/CSU called for action, including that schools pay more attention to communicating religious tolerance.

In December Hamburg's parliament passed a resolution to strengthen preventive work against anti-Semitism. The parliament allocated an additional 300,000 euros (\$344,000) for school programs to combat anti-Semitism, including educational visits to former concentration camps, adult education, and anti-discrimination counseling. The parliament said it would cooperate with Hamburg's Jewish community and organizations to support their efforts to combat anti-Semitism, and that its efforts would target right-wing extremist groups.

In May the education ministry of Brandenburg, and the education ministries of Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate in June, signed declarations of intent with Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Israel to collaborate on Holocaust education in the states' schools. In November Hamburg's education ministry introduced educational materials on Jewish life from Yad Vashem as part of a broader effort to combat anti-Semitism in schools. Yad Vashem said it had concluded such agreements with 15 of 16 states in the country.

In June the Baden-Wuerttemberg state government announced plans to reorganize Islamic religious education in public schools. Minister-President Winfried Kretschmann said that, because of the absence of a single Islamic partner organization, he proposed establishing a Sunni Muslim educational foundation that would serve as a mediator between the state and various Islamic associations. The state government did not reach a decision on a new model for Islamic religious education and announced it would continue the existing system for an additional school year.

The Alevi Muslim community continued to offer separate religious lessons in schools in eight states for approximately 1,400 students.

In June Berlin Humboldt University, a public university, created an institute for Islamic theology and said it would begin training imams and religion teachers in 2019. The state of Berlin pledged to provide 13.8 million euros (\$15.83 million) in funding for the institute through 2022. Humboldt University created the institute in cooperation with three Muslim associations – the Central Council of Muslims, Islamic Federation, and Islamic Association of Shia Communities – and the

associations were to have a voice in selecting the institute's professors. Critics, including student organizations and the Berlin CDU, said they disapproved of the extent of the associations' control over the institute's board, or of what they described as the associations' conservative orientation.

During campaigning for the October Bavarian state elections, the Bavarian AfD distributed posters calling for "Islam-free schools," which the party explained as a call to end "Islamic education and headscarves in schools."

The COS continued to report governmental discrimination. "Sect filters," which were signed statements by potential employees to confirm they had no contact with the COS, remained in use in the public and private sectors. According to the COS, in September a Munich school refused to hire a teacher due to his membership in the COS. The COS said the government also discriminated against firms owned or operated by its members. According to the COS, Hamburg city officials asked one COS member to sign a "sect filter" when he attempted to purchase land from the city for his company.

In April the Berlin Administrative Court dismissed a suit that the mosque association Neukoellner Begegnungsstaette (NBS) had brought against the Berlin OPC in 2017. NBS had sought to have the Berlin OPC remove the association's name from its annual report and to stop stating NBS had ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. The court ruled that the Berlin OPC's statements that NBS had had contacts with the Islamic Community in Germany and that the latter group organized followers of the Muslim Brotherhood were valid.

In May the NRW state chancery spokesperson told media the state government stopped cooperation with DITIB due to the Turkish government's influence over the group.

In July the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (also known as the Jewish Claims Conference) and the government announced an increase of 75 million euros (\$86 million) of government funding for social welfare services for Holocaust survivors, raising the yearly contribution from 405 million euros (\$464.45 million) in 2018 to 480 million euros (\$550.46 million) in 2019. According to the commission, the increased funds would finance additional home care, food support, medicine, and transportation services for Holocaust survivors.

The government continued to subsidize some Jewish groups. Based on an agreement between the federal government and the Central Council of Jews in

Germany, the federal government increased its yearly support from 10 to 13 million euros (\$11.47 to \$14.91 million) 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, an international research group on the history and culture of German Jewry.

State governments continued to provide funds to Jewish communities and organizations in various amounts, for such purposes as 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.

In September the NRW government announced a ten-year plan totaling 44 million euros (\$50.46 million), beginning in 2018 and ending in 2028, for the modernization and new construction of Jewish facilities and institutions. The state said funding would begin at three million euros (\$3.44 million) and be increased by 200,000 euros (\$229,000) annually until reaching the maximum funding level of five million euros (\$5.73 million) in 2028. Separately, NRW again provided three million euros (\$3.44 million) to support and upgrade security in Jewish buildings.

On November 8, the city of Dessau-Rosslau in Saxony-Anhalt presented the Jewish community with a piece of land to build a new synagogue in the center of town. The community received 195,000 euros (\$224,000) from the city and 300,000 euros (\$344,000) from the state's lottery commission for the construction of the building, as well as 700,000 euros (\$803,000) from the federal government. The Minister-President of Saxony-Anhalt, Reiner Hasselof, welcomed the new synagogue, stating it would increase the visibility of Jewish life in the city.

According to the Humanistic Union, an independent civil liberties organization, total state contributions during the year to the Catholic Church and the EKD amounted to approximately 538 million euros (\$616.97 million). The union said it calculated its estimate based on the federal states' budgets.

In June the NRW state government's Center for Political Education organized six one-day information programs in six cities entitled Diverse Islam versus Violence-Prone Salafism: Opportunities for Intervention and Prevention. The stated goals

were to help teachers and educators distinguish between Islam as a religion and what the organizers described as violent Islamist extremists, and to engage with youths vulnerable to religiously based extremism. Presenters were Muslim and non-Muslim academics, members of NGOs, and state government employees. Muslim religious leaders did not participate in the programs.

In July the NRW Ministry for Children, Family, Refugees, and Integration awarded 160,000 euros (\$183,000) to the Central Council of Muslims in support of its Hands-on Diversity: Students against anti-Semitism project.

In January the Federal Constitutional Court reversed the 2016 acquittal by the Wuppertal Regional Court of seven members of a self-declared “Sharia Police” on charges of violating the prohibition on wearing uniforms as expressions of a common political opinion. Dressed in yellow vests marked “Sharia Police,” the men patrolled Wuppertal in September 2014 to counter “non-Muslim behavior.” The Constitutional Court remanded the case back to the lower court and stated the latter had failed to consider whether the uniforms caused intimidation or were otherwise threatening to the public. At year’s end the lower court had not scheduled a new trial date.

On July 9, the Berlin-based Jewish Forum for Democracy and anti-Semitism, in conjunction with several other Jewish organizations in the country, published a “declaration of principles on the fight against anti-Semitism.” While applauding several “well-intentioned” federal- and state-level public statements and initiatives over the previous months, the declaration called on the government to back up policies with concrete action. It cited the need to take victims seriously, distinguish anti-Semitism as a specific form of discrimination, and apply the IHRA’s working definition of anti-Semitism. The signatories called upon the newly appointed federal and state commissioners on anti-Semitism to develop more effective preventative measures to combat it and to learn from the experiences of victims to develop more effective preventive measures. They also called on federal and state government agencies and publicly funded institutions to explicitly distance themselves from all form of anti-Semitism, including campaigns such as BDS.

Frankfurt Deputy Mayor and City Treasurer Uwe Becker targeted the BDS movement against Israel on numerous occasions and called for a ban of BDS in Germany. In April Becker said “Frankfurt will, in the future, only work with banks which do not maintain business relations with the anti-Semitic BDS movement.” In June he added that artists who supported the BDS movement were



not welcome in Frankfurt and festivals or organizations in Frankfurt supporting BDS or providing a platform to its supporters risked losing city funding.

In September the NRW State Parliament condemned the BDS movement and its calls to boycott Israeli products and companies, as well as Israeli scientists and artists in NRW. The parliament also requested that all NRW government organizations deny BDS requests to use city, municipality, and county spaces.

In December Jewish community leaders in Duesseldorf said they believe NRW could still do more to combat anti-Semitism, and they found state-level responses to the BDS movement to be insufficient and weak.

On January 1, the government implemented procedures for registering complaints and violations of the law barring hate speech enacted in late 2017. The procedures stipulated operators of social networks with more than two million users in the country, including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, must delete or block “obviously illegal content” within 24 hours after notification or, in more complex cases, within seven days. Operators must name a representative in the country able to react to complaints within 48 hours. Operators failing to comply systematically with the requirements were subject to fines of up to 50 million euros (\$57.34 million). By year’s end the government had not penalized any companies under the law. Anti-Semitism Commissioner of Baden-Wuerttemberg Michael Blume reported the new law had had little effect on the spread of anti-Semitism and other forms of hate speech, as groups simply chose to use other, less public social media forms such as WhatsApp groups and video game chat rooms not covered by the law.

In March federal Interior Minister Seehofer stated the phrase “Islam is part of Germany,” which former President Christian Wulff and other politicians had popularized, was wrong. “No. Islam is not part of Germany,” he said. Seehofer added that Muslims in the country “are, of course, part of Germany,” but that he did not consider Islam to be a part of the country’s culture. The minister’s statements led to a public debate on the role of Islam and Muslims in the country. Chancellor Angela Merkel stated that, while the country was shaped by its Judeo-Christian heritage, “Now there are four million Muslims living in Germany” who “can live their religion here, too.” Several Muslim associations criticized the minister’s statements. Gokay Sofuoglu, chair of the advocacy group Turkish Community in Germany, said, “At a time when there are more and more attacks on mosques and Muslims, it is not a good start if the minister of the interior begins with such a statement.” He also stated that “it is not his [Seehofer’s] job to decide

who belongs to Germany and who does not.” Addressing Seehofer’s remarks, Islamic Council Chair Burhan Kesici said, “He does not have the decency to withhold his opinion....It would be better to recognize reality and see Muslims as part of society. Only then could prejudices be reduced.” Ayman Mazyek, Chair of the Central Council of Muslims, commented, “Against the backdrop of the mosque fires and the increased Islamophobic attacks, I would have expected the new interior minister to stand behind German Muslims.”

In September Hans Peter Stauch, an AfD state parliament member in Baden-Wuerttemberg, posted a video on Facebook entitled “The Power of the Rothschilds.” The video included statements that the Rothschilds, a Jewish banking family, were responsible for World War II and the Holocaust. Baden-Wuerttemberg’s state commissioner for anti-Semitism and the heads of the state-level Green, SPD, and FDP parties criticized Stauch, saying that he was spreading anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. Stauch responded that he had only posted the video without commentary and said he was exercising his freedom of speech.

In January AfD Bundestag (federal parliament) member Beatrix von Storch tweeted that Cologne police were appeasing “barbaric, gang-raping, Muslim hordes” when the police tweeted a New Year’s Day greeting in Arabic. Twitter briefly suspended von Storch’s account. Thomas Held, spokesman for the Cologne police, confirmed to media that the Cologne police initiated a criminal report against von Storch for suspicion of inciting hatred, stating that this was “a completely normal procedure” which they were “legally obliged” to start upon the suspicion of a criminal offense. Additionally, approximately 100 private individuals reported von Storch’s tweet to police. Twitter also deleted a tweet by AfD Parliamentary Caucus Chief Alice Weidel, defending her colleague by using the phrase “imported, marauding, grabbing, beating, knife stabbing migrant mobs.”

In May Weidel argued in a parliamentary debate that the uncontrolled immigration of Muslims endangered the wealth of the country, stating, “Burquas, headscarf girls, subsidized knife men, and other good-for-nothings will not secure our wealth, the economic growth, and most of all our welfare state.” Representatives of all other parties present in parliament reacted with interjections and booing. Parliament President Wolfgang Schaueble called her to order for “discriminating against all women who wear a headscarf.”

