

THE NETHERLANDS 2021 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution prohibits religious discrimination and protects the freedom of individuals to profess their religion or belief. It is a crime to engage in public speech inciting religious hatred. Parliament continued to pressure the government to counter foreign funding of mosques and Islamic institutions in an effort to stop the influence of Salafist and radical ideas. Authorities rarely enforced the law banning full-face coverings in schools, hospitals, public transportation, and government buildings. Local and national security officials said they continued to work with Jewish and Muslim communities to increase security at religious sites. Politicians from some political parties made anti-Islam statements during the year that were protected by constitutional provisions on free speech. Government ministers spoke out against antisemitism. In April, Eddo Verdoner became the country's first National Coordinator for Countering Antisemitism. In September, Justice Minister Ferdinand Grapperhaus announced that Holocaust denial would explicitly become a punishable offense under the law and King Willem-Alexander unveiled the National Holocaust Memorial of Names in Amsterdam. During the International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism in October, Deputy Prime Minister Karin Ollongren announced the country would host the headquarters of the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure and help finance its establishment. In September, leading Jewish organizations called on parliamentary parties to speak out against the use of Holocaust comparisons in political debates and messaging in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In March and June, Education Minister Ingrid van Engelshoven announced updates to the national artwork restitution policy which would end the "balancing principle" that weighed the interests of museums against claimants in deciding restitution cases. The Minister also announced the allotment of 1.5 million euros (\$1.70 million) annually for four years to support restitutions and to restart provenance research.

Government and nongovernmental organizations reported hundreds of anti-Muslim and antisemitic incidents involving nonlethal violence, threats, harassment, discrimination, hate speech, and vandalism, although the data collected by agencies often differed because of varied reporting, collection, and analysis methods. The editor-in-chief of a prominent daily issued a statement in April in which he apologized for publishing a caricature depicting a Jewish political pollster and entrepreneur as a puppet master. An unknown assailant vandalized a kosher

restaurant in Amsterdam in February, the eighth incident targeting the restaurant since 2018. The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights (NIHR), an independent government advisory body, received 22 complaints of religious discrimination in 2020 (the most recent information available), mostly in the workplace, compared with 26 in 2019. Police registered 517 antisemitic incidents in 2020 (the most recent information available) compared to 768 in the previous year. Of those incidents, 17 involved vandalism (swastikas or antisemitic texts sprayed on property and Jewish monuments) and 27 involved some form of violence. Some observers attributed the decrease in complaints to the COVID-19 pandemic-related reduction in the number of public gatherings, for example sports events, where antisemitic incidents tended to occur. Antisemitic chanting continued at soccer matches, despite agreements between authorities, the Royal Netherlands Soccer Association (KNVB), soccer clubs, and the Anne Frank Foundation to discourage antisemitic behavior at those events. The Jewish community again stated it was concerned about increasing antisemitism. In September, the Brussels-based NGO Action and Protection League issued the results of its European antisemitism survey, which found that 2 percent of 1,000 respondents ages 18-75 in the Netherlands said they had negative feelings towards Jews. In 2020, police registered 180 incidents of other forms of religious discrimination, most of which targeted Muslims, compared with 225 incidents in 2019. Municipal antidiscrimination boards registered more overall incidents in 2020 (391) than in 2019 (297), 79 percent of which involved anti-Muslim discrimination. Monitoring organizations said there was a further increase in anti-Muslim hate speech online and that many instances of workplace discrimination against Muslims were directed at women wearing headscarves. Muslim women wearing niqabs or burqas reported they were subjected to increased physical and verbal abuse in locations where the full-face covering ban did not apply, such as parks and shops.

The U.S. embassy in The Hague and the consulate general in Amsterdam emphasized the importance of supporting all faiths and engaging in interfaith dialogue in both formal meetings and informal conversations with government officials from multiple ministries and with parliamentarians. Embassy and consulate general representatives discussed religious freedom issues with leaders of several different faith communities and a broad range of civil society groups. U.S. officials met with the Dutch Jewish Council (CJO) regarding cooperation with the Jewish community on Holocaust restitution and reparations efforts. The embassy and consulate general highlighted the need for religious tolerance and interfaith understanding and discussed issues of religious integration and countering violent extremism in outreach to youth, academics, religious leaders, and organizations from various faith traditions. During these meetings, embassy

representatives discussed religious freedom issues, including the ban on full face coverings and the importance of safeguarding halal and kosher slaughter and religious education.

Section I. Religious Demography

The Netherlands, along with the Dutch Caribbean islands of Aruba, Curacao, and Sint Maarten, form the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The U.S. government estimates the total population of the Netherlands at 17.3 million (midyear 2021). In a 2019 survey (the most recent available), Statistics Netherlands, the official source for government statistics, reported that 54 percent of the population age 15 or older in the Netherlands declared no religious affiliation, 20 percent identified as Roman Catholic, 15 percent as Protestant (6 percent Reformed, 2.9 percent Calvinist, and 5.6 percent unspecified Protestant), 5 percent as Muslim, and 6 percent as “other,” including Hindus, Jews, Buddhists, and Baha’is.

The U.S. government estimates the total population of Curacao at 151,900 (midyear 2021). According to 2011 census data, 72.8 percent of the population in Curacao identified as Roman Catholic, 18.4 percent another denomination of Christianity, 2.3 percent another religion (including Jehovah’s Witness, