

# UNITED KINGDOM 2018 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

## Executive Summary

In the absence of a written constitution, the law establishes the Church of England as England's state church and the Church of Scotland as Scotland's national church. The law prohibits "incitement to religious hatred" as well as discrimination on the grounds of religion. The government updated the 2016 Hate Plan and committed to spending 1.5 million pounds (\$1.92 million) on educational programs to challenge discriminatory beliefs. The Home Office published an independent review of the application of sharia in England and Wales that included recommendations for legislative changes to bring the treatment of Muslim religious marriages into line with those of other faiths, an awareness campaign highlighting the benefits of civil registration for religious marriages, and a proposal for the government to regulate sharia councils. The main political parties faced numerous accusations of religious bias. Religious and civil society groups, the media, and others accused Conservative Party politicians, including former Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, of anti-Muslim sentiment, and a number of Labour Party politicians, including leader Jeremy Corbyn, faced repeated accusations of anti-Semitism. The Scottish government launched an "Anti-Hate" campaign in an effort to erase sectarianism. The government, a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) since 1998, adopted the IHRA's full working definition of anti-Semitism. In 2017 the London Assembly, Scottish government, and Welsh government also adopted the IHRA's definition. During the year, the Conservative, Labour, and Liberal Democrat Parties adopted the IHRA definition, but the Green Party's ruling body decided against it. The Scottish National Party (SNP) did not clarify whether it has adopted the definition.

The government reported similarly high numbers as the previous year in religiously motivated hate crimes and incidents in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Community Security Trust (CST), a nongovernmental organization (NGO) monitoring anti-Semitism, recorded 1,652 anti-Semitic incidents during the year, the highest it had ever recorded in a single year and an increase of 16 percent, compared with 1,414 incidents in 2017. There were multiple incidents of violence, arson, threats, and vandalism against religious groups. There were incidents of religiously motivated hate speech against Muslims, Jews, and Christians. Such incidents included the assault on and threatening of a man because of his Muslim beliefs, an assault on two female Jewish protesters outside a political event, attacks and vandalism on Sikh temples

and mosques, and a postal campaign encouraging members of the public to “Punish a Muslim.” A number of interfaith initiatives were launched, including the “21 for 21” project, which attempts to identify leaders for the 21st century, seven each from the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities.

U.S. embassy officials engaged with and sponsored speakers to visit religious groups. The embassy recognized October 27 as International Religious Freedom Day on its social media channels, including tweets from the embassy’s account highlighting the International Religious Freedom Act, the 2018 Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, and the statement of the U.S. Secretary of State on the importance of promoting religious freedom and defending vulnerable minorities. On October 29, the Ambassador joined Home Secretary Sajid Javid, Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, and other religious and political leaders at a memorial at a North West London Jewish center for the victims of the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting. The Ambassador joined other speakers in calling for unity against religious hatred.

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

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 65.1 million (October 2018 estimate). Census figures from 2011, the most recent, indicate 59.3 percent of the population in England and Wales is Christian, comprising the Church of England (Anglican), the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian), other Protestant churches, the Roman Catholic Church, and other Christian groups. Of the remaining population, 4.8 percent identified as Muslim; 1.5 percent Hindu; 0.8 percent Sikh; 0.5 percent Jewish; and 0.4 Buddhist. Approximately 25 percent of the population reported no religious affiliation, and 7 percent chose not to answer. The Jehovah’s Witnesses estimates there are 137,000 members in the country, and the Baha’i community estimates it numbers more than 7,000 members.

According to the 2018 British Social Attitudes survey, an annual survey conducted by the independent National Center for Social Research, 53 percent of those surveyed described themselves as having no religion, 15 percent as Anglican, 10 percent as Catholic, and 6 percent as belonging to non-Christian religious groups.

The Muslim community in England and Wales is predominantly of South Asian origin, but it also includes individuals from the Arabian Peninsula, the Levant, Africa, and Southeast Asia, as well as a growing number of converts of European descent. Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, and Buddhists are concentrated in London and other large urban areas, primarily in England.

Census figures for Scotland in 2011 indicate 54 percent of the population is Christian, comprising the Church of Scotland (32 percent), Roman Catholic Church (16 percent), and other Christian groups (6 percent). The Muslim community constitutes 1.4 percent of the population. Other religious groups, which together make up less than 1 percent of the population, include Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, and Buddhists. Persons not belonging to any religious group make up 36.7 percent of the population, and the remainder did not provide information on religious affiliation.

Census figures from Northern Ireland in 2011 indicate 41.5 percent of the population is Protestant – consisting of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland (19 percent), Church of Ireland (14 percent), Methodist Church in Ireland (3 percent), and other Protestant groups (6 percent) – and 41 percent Roman Catholic. Less than 1 percent of the population belongs to non-Christian religious groups, and approximately 10 percent professes no religion; 7 percent did not indicate a religious affiliation.

Census figures from Bermuda in 2010 cite 22 religious groups in the population of 71,000; 78 percent identifies as Christian, including 16 percent Anglican, 15 percent Roman Catholic, 9 percent African Methodist Episcopal, and 7 percent Seventh-day Adventist. Approximately 2 percent identifies with other religious groups, including approximately 600 Muslims, 200 Rastafarians, and 120 Jews. Approximately 20 percent did not identify with or state a religious affiliation.

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

### **Legal Framework**

In the absence of a written constitution, the law establishes the Church of England as England's state church. Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland do not have state religions. Legislation establishes the Church of Scotland as Scotland's national church, but it is not dependent on any government body or the queen for spiritual matters or leadership.