In July a group of AfD party members from Weidel’s Bodensee electoral district in Baden-Wuerttemberg visited the Sachsenhausen concentration camp memorial in Brandenburg State as part of a trip to Berlin sponsored by the federal press office.

According to the memorial site's staff, some participants continuously interrupted the guided tour with inappropriate comments, including speech that trivialized Nazi crimes and questioned the existence of gas chambers. The federal press office stated one participant made anti-Semitic statements. Neuruppin public prosecutor Wilfried Lehman was investigating the case, and stated in November that his office hoped to complete the investigation by year's end, and he already had sufficient evidence for one case of Holocaust denial.

On April 26, the Bundestag condemned the increasing number of anti-Semitic incidents and attacks in the country, and emphasized its support for Israel's right to exist. "It is intolerable when Jewish life in Germany is not possible without fear," said SPD party leader Andrea Nahles. Volker Kauder (who at the time was CDU/CSU parliamentary caucus leader), said "Everyone has a place in this society," but that there was no place for anti-Semitism.

In May the Rostock District Court upheld a lower court's 2016 finding that AfD state Member of Parliament (MP) Holger Arppe was guilty of hate speech against Muslims for comments he wrote on the right-wing website Politically Incorrect in 2010, while using a pseudonym. The court increased Arppe's fine from 6,300 to 9,000 euros (from \$7,200 to \$10,300).

On February 8, the Stuttgart Higher Regional Court found the creator of the banned Altermedia neo-Nazi website guilty of leadership in a criminal association and inciting racial hatred and sentenced him to two and a half years in prison. Three women, charged with supporting the website and incitement, were convicted and received suspended sentences ranging from eight months to two years. The court declared the platform a criminal organization. It had published content that denied the Holocaust and targeted Jews, immigrants, and foreigners; the federal interior minister closed it in 2016.

According to the Central Council of Muslims (ZMD), political parties continued to distance themselves from Islamic associations because they were concerned foreign nations and organizations could influence Muslims with money and by sending radical imams to mosques in the country.

As part of the coalition agreement between the ruling CDU/CSU and SPD parties, the government agreed to continue the German Islam Conference dialogue between representatives of the government and Muslims in the country, which began in 2006. The conference's aim was to improve the religious and social participation of the Muslim population in the country, give greater recognition to

Muslims' contributions to society, and, in the absence of a central organization representing all Muslims in the country, further develop partnerships between the government and Islamic organizations. In November the government held its fourth German Islam Conference, a two-day conference with 240 participants. Conference attendees included representatives of Muslim associations, communities, scholars, and activists. Interior Minister Seehofer called on Muslim communities to cut their ties with sources of foreign funding and influence, develop their own training systems for the country's imams, and increase their cooperation with the country's government. Federal Integration Commissioner Annette Widmann-Mauz, reiterating concerns about the foreign financing of the country's mosques, said, "Those who want to be part of Germany as a Muslim organization cannot remain part of Ankara."

In January Sawsan Chebli, a Berlin state legislator of Palestinian heritage, proposed the government require that "everybody living in this country" visit Nazi concentration camp memorials at least once. She added that newly arrived immigrants should visit the memorials as part of programs to integrate them into society, in order to sensitize them to Nazi crimes against Jews and combat anti-Semitism. The country's Central Council of Jews and the World Jewish Congress endorsed the proposal. Council President Josef Schuster told Deutschlandfunk Radio that migrants who had fled or been expelled from their home countries could develop empathy by visiting such memorials. The proposal generated debate and was not adopted. Critics said such visits should be voluntary and preceded by prior education about the Holocaust. Gunter Morsch, Director of the Brandenburg Memorials Foundation and head of the Sachsenhausen Memorial and Museum, said, "It seems to me an illusion to believe that such a visit can help to counter a strongly entrenched prejudice."

In March NRW Minister-President Laschet hosted an iftar at the state chancery, the first NRW minister-president to do so.

The government created the position of federal commissioner for worldwide religious freedom within the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development and in April it appointed MP Markus Gruebel as the first commissioner. Gruebel stated the government wanted to send a clear signal on the importance it places on religious freedom and the strengthening of common values.

The country is a member of the IHRA.

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

There were numerous reports of anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian incidents, including assaults, verbal harassment, threats, discrimination, and vandalism. Most anti-Christian incidents involved actions by Muslim migrants against migrant converts. According to Ministry of Interior federal crime statistics, there were 1,799 anti-Semitic crimes committed during the year – including 69 incidents involving violence – a 20 percent increase over the 1,504 anti-Semitic crimes, of which 37 were violent, reported in 2017. The interior ministry attributed 93 percent of the incidents in 2017 to the far right but stated its methodology was not exact.

The federal OPC's annual report stated the number of violent right-wing anti-Semitic incidents decreased from 31 in 2016 to 28 in 2017. It noted membership in neo-Nazi groups remained steady at approximately 6,000 persons.

NGO RIAS, to which victims can report anti-Semitic incidents independently of filing charges with police, reported 527 anti-Semitic incidents in Berlin in the first six months of the year, including 18 involving violence or attempted violence, compared with 514 incidents over the same period a year earlier. RIAS used different categories than official police statistics and counted anti-Semitic incidents that did not rise to the level of a criminal offense, such as "hurtful behavior."

According to the anti-Semitism commissioner in Bavaria, incidents of anti-Semitism were increasing in the state. He said perpetrators were from both the extreme left and right, as well as the Muslim community.

In 2017, the first year in which authorities maintained a tally of anti-Muslim and anti-Christian incidents, the Ministry of Interior registered 1,075 incidents against Muslims and Muslim institutions, such as mosques or community centers, including 56 attacks involving bodily harm. Other recorded infractions included online hate speech against Muslims, hate mail, and aggressive behavior in the street. The ministry also recorded approximately 90 demonstrations against the "Islamization of Germany."

The Ministry of Interior counted 129 incidents against Christians in 2017, including 34 cases involving violence. It classified a majority of these incidents as motivated by religious ideology. In at least 14 cases, the victims were refugees. Media reported that refugees who had converted from Islam to Christianity experienced aggression from Muslim refugees, especially if they were housed in the same refugee shelter.

In February an unknown perpetrator fired shots with an air gun from a high-rise building towards a mosque in Halle and injured a Syrian man. Federal Immigration Commissioner Aydan Oezoguz (SPD) visited the site to talk to members of the Muslim community. In June one or more unidentified individuals fired shots from an air gun near the same mosque that hit a man of Syrian origin. Police investigated, but by year's end had not identified a suspect in either incident.

On June 3, according to RIAS, three men accosted four teenagers listening to an Israeli song on a cell phone at a subway station in Berlin. The men asked the cell phone owner if he was Jewish. When he said yes, they told him they were from Gaza City, that Jews had been killing children for 70 years, and that if he showed up again they would slit his throat, calling him a [expletive] Jew. The men then tried to push the cell phone owner onto the subway tracks and injured one of the other youths with broken glass. The attackers fled when police appeared. There were no arrests.

In September the president of the Jewish amateur sports club Makkabi Germany, Alon Meyer, said club members increasingly faced anti-Semitic abuse from other competitors during sporting events, ranging from insults to physical violence and knife attacks. According to Meyer, insults included "filthy Jew" and "Jews into the gas." He added, "It's not stopping at insulting, it will be fisticuffs, it will be knife attacks." Meyer attributed the attacks mostly to an increase in migrants and refugees with a Muslim-Arab background.

In February the regional court in Traunstein, Bavaria sentenced an Afghan man to life in prison. The court found the man guilty of stabbing a woman to death in 2017, in part because she had converted from Islam to Christianity. According to the court, the attacker killed the victim, who was also from Afghanistan, in front of her young sons.

On August 31, the Dresden District Court convicted a man charged with bombing a mosque in 2016 of attempted murder, arson, and causing a bomb explosion and sentenced him to nine years and eight months in prison.

In June police reported three men with extreme far-right views attacked a Jewish man from Dortmund, attempting to punch him in the head and insulting him. The victim said he encountered the attackers for a second time that same day, and they again insulted and threatened him and made the Nazi salute. The Dortmund police

intelligence service published a call for witness accounts and launched an investigation, which was ongoing at year's end. Three days earlier, the victim said one of the three men had pushed him and directed anti-Semitic insults at him. At that time, police had verified the identities of alleged perpetrator and victim and were investigating the former for possible charges, including incitement to violence.

In July in Bonn, a 20-year old citizen of Palestinian descent assaulted a visiting Israeli professor from Johns Hopkins University. The attacker, upon seeing the professor, shouted "No Jews in Germany!" and then knocked the yarmulke off his head. When police arrived, the attacker fled the scene. The police mistakenly believed the victim to be the attacker and used force to detain him. Police later apprehended the alleged perpetrator and charged him with incitement of hate and causing bodily harm. They later released him. The Cologne police opened an internal investigation of the Bonn police actions in the incident, and the police officers involved were assigned to desk jobs pending the investigation's results.

In April a group of three men reportedly insulted two men wearing yarmulkes across a street in Berlin. In court, the victims stated their attackers had shouted insults at them in Arabic. A video then showed one of the perpetrators, a Syrian refugee, crossing the street towards one victim, hitting him with a belt, and screaming the Arabic word for Jew. The victim was an Arab-Israeli who had received the yarmulke as a gift. In June the local court in Berlin-Tiergarten sentenced the attacker to four weeks in jail. Since the man had been in pretrial detention for two months, authorities set him free immediately, as they considered the sentence served. The man sought monetary compensation for the excess time he had served in prison, but authorities denied his claim. While his lawyer initially announced in July he would appeal the decision not to compensate him, the lawyer withdrew the appeal in October.

On August 26, the AfD and the group Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West (PEGIDA) organized a peaceful rally in Chemnitz after the killing of a citizen, reportedly by two refugees from Syria and Iraq. Later that day, approximately 800 persons marched in another demonstration in downtown Chemnitz and reportedly shouted anti-immigrant slogans, attempted to attack persons who appeared to be migrants, and clashed with police. On August 27, a group of 12 individuals who yelled "Get out of Germany, you Jewish pig" attacked the Jewish owner of the Schalom restaurant in Chemnitz, throwing rocks and bottles at the restaurant and injuring the owner, before running away. At year's end Chemnitz police were still investigating the case. Saxony Minister-President Michael Kretschmer strongly condemned the attack, which occurred after social

unrest in the city. The same day, according to press reports, approximately 6,000 right-wing demonstrators and 1,500 counterdemonstrators marched in Chemnitz. Newscasts showed demonstrators shouting anti-immigrant slogans and making the Nazi salute. Two police and 18 demonstrators were injured. Because ethnicity and religion are closely linked, it was difficult to categorize the demonstrations as being solely based on religious identity.

In May a 67-year-old man allegedly hit a woman wearing a headscarf in the face at a bus stop in Berlin. The man had asked the woman about the headscarf, and she had told him she was a Muslim and liked to wear it. Police identified a suspect and opened an investigation.

In August the Berlin-Tiergarten local court convicted a 68-year-old woman of committing deliberate bodily harm and insult for hitting a Muslim woman in the face and trying to rip off her headscarf in an incident in January. The victim and her daughter managed to detain the perpetrator until police arrived. The court fined the perpetrator 2,400 euros (\$2,800).