The Human Rights Act 1998 protects freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. It states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with other and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance." The Human Rights Act

reaffirms the European Convention of Human Rights, Article 9, which guarantees freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, subject to certain restrictions that are “in accordance with law” and “necessary in a democratic society.”

As the supreme governor of the Church of England, the monarch must always be a member of, and promise to uphold, that Church. The monarch appoints Church of England officials, including lay and clergy representatives, on the advice of the prime minister and the Crown Appointments Commission. Aside from these appointments, the state is not involved in the Church’s administration. The Church of Scotland is governed by its General Assembly, which has the authority to make the laws determining how it operates.

In England and Wales, the law prohibits religiously motivated hate language and any acts intended to incite religious hatred through the use of words or the publication or distribution of written material. The law defines religious hatred as hatred of a group because of its religious belief or lack thereof. The police are responsible for investigating criminal offenses and for gathering evidence; the Crown Prosecution Service, which is an independent body and the main public prosecution service for England and Wales, is responsible for deciding whether a suspect should be charged with a criminal offense. The maximum penalty for inciting religious hatred is seven years in prison. If there is evidence of religious hostility in connection with any crime, it is a “religiously aggravated offense” and carries a higher maximum penalty than the underlying crime alone. In Scotland the law requires courts to consider the impact of religious bias when sentencing.

By law the General Register Office for England and Wales governs the registration and legal recognition of places of worship in England and Wales. The law also states buildings, rooms, or other premises may be registered as meeting places for religious worship upon payment of a fee; the General Register Office for England and Wales keeps a record of the registration, and the place of worship is assigned a “worship number.” Registration is not compulsory, but it provides certain financial advantages and is also required before a place of worship may be registered as a venue for marriages. Registered places of worship are exempt from paying taxes and benefit from participating in the country’s Gift Aid program. Gift Aid allows charities to claim back the 25 percent basic rate of tax already paid on donations by the donor, boosting the value of a donation by a quarter.

Throughout the country the law requires religious education (RE) and worship for children between the ages of three and 13 in state-run schools, with the content decided at the local level. Specialist schoolteachers, rather than religious groups,

teach the syllabus. Parents may request to exempt their children from RE. At age 13, students themselves may choose to stop RE or continue, in which case they study two religions. Nonreligious state schools require the RE curriculum to reflect “Christian values,” be nondenominational, and refrain from attempts to convert students. It must also teach the practices of other principal religions in the country. Students and, unless they are employed by faith-based schools, teachers may decline participation in collective worship, without prejudice.

Nonreligious state schools in England and Wales are required to practice daily collective prayer or worship of “a wholly or mainly...Christian character.” Schoolteachers lead these assemblies; however, parents have the legal right to request their children not participate in collective prayer or worship. The law permits sixth form students (generally 16- to 19-year-olds in the final two years of secondary school) to withdraw from worship without parental permission or action. Nonreligious state schools are free to hold other religious ceremonies as they choose.

In Scotland only denominational (faith-based) schools practice daily collective prayer or worship; however, religious observance is compulsory in all Scottish schools. Religious observance is defined as “Community acts which aim to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school’s community.” Examples of religious observance include school assemblies and events to recognize religious events, including Christmas, Easter, and Holocaust Memorial Day. Parents can make the decision to opt out their children from this requirement, but children may not make this decision themselves.

In Bermuda the law requires students attending state schools to participate in collective worship, characterized by educational officials as reciting the Lord’s Prayer, but prohibits worship “distinctive of any particular religious group.” At the high school level, students are required to take a course that explores various religions until year 9 (ages 11-14); in years 10 and 11 (ages 15-16), courses on religion are optional.

There are two faith-based private schools in Bermuda that operate from kindergarten through high school. One follows the guidance of the North American division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The other follows principles of the Catholic Church.

The government determines whether to establish a faith-based school when there is evidence of demand, such as petitions from parents, religious groups, teachers, or

other entities. If a faith-based school is not oversubscribed, then the school must offer a place to any child, but if the school is oversubscribed, it may use faith as a criterion for acceptance. Nonstate faith-based schools are eligible to claim “charitable status,” which allows for tax exemptions.

Almost all schools in Northern Ireland receive state support, with approximately 90 percent of students attending Protestant or Catholic schools. Approximately 7 percent of school-age children attend religiously integrated schools with admissions criteria designed to enroll equal numbers of Catholic and Protestant children without the intervention of the state, as well as children from other religious and cultural backgrounds. Students of different faiths are able to attend Protestant and Catholic schools but tend to gravitate toward the integrated schools. These integrated schools are not secular but are “essentially Christian in character and welcome all faiths and none.” RE – a core syllabus designed by the Department of Education, Church of Ireland, and Catholic, Presbyterian, and Methodist Churches – is compulsory in all government-funded schools, and “the school day shall include collective Christian worship whether in one or more than one assembly.” All schools receiving government funding must teach RE; however, students may request to opt out of the classes and collective worship. Catholic-managed schools draw uniquely on the Roman Catholic tradition for their RE, while other schools may draw on world religions.

An estimated 30 sharia councils operate parallel to the national legal system. They adjudicate Islamic religious matters, including religious divorces, which are not recognized under civil law. Participants may submit cases to the councils on a voluntary basis. The councils do not have the legal status of courts, although they have legal status as mediation and arbitration bodies. As such, rulings may not be appealed in the courts.