In separate incidents during one week in March, unknown individuals threw Molotov cocktails at a mosque in Berlin, at a Turkish club in Meschede, and at a Turkish greengrocer in Itzehoe. The newspaper *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* reported that, between mid-January and mid-March, individuals carried out 26 attacks on mosques, of which 18 belonged to DITIB. According to the same newspaper, after an attack with Molotov cocktails on a building belonging to the Muslim group Milli Gorus in Laufen-am-Neckar in March, what appeared to be anti-Turkish Kurds said in an online video the attacks were in retaliation for Turkish army raids against the northern Syrian city of Afrin. In a joint statement, DITIB, the Central Council of Muslims, and the Islamic Council expressed the Muslim community's perception that politicians and the public were not taking their concerns about their safety and that of their mosques seriously. At year's end authorities continued to investigate these incidents and had made no arrests.

A Berlin-based Jewish-Israeli restaurant owner who appeared in a 2017 video that received widespread online attention showing him as the target of verbal anti-Semitic aggression received death threats and hate mail, and individuals threw firecrackers at his restaurant. According to a media report in September, hate mail he received filled 31 pages. Police investigated but could not identify any of those sending death threats. In July the man who had initiated the original diatribe against the restaurant owner in 2017 received a seven months' suspended prison sentence.



The Duesseldorf Jewish Community said attendance at two Jewish schools it sponsored in the city had spiked up due to increased anti-Semitism in schools around Duesseldorf. According to the group, the schools, which the NRW government funded, had been established to enable Jewish students to strengthen their Jewish identity. Most students, however, were enrolling because they sought a safe haven from increased bullying due to their Jewish faith. According to NRW Ministry of Education officials, much anti-Semitism in schools came from students' parents and media, and anti-Semitism among Muslim children was particularly difficult to change.

The Catholic Church and the EKD continued to oppose the COS publicly. "Sect commissioners" or "departments on sects and worldview matters" of the EKD and the Catholic Church investigated "sects and cults" and publicized what they considered to be the dangers of these groups. On its website, the EKD Center for Questions of World Views warned the public about what it said were the dangers posed by multiple religious groups, including the COS, the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (Unification Church), Bhagwan-Osho, Transcendental Meditation, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Universal Life, and continued to produce literature criticizing these groups.

A study on discrimination against migrants in the labor market by the Scientific Center Berlin for Social Research released in June reported that Muslims experienced discrimination when looking for a job. According to the study, which included more than 6,000 fictitious job applications, Muslim job applicants were 7 percent less likely to receive a positive answer than Christian applicants with the same qualifications.

In April the Center to Combat Antidiscrimination and Counselling on Racism and Anti-Semitism (SABRA) held an all-day conference on Anti-Semitism and Refugees. The Duesseldorf Jewish Community established SABRA in 2017 as a new service to combat anti-Semitism. SABRA is part of a network of state government-supported organizations throughout NRW that provide services to immigrants to help them integrate into society. Conference participants stated that, although anti-Semitism had always been present in the country, the influx of a large number of mostly Muslim refugees exacerbated anti-Semitism. The program focused on supporting individuals who were victims of anti-Semitism, racism, and discrimination by providing counseling and legal services and helping to resolve cases of discrimination; sponsoring prevention programs in schools; and monitoring incidents of anti-Semitism throughout the state. SABRA also provided

support for victims of anti-Semitic incidents that did not meet the threshold for filing criminal charges.

In November Abraham Lehrer, Vice President of the Central Council of Jews, told media that he expected anti-Semitism among Arab or Muslim immigrants to increase and called for combating anti-Semitism through education. Lehrer said, “Many of these people were influenced by regimes in which anti-Semitism is part of the rationale of the state and the Jewish state is denied the right to existence.” As a remedy, Lehrer proposed integration courses tailored to immigrants’ country of origin, with intensive teaching of such values as democracy and the treatment of women in society.

In December the European Union’s Agency for Fundamental Rights (EU-FRA) released its second survey of Jewish experiences and perceptions of anti-Semitism. EU-FRA targeted Jewish populations through community organizations, Jewish media, and social networks; 1,233 individuals who identified themselves as Jewish residents of Germany responded to the online survey. Twenty-nine percent said they had witnessed other Jews being physically attacked, insulted, or harassed in the previous 12 months, and 41 percent reported being harassed over the same period. Thirty-seven percent said they had felt discriminated against because of their religion or belief. Eighty-nine percent said anti-Semitism had increased during the previous five years.

According to a survey of more than 2,000 German-speaking residents released in September by the Social Science Institute of the Protestant Church, 54 percent did not agree with the statement that “Islam fits into German society,” and 31 percent agreed. While 69 percent agreed that Muslims were part of everyday life in the country, only 27 percent said they were well or very well informed about Islam. A third of respondents approved of Islamic religious instruction in schools.

PEGIDA continued to organize weekly demonstrations in Dresden. Journalists said PEGIDA supporters pushed and threatened them when they were reporting on the demonstrations. On September 3, police detained a PEGIDA demonstrator who had allegedly attacked a journalist, according to Deutschlandfunk online. On September 24, several PEGIDA demonstrators attacked two journalists, hitting one reporter in the face and kicking the other, while other PEGIDA supporters stood nearby and cheered, according to the newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Some members of the crowd then reportedly helped the perpetrators escape. Amid calls to curb immigration, PEGIDA supporters regularly expressed anti-Muslim

sentiments during the rallies, including by carrying posters expressing opposition to women who wear religious head coverings.

The number of participants at PEGIDA marches remained constant at approximately 1,500-2,000 protesters per rally, according to several media reports. An exception was the October 21 rally in Dresden, when 4,500 supporters marked the group's fourth anniversary. On the same day in Dresden, approximately 10,000 persons marched in support of tolerance and against PEGIDA. Among the participants in the counterdemonstration were Saxony Minister-President Kretschmer, Dresden Mayor Dirk Hilbert, and several state ministers. The October 21 demonstrations were largely peaceful, but police reported five incidents of assault. Early in the year AfD parliamentarians gave multiple speeches at PEGIDA rallies. In January the magazine *Der Spiegel* cited AfD Bundestag member Siegbert Droese as stating that in Saxony there was close cooperation between his party and PEGIDA.