The law prohibits discrimination on the grounds of “religion or belief” or the “lack of religion or belief.” The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) – a body sponsored by the Department of Education’s Government Equalities Office – is responsible for enforcing legislation prohibiting religious discrimination. The EHRC researches and conducts inquiries into religious and other discrimination in England, Scotland, and Wales. The minister for women and equalities appoints the members. If the commission finds a violation, it may issue a notice to the violator and seek a court order to enforce the notice. The EHRC receives government funds but operates independently. The Northern Ireland equivalent to the EHRC is the Equality Commission.

In Northern Ireland the law bans discrimination on the grounds of religious belief only in employment; however, schools may discriminate on the grounds of religion when recruiting teachers. In the rest of the country, the law prohibits any discrimination, including employment discrimination, based on religious belief, unless the employer can show a genuine requirement for a particular religion.

Citing a limited broadcast spectrum, the law prohibits religious groups from holding national radio licenses, public teletext licenses, more than one television service license, and/or radio and television multiplex licenses, which would allow them to offer multiple channels as part of a single bundle of programming.

Twenty-six senior bishops of the Anglican Church sit in the House of Lords as representatives of the state Church. Known as the Lords Spiritual, they read prayers at the start of each daily meeting and play a full role in the life and work of the upper house.

The law requires visa applicants wishing to enter the country as “ministers of religion” to have worked for at least one of the previous five years as a minister and to have at least one year of full-time experience or, if their religion requires ordination, at least two years of part-time training following their ordination. A missionary must also be trained as such or have worked previously in this role.

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

### **Government Practices**

In the Autumn Budget, Chancellor Phillip Hammond announced 1.7 million pounds (\$2.18 million) of new funding to support Holocaust education. The money was earmarked for coordinating Holocaust survivors’ visits to schools and student visits to concentration camps. The Treasury is designated to work with the Holocaust Education Trust to distribute the funds. This funding is in addition to the 50 million pounds (\$64.02 million) committed to support the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre and Holocaust Memorial, due to be built next to Parliament.

On October 16, the Home Office and the Department for Housing, Communities, and Local Government updated the government’s 2016 Hate Crime Plan. The updated plan includes more than 1.5 million pounds (\$1.92 million) of new funding for educational programs to challenge discriminatory beliefs among young persons. The plan also extended the Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme

from three to four years. During the year, the scheme provided grants to nine churches, 22 mosques, two Hindu temples, and 12 Sikh gurdwaras. Additional new measures include a Law Commission review into hate crime; a nationwide public awareness campaign; specialist training for police call handlers on how to support hate crime victims; an upgrade of the reporting website, True Vision; and roundtables hosted by government ministers on anti-Semitism and anti-Islamic sentiment.

On May 31, a committee led by Lord Bracadale (Alastair Campbell, former Scottish judge) provided to Scottish ministers the final report of the Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation that was tasked in January 2017. The report found adequate provisions under existing law for religion as a “protected characteristic.”

In September the Scottish government together with Police Scotland launched a “Letters from Scotland” advertising campaign to raise awareness of hate crimes and encourage persons to report them. The Catholic Church criticized the Scottish government for not directly addressing sectarian hate crimes in the campaign.

The government continued to provide religious accommodation for employees when it considered such accommodation feasible. Muslim employees of the prison service regularly took time off during their shifts to pray. The prison service recognized the rights of prisoners to practice their faith while in custody. The pastoral needs of prisoners were addressed, in part, through chaplains paid for by the Ministry of Justice, rather than religious groups. All chaplains worked as part of a multifaith team, the size and breakdown of which was determined by the size of the prison and the religious composition of the prisoner population. Prison service regulations stated that “chaplaincy provision must reflect the faith denomination requirements of the prison.”

The military generally provided adherents of minority religious groups with chaplains of their faith. At year’s end, there were approximately 240 recruited chaplains in the armed forces, all of whom were Christian. The armed forces also employed five civilian chaplains as full-time civil servants to care for their Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish, and Muslim recruits. The Armed Forces Chaplaincy Policy Board was reviewing provision of chaplaincy for personnel of these religions and considering employing suitable chaplains in the reserve forces.

In February the Home Office published an independent review into the application of sharia in England and Wales. The review, commissioned in October 2015 and



launched in May 2016, provided three recommendations. The independent review panel recommended amendments be made to the Marriage Act 1949 and the Matrimonial Act 1973. These changes would “ensure that civil marriages are conducted before or at the same time as the Islamic marriages, in line with Christian and Jewish marriages in the eyes of the law.” The review stated the closure of sharia councils was not a viable option. Sharia councils are predominantly used by Muslim women seeking a religious divorce, in some cases because their religious marriages were never registered civilly, rendering civil divorce unavailable to them. The report also recommended the introduction of awareness campaigns, educational programs, and other similar measures to “encourage communities to acknowledge women’s rights in civil law, especially in areas of marriage and divorce.” The report also proposed the creation of a body that would set up the process for councils to regulate themselves. This regulation would require sharia councils to accept and implement a code of practice established by the regulatory body.

The Home Office responded to the independent panel’s recommendations stating, “We will not be taking forward the review’s recommendation to regulate sharia councils. Sharia law has no jurisdiction in the UK, and we would not facilitate or endorse regulation, which could present councils as an alternative to UK laws.”

As of January 2017 there were 6,814 state-funded faith-based schools in England. Of these, 6,177 were primary schools (ages three through 11), representing 37 percent of all state-funded primary schools, and 637 secondary schools (ages 11 through 16), representing 19 percent of all state-funded secondary schools. Church of England schools were the most common type among primary schools (26 percent); Roman Catholic schools were the most common at secondary level (9 percent). Additionally, at the primary and secondary levels, there were 26 Methodist, two Greek Orthodox, one Quaker, one Seventh-day Adventist, one United Reform, 145 other Christian, 48 Jewish, 27 Muslim, 11 Sikh, and five Hindu state-funded schools. There were 370 government-funded denominational schools in Scotland: 366 Catholic, three Episcopalian, and one Jewish. The government classified schools with links to the Church of Scotland as nondenominational.

On the centenary of the legislation that brought Catholic schools into Scotland’s state education system, in June First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced a 450 percent increase to 127,000 pounds (\$163,000) in funding for a Catholic teaching program so that more individuals could acquire a Catholic Teaching Certificate allowing them to teach at a Catholic school.

The government continued to require schools to consider the needs of different religious groups when setting dress codes for students. This included wearing or carrying specific religious artifacts, not cutting hair, dressing modestly, or covering the head. Guidance from the Department of Education required schools to balance the rights of individual students against the best interests of the school community as a whole; it noted schools could be justified in restricting individuals' rights to manifest their religion or beliefs when necessary, for example, to promote cohesion and good order.

In April the Department of Education dropped plans to require providers of out-of-school education to register with local authorities, following a reported personal intervention by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The proposals, which aimed to safeguard children from the risk of extremism, would have subjected religious organizations to government regulations and inspections. The plans would have affected Christian Sunday schools and Muslim madrassas. Groups including the Evangelical Alliance, Christian Institute, and Christian Concern expressed their opposition to the proposals. The Department of Education received approximately 18,000 responses during its three-month consultation period (November 2015-January 2016), many of which were from faith groups stating concern over the proposed regulation.

In January press reported that a North London coroner withdrew a special arrangement for the Jewish community in October 2017. Under the arrangement in effect since January 2015, the remains of Jews who died at home in North London could be sent directly to a specified funeral home, rather than a public mortuary. Coroner Mary Hassell stated that a North London synagogue and burial society had made one of her officers feel bullied and persecuted during a previous postmortem examination. In response, Stamford Hill's Adath Yisroel Synagogue and Burial Society said the policy was "unlawful" and called for Hassell's removal. Religious groups brought a legal challenge, and in April the High Court declared Hassell's policy unlawful and ordered her to change it. In July Hassell made a public apology and requested input from religious groups in crafting a new policy.

In Scotland, a law that criminalized religious hatred where it was connected to soccer matches was repealed on April 20. New charges that would previously have been reported under that law would henceforth be reported as a different offense with a religious aggravation. All ongoing charges under the former law were amended to reflect the change in statutes.

In August a Scottish judge blocked the deportation of a Malaysian Christian woman on religious grounds after she stated she had come to the country to flee Islamist persecution. The presiding Judge Lady Clark held that the woman's life would be in danger if she were to return to Malaysia.

In May the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) wrote an open letter to the chairman of the Conservative Party demanding an inquiry into "Islamophobia" within the party. In the letter, the MCB asked the party to launch an independent inquiry, publish a list of incidents, institute an education program, and make a public commitment to stamp out bigotry. The letter named Conservative Member of Parliament (MP) Bob Blackman as "fostering Islamophobia." It listed examples of politicians who had "liked" or reposted anti-Muslim social media posts and pages or had ties to anti-Muslim and far-right groups. In August a petition demanding an independent inquiry into "Islamophobia" in political parties reached more than 30,000 signatures in two days. The petition asked the parliament to adopt the steps proposed by the MCB.

In June two Conservative councilors were suspended following allegations of anti-Muslim comments on social media. Councilor Linda Freedman of Barnet in North London appeared to express support for the detention of Muslims on Twitter. Councilor Ian Hibberd of Southampton posted derogatory comments under a photograph of a fellow councilor wearing Sikh religious dress.

In August former Foreign Secretary and Conservative MP Boris Johnson wrote an opinion piece in *The Telegraph* newspaper in which he compared fully veiled Muslim women to "letter boxes" and "bank robbers." Johnson faced criticism from a range of voices within his party, the opposition, and civil society. Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party Theresa May and the chairman of the Conservative Party, Brandon Lewis, both called on Johnson to apologize for his comments. Labour Party Shadow Equalities Minister, MP Naz Shah, labeled the comments as "ugly and naked Islamophobia." The chairman of the Conservative Muslim Forum accused Johnson of "pandering to the far right." In December an independent panel cleared Johnson of breaking the Conservative Party's code of conduct. The panel found that while his comments could be considered provocative, it would be "unwise to censor excessively," adding that Conservative Party rules do not "override an individual's right to freedom of expression."

The Labour Party and its leader, Jeremy Corbyn, faced further allegations of anti-Semitism. The CST recorded 148 incidents during the year that were examples of,

or related to arguments over, alleged anti-Semitism within the Labour Party. In April the Labour Party was internally investigating 90 cases of anti-Semitism among its members. In April Corbyn wrote an article published in the *London Evening Standard* newspaper stating that the number of cases of anti-Semitism over the past three years represented less than 0.1 percent of Labour's membership. In response, *BBC Reality Check* calculated that from 2015 to 2018, there were more than 300 complaints regarding anti-Semitism in the party, approximately half of those leading to expulsions. In March press reported that in 2012, Corbyn showed support for a mural depicting "Jewish bankers playing monopoly on the backs of the poor." In response, two major Jewish groups – the Jewish Leadership Council and the Board of Deputies of British Jews – wrote an open letter to the Labour Party and organized a demonstration in Parliament Square. Corbyn later apologized, saying he did not properly look at the picture before arguing that the art should not be removed. Labour MPs joined the British Jewish community in a 2,000-person protest against anti-Semitism within the party.