In what organizers said was a sign of solidarity with Jews in Germany, hundreds of persons wearing yarmulkes demonstrated against anti-Semitism in several cities around the country, including in Berlin, Cologne, Erfurt, Magdeburg, and Potsdam, in April and May. During the Berlin demonstration, where there were approximately 2,500 participants, authorities reported incidents in which counterprotesters spit on demonstrators, called them terrorists, and violently removed an Israeli banner.

Between May and August Realitaet Islam (Reality Islam), a group that said it aimed to strengthen the Islamic identity of Muslims in the country, campaigned in Frankfurt and other cities in Hesse against a headscarf ban. The group said it targeted young Muslims and had collected more than 140,000 signatures from throughout the country. The Hesse state OPC stated to media on August 29 that, while the campaign itself was not illegal, the group rejected the country's liberal democratic order and was striving for a theocracy, and a "high Islamic radicalization potential" for the group "could not be excluded."

On January 17, approximately 300 persons demonstrated against the construction of a mosque by the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in Erfurt. The AfD leadership in Thuringia supported the demonstration, and state AfD Chairperson Bjoern Hoecke said the mosque's construction was "part of a long-standing land grab project." Mosque opponents subsequently organized a series of smaller demonstrations against the construction. For example, in June David Koeckert, who press reported was a former member of the National Democratic Party, widely

described as a neo-Nazi group, organized an event at an Erfurt market where protestors staged a fake execution, shouting “*Allahu akbar*” (“God is great” in Arabic) and pretending to cut a woman’s throat using imitation blood. Left Party state MP Steffen Dittes called the act disgusting. According to police, authorities filed charges against the organizers for insult and damage to property.

In September demonstrators against the construction of the mosque wore masks depicting what they considered to be stereotypical Middle Eastern faces and “Arab” garb. Numbering fewer than 20 participants, the demonstrators also marched in front of Green Party state MP Astrid Rothe-Beinlich’s home. Rothe-Beinlich criticized local authorities for authorizing a demonstration directly in front of her house, which she described as a personal threat. Authorities permitted the masks’ use, stating there was no violation of the ban on face coverings during demonstrations, because protestors could be identified with their identification documents. Critics stated there was no exception to the ban on face coverings during demonstrations.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim community in Erfurt moved forward with the construction and celebrated the laying of the foundation stone on November 13. The ceremony was accompanied by loud protests from approximately 60 opponents of the mosque, as well as a counterdemonstration by persons calling for religious freedom and tolerance.

Construction of a mosque in Sulzbach, Saarland was ongoing at year’s end. The citizen’s group Sulzbach wehrt sich (Sulzbach Fights Back) continued to protest the construction of the mosque. In April the group organized a protest as well as a concert with the band Kategorie C/Hungrige Wolfe that the OPC said it was monitoring for its connection to right wing extremists. The city tried to prevent the concert in a municipal building, stating the group had misled it in registering the event without the band’s name. The Saarland Higher Administrative Court ruled in April the city had to allow the concert to take place since it could not show sufficient cause for cancelling it. Approximately 200 representatives of political parties, trade unions, and churches protested against the concert.

In June Ruhrtriennale, a cultural festival receiving state financial support in NRW, invited the Scottish band Young Fathers to play a concert. The private company Kultur Ruhr GmbH organizing the festival said it cancelled the appearance when it learned the band supported the BDS movement. The organizers stated they later reversed their decision and reinvited the band so they could publicly explain their views, but the band declined. State Minister of Culture and Science Isabel

Pfeiffer-Poensgen criticized the organizer's reinvitation of the band in a press statement, and the minister-president cancelled his attendance. Jewish organizations criticized the scheduling of a panel discussion at the festival about the BDS debate because it took place on the Sabbath and featured Jewish artists who supported BDS. A Jewish activist, Malca Goldstein-Wolf, organized a demonstration headlined "No support for BDS with taxpayers' money." The demonstration took place in Bochum on August 18, and there were approximately 250 participants.

In August the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel called for a boycott of the Berlin Pop-Kultur Festival, and several artists from the United Kingdom and the United States cancelled their appearances. The Israeli embassy had supported the festival with 1,200 euros (\$1,400) and appeared on the festival's website as a "partner." During the festival, the BDS movement put up posters in Berlin that mimicked the festival's logo, stating "pop culture – sponsored by apartheid." BDS activists also disrupted the festival's opening event.

According to a study the Technical University of Berlin issued in July, anti-Semitic online hate speech reached record levels on social media, blogs, websites' comment sections, and thematically unrelated websites and online forums. The researchers stated that, since online communication was becoming more important, acceptance of anti-Semitism could increase. The study, which distinguished between anti-Semitism and political criticism of Israel, evaluated 30,000 German language online statements made between 2014 and 2018 on Twitter, Facebook, and the comment sections of mainstream media outlets. The study also evaluated 20,000 emails sent to the Israeli embassy in Berlin and the Central Council of Jews in Germany. According to the report authors, between 2007 and 2017, anti-Semitic content in the texts had tripled "in some instances." The study identified an increased use of comparisons of Israel to Nazis; fantasies of violence targeting Jews, e.g., references to asphyxiating Jews in pig excrement and to hunting and killings Jews; and dehumanizing or demonizing characterizations of Jews, such as "pest," "cancer," or "filth." Almost half of the texts used centuries-old anti-Semitic stereotypes, such as portraying Jews as strangers, usurers, exploiters, vindictive intriguers, blood cult practitioners, robbers, and murderers. According to the authors, anti-Semitism related to Israel was encountered in a third of all texts.