In April Labour expelled a party member for heckling a Jewish MP at the launch of an anti-Semitism report in 2016. Former Labour Party member and activist Marc Wadsworth accused MP Ruth Smeeth of working "hand-in-hand" with the right-wing newspapers. Wadsworth was expelled two years later by the party's National Constitution Committee for breaching party rules.

In May former London Mayor Ken Livingstone announced his resignation from the Labour Party after being suspended by the party for two years over allegations of anti-Semitism. The Labour Party first suspended Livingstone in 2016 after he said in a radio interview that Hitler had supported Zionism and announced in March that his suspension had been extended following another formal investigation over anti-Semitism. He continued to dispute the allegations.

In July Labour MP Naz Shah was appointed Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities. In 2016 Shah lost the party whip position and was barred from party activity for three months following comments on Facebook in which she appeared to liken Israeli policies to those of Hitler and suggested Israel should be moved to the United States. In January 2017, following a meeting with the Bradford Board of Deputies, a leading Jewish organization, its president, Jonathan Arkush, supported her, saying, "[Shah] is one of the only people involved in Labour's anti-Semitism crisis who has sought to make amends for her actions, and for this we commend her and now regard Naz as a sincere friend of our community."

In December Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt ordered an independent, global review of the persecution of Christians of all nationalities. The Foreign Office review was to be led by Bishop of Truro Philip Mountstephen and was to make recommendations to the government to better support those under threat. The review was due by April 21 (Easter) 2019.

The government, a member of the IHRA since 1998, adopted the full working definition of anti-Semitism in 2016, and the Crown Prosecution Service used it to assess potential prosecutions for anti-Semitic hate crimes. In 2017 the London Assembly, Scottish government, and Welsh government also adopted the IHRA's definition. In July the Conservative Party adopted the IHRA definition and amended its code of conduct to include an interpretive annex on discrimination, which refers to the IHRA definition. The Liberal Democrats Party adopted the definition in September. *The Guardian* newspaper reported that the Green Party's ruling body discussed adopting the definition as part of an internal review but decided against it. The SNP did not clarify whether it had adopted the IHRA definition, but a spokesperson pointed out that the Scottish government, which is ruled by the SNP, adopted the definition in 2017.

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

According to Home Office figures for the 12 months ending in March, there were 8,336 religiously motivated hate crimes recorded in England and Wales – 9 percent of total hate crimes – a 40 percent increase over the 5,949 crimes in the previous year. There was no breakdown by type of crime. Home Office statisticians said the increase likely reflected both a genuine rise in hate crime and ongoing improvements in crime recording by the police. Figures rose sharply in March 2017 and March 2018; however, police record crime data on a UK financial year basis (April-March), and there are commonly “increases” in March of each year as police reconcile their annual data. There was also a sharp increase in religiously motivated hate crime in June 2017, which the Home Office linked to the ISIS terrorist attacks in May and June.

In July Tell MAMA, a national project that records anti-Muslim hate crimes, released its annual report for 2017. The report showed the highest number of anti-Muslim incidents since its launch in 2012. In 2017 Tell MAMA recorded a total of 1,330 reports, of which 1,201 were verified as being anti-Muslim in nature. More than two-thirds (839) of the verified incidents, a 30 percent increase compared with 2016, did not occur online. Online reports accounted for one-third of the total incidents in 2017, a 16.3 percent increase from the previous year. Consistent with

previous years, incidents that were not online took place within public areas such as parks and shopping areas. Public transport was the second most common place for incidents to take place. The report stated there was “a sharp increase in hate crime in June 2017 following terrorist attacks in May and June.”

In November Tell MAMA released its interim report for the first six months of 2018. During this time, a total of 685 incidents were reported, of which 608 were verified as being anti-Muslim. Of the total number of incidents, 65.9 percent (401) were offline, or street-based, and 34 percent (207) occurred online. The report noted 59.9 percent (124) of the online incidents took place on Twitter, 23.6 percent (49) on Facebook, and the rest on platforms including YouTube and Instagram. Abusive behavior formed the majority of incidents that were not online, and accounted for 45.3 percent (182) records. More than half the victims were Muslim women, accounting for 58 percent (233) of incidents where gender data was available.

In Scotland the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service reported 642 religiously motivated crimes in the 12 months ending in March, a 5 percent decrease (678 in the previous year). The most recent figures included 319 anti-Catholic crimes (384), 174 anti-Protestant crimes (165), 115 anti-Muslim crimes (113), and 21 anti-Semitic crimes (23). Cases did not add up to the total number reported as some of the crimes related to conduct that targeted more than one religious group. In the year ending in March, court proceedings commenced in 85 percent of cases.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) reported 41 religiously motivated hate crimes committed in 38 incidents during 2017-18, a 46 percent increase from the previous period. The PSNI cited 52 other religiously motivated incidents in the same period that did not constitute crimes, an increase of 31 over the previous year.

The CST recorded 1,652 anti-Semitic incidents during the year – the highest in a calendar year. For the 2018 calendar year, incidents targeted Jewish public figures (82, compared with 18 in 2017), Jewish schools (40), synagogues (66), Jewish homes (130), and Jewish community organizations, communal events, or commercial property (221). The CST categorized 122 incidents as assaults. Almost three quarters of the incidents occurred in the main Jewish centers of greater London and greater Manchester, 950 and 145, respectively. The CST recorded 384 incidents of anti-Semitism on social media, constituting 23 percent of

the overall total of incidents, an increase of 54 percent, compared with 249 in 2017.

According to CST, the sustained high levels of anti-Semitic incidents reported may have resulted in part from improvements in information collection, including better reporting from victims and witnesses as a result of growing communal concern about anti-Semitism; an increase in the number of security guards (many of whom the government funded through a CST-administered grant to provide security at Jewish locations); and ongoing improvements to CST's information sharing with police forces around the country. While CST stated there was no clear trigger event, months in which the CST recorded a higher number of incidents correlated with the political and media debate over allegations of anti-Semitism within the Labour Party. The CST recorded 148 incidents that were examples of, or linked to, the Labour Party. The CST also stated that higher monthly totals in April and May might have been partly influenced by reactions to violence on the Gaza-Israel border. According to the CST, this sustained high number of anti-Semitic incidents suggested a longer-term phenomenon in which persons with anti-Semitic views appeared to be more confident expressing their views. The CST stated that identifying the ethnicity or religious beliefs of anti-Semitic offenders was difficult, since many incidents involved brief public encounters or, in the case of online statements, no face-to-face contact at all. The CST received a description of the ethnic appearance of an offender in 30 percent (502) of the 1,652 incidents reported. Of these, 60 percent (300) were described as white - European; 15 percent (73) as Black; 13 percent (64) as South Asian; and 9 percent (44) as Arab or North African; and 4 percent (18) as white - South European.

In January the Chelsea Football Club (FC) announced a new campaign to raise awareness of anti-Semitism and its consequences, after fans chanted anti-Semitic abuse at a game in late 2017. Days after Chelsea FC announced its initiative to combat anti-Semitism by its fans, in February some of its supporters were caught singing anti-Semitic songs during a game. In April Chelsea FC sent a delegation of 150 staff and supporters to Auschwitz for the annual March of the Living, a trip described by Chelsea FC's chairman, Bruce Buck, as "important and effective." In October Chelsea FC owner Roman Abramovich announced plans to continue the initiative by sending anti-Semitic supporters on educational trips to Auschwitz, rather than banning them from attending games. Buck told *The Sun*, "This policy gives them a chance to realize what they've done, to make them want to behave better." On October 10, Chelsea FC previewed a film at the Houses of Parliament aimed at raising awareness of the consequences of anti-Semitism, through interspersing images of offensive chants and social media posts alongside images

from the Holocaust. The club's website states, "We are just trying to make a dent in the anti-Semitism in this world. Over time, we hope to make a real contribution for good to society."

Paul Golding and Jayda Fransen, respectively the leader and deputy leader of Britain First, a nationalist party widely described as far right, appeared separately in court in January in response to charges lodged in November 2017 over their allegedly inciting hatred with anti-Islamic remarks made at the "Northern Ireland against Terrorism" rally, held in Belfast in August 2017. The pair were due in court in April 2018, but the trial was postponed after they were imprisoned in England for similar crimes. As of year's end, no date had been set for the trial to resume.

In March the leaders of Britain First were jailed over anti-Muslim hate crimes. In May 2017 authorities charged them with causing religiously aggravated harassment in connection with a trial of four Muslim men, at least three of whom were migrants from Afghanistan, accused of gang-raping a 16-year-old girl. Authorities stated that during the trial of the four men, Britain First leaders Paul Golding and Jayda Fransen had distributed leaflets, posted videos, and harassed individuals who they believed were associated with the accused rapists. On October 17, Golding and Fransen were found guilty of "religiously aggravated harassment," Golding on one charge and Fransen on three. Golding was sentenced to 18 weeks in prison and Fransen to 36 weeks. Facebook deleted the pages of Britain First in the following days, stating the posts had "crossed the line and became hate speech designed to stir up hatred against groups in our society."

In September the Local Government Commissioner for Standards suspended independent Belfast Councilor Jolene Bunting for four months after she helped Britain First deputy leader Jayda Fransen send a video message from the lord mayor's chair. In the video, Fransen referred to a speech she gave in August 2017, where she made anti-Muslim comments. In addition to the PSNI investigation of the incident, the local government commissioner was investigating 14 other complaints, including comments she made about Islam.

In March an individual sent letters promoting "Punish a Muslim Day" to mosques in England and Wales, South Asian Members of Parliament, and members of the government, including Prime Minister May. Similar letters, sent in 2016, targeted former Prime Minister David Cameron and Queen Elizabeth II. In 2017 similar letters were sent to mosques around the country. The letters assigned points to specific acts of violence, from awarding 25 points for removing a Muslim



woman's headscarf to 1,000 points for bombing a mosque. Politicians from across the political divide condemned the letters. Following an Urgent Question raised by MP Yasmin Qureshi in the House of Commons, Home Office Minister MP Victoria Atkins called on Muslims to report this letter, or similar communications, to the police. The minister also confirmed the government would revise its Hate Crime Action Plan by introducing new measures, including a wide-ranging law commission review into hate crime, increased funding for places of worship, and the launch of a new public awareness campaign. In June David Parnham, a local government employee from central England, was arrested following fingerprint and DNA evidence. In October Parnham pleaded guilty to creating and sending the letters with the intention of terrorizing Muslims; Parnham faced a potential life sentence.