In April the German Music Federation awarded rappers Farid Bang and Kollegah, whose songs include anti-Semitic lyrics, the country's Echo music award based on high record sales. Civil society groups, artists, politicians, and Jewish groups

criticized the award. Several musicians who were past recipients of the Echo, returned their awards in protest, and singer Peter Maffay and Foreign Minister Maas both said awarding the prize on Holocaust Remembrance Day was “shameful.” After the award ceremony, 11 persons reported the rappers to police for “incitement of hatred.” In June the Duesseldorf public prosecutor’s office declined to prosecute them. The Duesseldorf prosecutor stated that, while their songs contained anti-Semitic and misogynist lyrics, the lyrics were characteristic of their genre and a form of protected artistic freedom. Following the controversy, the federation revoked the Echo prize given to Farid Bang and Kollegah, and the organizers announced they would discontinue the award.

In April a satirical play based on Adolf Hitler’s book *Mein Kampf* was performed in Constance, Baden-Wuerttemberg. The play’s organizers promised free entry to spectators who wore the swastika, and those who paid for a ticket had to wear a Star of David “as a sign of solidarity with the victims of Nazi barbarism.” Several legal complaints were filed against the theater. Although the law prohibits the public display of Nazi symbols and several legal complaints were reportedly filed against the theater, local prosecutors allowed the theater to present the play and allow free entry for those wearing swastikas, citing free speech laws that permit artistic performances. The region’s German-Israeli Society called for a boycott of the play.

On April 20, approximately 1,300 neo-Nazis gathered in the town of Ostritz in Saxony to commemorate Hitler’s birthday. Thorsten Heise, chairman of the National Democratic Party of Germany, organized the event. On the same date, also in Ostritz, opponents held a peace festival, a counterrally of approximately the same size. Police were present in force, and both events were largely peaceful. According to press reports, one person was slightly injured during scuffles between the opposing groups, and police detained one man for making the Nazi salute. The same organizers organized a neo-Nazi Shield and Sword (SS) rock festival in Ostritz on November 1-4. In another peace festival, approximately 3,000 opponents protested again. Police stopped another right-wing rock concert in Ostritz on December 1, after neighbors reported hearing the participants yell the Nazi slogan, “*Sieg Heil*.” Authorities were investigating the incident at year’s end.

On September 21, an estimated 100 neo-Nazis rallied in Dortmund, NRW, chanting anti-Semitic slogans, such as, “He who loves Germany is anti-Semitic,” and carrying symbols such as the “Reich” flag.

At a Unification Day demonstration on October 3 in Berlin with approximately 2,000 participants, media reported a few participants performed the Nazi salute, and several dozen displayed neo-Nazi tattoos, inscriptions on their clothes, or posters. Several counterdemonstrations with a similar total number of participants took place in Berlin at the same time. All the demonstrations were peaceful.

In May authorities arrested 89-year-old Ursula Haverbeck after she failed to appear to serve her prison sentence for Holocaust denial. In 2017, the Regional Court Verden sentenced Haverbeck to two years' imprisonment after convicting her on eight counts of incitement of hate. In February the Celle Higher Regional Court rejected her appeal. In August the Federal Constitutional Court refused to accept her complaint that Holocaust denial was covered by the protected constitutional right of freedom of expression and not a punishable offense. At year's end, Haverbeck was serving her sentence and publishing messages from prison on her website, Freedom for Ursula.

In May unknown perpetrators spray-painted a swastika on a house in the town of Kirchhain in Hesse and covered commemorative cobblestones for Nazi victims (*Stolpersteine*) with black paint.

According to state authorities and local media, religious establishments in Ulm in Baden-Wuerttemberg experienced increased vandalism over the course of the year. In September unknown individuals painted swastikas and other pro-Nazi symbols or writing on the door and pews of the Protestant cathedral in Ulm. State authorities said they had found similar anti-Semitic graffiti in Ulm and the surrounding area in the preceding months, including at a local synagogue and a Turkish mosque.

In September unknown persons targeted the Al-Nour Mosque in Hamburg, just before its opening, with anti-Muslim graffiti. The mosque was converted from a former Protestant church. According to a mosque official, the mosque had held open days for city residents in an effort to engage with non-Muslims and be as transparent as possible with the project.

In February the Duesseldorf Memorial and Education Center, a museum, research center, and archive of the Holocaust, started a research project aimed at identifying the number of victims in NRW of the November 1938 Pogromnacht (Kristallnacht) pogrom, as well as how the victims had died. The center published a report of its findings on the 80th anniversary of the pogrom, on November 9. The report

detailed the cases of the approximately 127 persons from NRW who lost their lives as a result of the pogroms.

According to local officials, legal proceedings against a bus driver in Emden, Lower Saxony for refusing a pregnant woman wearing a full-face veil onto his bus on three occasions, were continuing at year's end.

In May Hamburg's Jewish Community ordained five rabbis, its first ordination since World War II. Hamburg Mayor and Minister-President Peter Tschentscher (SPD) attended the ceremony.

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

The U.S. embassy and the five consulates general continued to engage closely with the government regarding responses to incidents of religious intolerance. Embassy officials regularly met with the Ministry of Interior's federal government commissioner for Jewish life in Germany and the fight against anti-Semitism. Consulate general officials in Frankfurt and Munich met with the Baden-Wuerttemberg and Bavaria commissioners for anti-Semitism to express concern about anti-Semitism and discuss ways of ensuring anti-Semitic incidents were correctly recorded.

Embassy and consulate general representatives met with members and leaders of numerous local and national religious and civil society groups about their concerns related to freedom of worship. Topics of discussion with Jewish groups included concerns about what they characterized as the growing acceptability of anti-Semitism through the country's changing political landscape (for example, the cooperation of the AfD with extreme right groups, especially in Chemnitz), the rise of the BDS movement, and concern that refugees and other migrants might be bringing concepts of anti-Semitism into the country. Embassy and consulate general representatives also discussed issues pertaining to religious freedom and tolerance with the Catholic, Evangelical, and other Protestant churches; COS; ZMD; Association of Islamic Cultural Centers; the Central Council of Jews in Germany; Coordination Council of Muslims in Germany; Alevi Muslims; Council of Religions Frankfurt; Jehovah's Witnesses; and human rights NGOs.

In January the Charge d'Affaires met with the head representative of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany (Jewish Claims Conference) in Frankfurt am Main to discuss the status of claims negotiations.



In March the embassy sponsored the visit of 11 young Muslim leaders from Berlin and Heilbronn to participate in a program in the United States on community outreach and engagement. Program topics included community efforts to combat violent extremism, particularly of Muslim youth, strengthening civil society and citizen participation, combating hate speech, and developing leadership skills to connect with and engage Muslim youth.

The embassy funded the participation of a U.S. photographer in a photography project titled *A World of Faith – 4 Perspectives on Religion*, in which four photographers presented pictures highlighting aspects of the beliefs of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. A display of the project at a Berlin art gallery in January and February encouraged interreligious dialogue among visitors and media. During a visit to the exhibition, the Charge d’Affaires stressed to organizers the importance of religious freedom and tolerance and commended the gallery and participating photographers for their efforts to promote understanding among people of different faiths.

To commemorate Religious Freedom Day on January 16, the Charge d’Affaires visited the photography exhibition *Religion behind Bars* that discussed religiosity in prison. The embassy supported the exhibition with a travel fund for one of the photographers. During the visit, the Charge stressed the importance of religious tolerance and freedom of religion.

On April 18, the Charge d’Affaires hosted a Celebrate Diversity Month reception for approximately 100 religious, government, and civil society leaders from a variety of backgrounds to encourage them to find common ground and engage in productive dialogue over shared values. In his remarks, the Charge spoke of religious diversity and freedom.

In June the Ambassador discussed Jewish life in the country and the community’s concerns about anti-Semitism and intolerance with Rabbi Gesa Ederberg of the New Synagogue on Oranienburger Street in Berlin and Rabbi Joshua Spinner, Executive Vice President of the Ronald Lauder Foundation in the country.

In July the Ambassador met with the Kreuzberger Initiative against anti-Semitism (KIGA), a Berlin-based NGO that trains students from Kreuzberg (a neighborhood with a high number of Muslim immigrants) to work with students and talk to school classes to promote tolerance and combat anti-Semitism.

In September the Ambassador hosted a screening of Yezidi activist Duezen Tekkal's documentary *Hawar – My Journey to Genocide*, which focused on the atrocities committed by ISIS against the Yezidi people in Iraq in 2014. The Ambassador delivered remarks on the importance of religious freedom and commended the work that Tekkal and fellow Yezidi activist and 2018 Nobel Peace Prize recipient Nadia Murad have done to highlight abuses by ISIS. The Ambassador said the Baden-Wuerttemberg state government's efforts to resettle approximately 2,500 Yezidi women and children were "courageous," and cited it as an example of Germany's commitment to defend religious freedom.

In October the Ambassador hosted a 20th anniversary celebration in honor of international Jewish NGO AJC's Berlin Ramer Institute. In his speech, the Ambassador highlighted the significance of religious freedom and efforts to combat anti-Semitism. He stressed the importance of German government restitution of Jewish property seized in World War II, compensation for Holocaust survivors, and promotion of Holocaust education.

In October the U.S. Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues visited Berlin and Magdeburg and met with representatives of the Jewish community to discuss how to best combat anti-Semitism. In Magdeburg, the special envoy attended a board meeting of the German Lost Art Foundation, which focused on provenance research for art and cultural assets the Nazis confiscated from Jews.

On November 9, the 80th anniversary of the Pogromnacht (Kristallnacht) pogrom, the Ambassador met with the head of Deutsche Bahn's (German Railway's) historical section at the Track 17 memorial, one of three deportation points for Berlin Jews during World War II, and toured the memorial. Embassy officials also cleaned defaced commemorative cobblestones for Nazi victims (*Stolpersteine*) throughout Berlin.

In November the Ambassador participated in a roundtable with KIGA peer trainers and program participants to discuss the importance of tolerance and religious freedom. The Ambassador also listened to the participants' views on KIGA's training, as well as their experiences with combatting anti-Semitism in their communities.

On November 13, the U.S. Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence and State Secretary at the German Ministry of Finance Rolf Bosinger hosted a discussion at the AJC's Berlin Ramer Institute on the U.S. Treasury's role in assisting Jews in Europe during the Holocaust, as well on

Germany's contributions to the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

In November the Charge d'Affaires delivered remarks on religious freedom and the importance of restitution for Holocaust victims and their heirs at the German Lost Art Foundation's Conference. On the margins of the conference, the German government signed a joint declaration with the U.S. government that reaffirmed both governments' commitment to find just and fair solutions for the return of stolen artwork to Holocaust survivors and their heirs.

On December 2, the Ambassador gave remarks on religious tolerance and nondiscrimination at an embassy reception to mark Hanukkah, in advance of an annual menorah lighting ceremony in central Berlin.

The embassy and consulates general provided small cash grants to support programs promoting religious tolerance, such as the Jewish Cultural Days in Halle, Saxony-Anhalt, Jewish Week in Leipzig, Saxony, and Yiddish Summer in Weimar, Thuringia. These events featured music, dancing, film screenings, exhibitions, and speakers that raised awareness about the Jewish community and Jewish culture.