In March staff at a Belfast library received "threatening phone calls" following an event planned to mark the birth of Belfast-born former Israeli President Chaim Herzog. The Israeli ambassador attended the event organized by the Northern Ireland Friends of Israel, which occurred without incident. Following the event, former First Minister of Northern Ireland Arlene Foster called for political parties in the region to unite against anti-Semitism.

In April the Glasgow High Court sentenced Connor Ward of Banff to life imprisonment for planning terror attacks against mosques. In October Ward appealed his conviction, which the Edinburgh Court of Criminal Appeal rejected on December 13.

In April a group calling itself "Generation Sparta" distributed anti-Muslim leaflets in the lower Ravenhill Road area of Belfast, warning against the "Islamification" of Northern Ireland and calling for Catholics and Protestants to unite against the "common threat" of "fanatical Islamists." Belfast City Councilor Jolene Bunting defended the incident, which was widely condemned by political parties and was being investigated by the PSNI.

In April a court in Airdrie fined Mark Meechan, who posted online videos of a pet dog taught to perform Nazi salutes, 800 pounds (\$1,000). Meechan recorded his partner's dog responding to statements such as "gas the Jews" and "siege heil" by raising its paw. Meechan posted these videos on YouTube in 2016. Meechan reacted to the verdict saying, "It's the juxtaposition of having an adorable animal react to something vulgar that was the entire point of the joke."

In May police investigated two incidents of anti-Semitic graffiti at Mearns Castle High School in the suburbs of Glasgow. Mearns Castle is a receiving high school for Calderwood Lodge, Scotland's only Jewish primary school.

In June a man was jailed for threatening to "slit a Muslim's throat" on Twitter. Twitter users reported Rhodenne Chand to police after they said they feared he would carry out his threat. Chand told police he was "venting" in the wake of the ISIS-inspired terrorist attacks in Manchester and London. He had written 32 tweets between the Manchester Arena bombing and his arrest in June 2017, including wanting to "slit Muslim's throat." West Midlands police said some of Chand's tweets, which had since been taken offline, encouraged violence against Muslims and called for mosques to be attacked. Upon his arrest, Chand told officers he "felt disgusted at himself for writing the posts." Chand was jailed for 20 months.

In June supporters of English Defence League founder Tommy Robinson – real name Stephen Yaxley-Lennon – performed Nazi salutes at a violent protest in London. Demonstrations against Robinson's jail sentence took place in various cities across the country. In London a man was filmed repeatedly saluting while holding a banner with anti-Muslim messaging. In Belfast, another supporter was photographed displaying the Nazi salute. Robinson was serving a 13-month sentence in prison, but a court of appeals overturned the verdict in August and ordered a retrial. In October the judge, retrying Robinson for contempt of court, referred the case to the attorney general, stating that in the current setting, lawyers would not be able to perform an appropriate cross-examination of the testimony and evidence given by Robinson in his own defense. By referring the case to the attorney general, Robinson's contempt charges could be heard in an adversarial setting, in which a lawyer could present evidence and question witnesses to make the case. Robinson was released on bail. The attorney general had responsibility for deciding whether to send the case to the High Court or drop the contempt proceedings. There was no timeline for the decision to be made, and the case remained pending at year's end.

Police were investigating a video showing England football fans making Nazi salutes during the World Cup in June. The video showed two fans performing a Nazi salute and singing a fascist chant while in a bar.

In July an individual spat on a Scottish priest twice as he spoke to parishioners outside a Catholic church in Glasgow. Another man carrying a pole then further insulted and lunged at the priest. The Orange Walk parade, an annual march held

by the Protestant fraternal order Orange Order, was passing by at the time of the incident. Police Scotland investigated the incident; the Grand Orange Lodge of Scotland said none of its members was responsible. Later, police charged a 24-year-old man with aggravated assault linked to the incidents. The attack drew condemnation from all sides of the political debate. In August in Glasgow, the Council banned the Orange Order from walking past the church. Police Scotland welcomed the move to reroute the parade.

In August two women, Emma Storey and Lois Evans, were convicted of assaulting a man because of his Islamic beliefs near Middlesbrough in northeast England. The two women held and beat the victim while shouting that they hated Muslims. Evans threatened to kill the victim. The court was shown footage of the assault, filmed on Storey's cell phone. Storey was sentenced to three years and four months, and Evans was sentenced to two years and eight months in prison.

In August an individual set fire to the doors of the Guru Nanak Gurdwara, a Sikh temple in Edinburgh, causing smoke damage to the temple. The gurdwara is situated in a former church and is the only Sikh center in the Scottish capital, serving a community of more than 500 Sikhs. The Church of Scotland released a short statement expressing its "deepest sympathy" to Edinburgh's Sikh community. Police arrested a 49-year-old man who had "issues with religion" in connection with the attack.

In August, in Birmingham, armed police were called to two mosques after perpetrators smashed windows using a "heavy-duty catapult" during evening prayers. The attacks, reportedly led worshippers to believe they were under attack by a gunman. No arrests were made.

In September a Swansea FC fan was banned from games for three years and sentenced to a 12-month probation period for making a Nazi salute during a game against Tottenham Hotspur FC. Tottenham's Director Jon Reuben captured the salute on camera.

In October *ITV Tyne Tees* discovered a Facebook group named "Bishop Auckland Against Islam" and reported it to Durham police. The Facebook group featured posts praising acts of violence against Muslims, with suggestions that Muslims should be killed for their religious beliefs. Facebook removed the page.

In October attackers beat and kicked two female Jewish protesters outside a "Corbyn, Antisemitism, and Justice for Palestine" event hosted by a pro-Corbyn

group in Islington, North London. One of the protesters was pulled to the ground and kicked repeatedly in the head by two women. The victim sustained minor head injuries. The protesters were asked by their attackers to cease filming the doorway to the event and were reportedly shouting “shame on you” as the women turned to enter the venue. It was not clear if the attackers were attending the Corbyn-hosted event.

In October police investigated a possible hate crime in Newtownards by a group dressed as Ku Klux Klan members, including an image posted on social media of the group in a threatening pose outside the town’s Islamic Centre. In 2017 a pig’s head was placed outside the same center.

Numerous individuals expressed complaints concerning an article in *The Sunday Times* newspaper in October by Rod Liddle for suggesting that British Islamists should “blow themselves up” in East London. The Independent Press Standards Organisation confirmed that it was processing the complaints but did not provide further information. Labour MP Anna Turley called the article “deeply insulting,” and Tell MAMA accused Liddle of Islamophobia.

In November a young boy required hospitalization after he was punched in the eye and grabbed by the mouth by a couple on a bus in Wales after his mother told them she was born in Israel. According to a bystander, the couple appeared to be intoxicated, and the man used “verbal anti-Semitic abuse” when he found out she was Israeli. Police were searching for the perpetrators.

In December the Arsenal Football Club investigated allegations of anti-Semitic behavior by fans during a game against Tottenham, including offensive chants and gestures.

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; 4,731 individuals who identified themselves as Jewish residents responded to the online survey. Twenty-four percent said they had witnessed other Jews being insulted, harassed, or physically attacked in the previous 12 months, and 25 percent reported being harassed over the same period. Seventeen percent of respondents said they had felt discriminated against because of their religion or belief; 88 percent thought anti-Semitism had increased over the previous five years.

A number of interfaith organizations operated in the country, including Faith Matters, the Inter Faith Network, and Interfaith Scotland. Various interfaith efforts took place throughout the year. In May Muslim leaders ran a full-page advertisement in *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper condemning anti-Semitism. Leaders of groups including Faith Matters, the Association of British Muslims, and Tell MAMA signed the advertisement. The advertisement read, “We understand that many in our country empathise with the Palestinians and their right to a sovereign state. However, we must be ever vigilant against those who cynically use international issues to vilify Jews or promote anti-Semitic tropes.” The Board of Deputies of British Jews praised the advertisement, tweeting, “Incredible solidarity.... Thank you. Together we will defeat the twin evils of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hate.” A week earlier, the Board of Deputies joined Tell MAMA in condemning Islamophobia following the release of its annual report.

In March Interfaith Glasgow won third prize in the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week for its program, “Friendship, Dialogue, Cooperation: Exploring Crucial Elements of Interfaith Harmony.” The group promotes positive engagement between persons of different religious traditions in Scotland’s most religiously diverse city.

In July Christian, Muslim, and Jewish groups joined to launch the “21 for 21” interfaith collaboration. The project, in collaboration with three media outlets – *The Jewish News*, *The Church Times*, and Muslim TV – was termed a “search for 21 leaders for the 21st century.” Seven Christians, seven Jews, and seven Muslims were to be chosen from a range of nominees. Winners would be presented with prizes at a reception at Lambeth Palace, the official residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In September local chapters of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association and the Quakers in Peterborough in Cambridgeshire organized an interfaith conference.

In October the Anglican Diocese of Oxford extended an invitation to a Muslim scholar to preach at a Eucharist service. In response to criticism, a spokesperson for the Diocese of Oxford said the imam “is not the first person from another faith community to be invited to preach the University Sermon. His presence on Sunday reflects the strong commitment of the Church, university, and other faith communities to interfaith engagement.”

In November Interfaith Scotland celebrated Scottish Interfaith Week through a series of events and competitions, including a launch event focused on women of

faith in the suffragette movement and creative competition targeted at school students and local communities.

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

In April U.S. embassy consular officials hosted members of the Jewish community to discuss religious funerals and ways in which the embassy could assist. Specific areas of concern included coroners refusing to work “out-of-hours” and intrusive post-mortems.

The embassy used social media channels to promote the recognition of International Religious Freedom Day on October 27, including tweets highlighting the International Religious Freedom Act, the 2018 Ministerial, and the Secretary of State’s statement on the importance of promoting religious freedom and defending vulnerable minorities. Similarly, the embassy used social media to call attention to International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27. On October 29, the Ambassador joined Home Secretary Sajid Javid, Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, and other religious and political leaders at a memorial in honor of the victims of the Pittsburgh Synagogue shooting at a North West London Jewish center. The Ambassador joined other speakers in calling for unity against religious hatred.

In November the Department of State and the UK’s Department for International Development cohosted a dialogue titled “Protecting Vulnerable Religious Minorities in Conflict and Crisis Settings,” at Wilton Park, Surrey.

In early December the Ambassador invited a local rabbi to light the menorah in observance of Hanukkah at a ceremony in the embassy. Also in December embassy officials sponsored a speaker to address a gathering at the London Central Mosque. The theme of the event was “diversity in the workplace” and specifically focused on diversity of religion in the working environment.

The U.S. Consulate General in Belfast continued to regularly engage Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim religious leaders to discuss challenges in their communities, including those pertaining to religious freedom and tolerance.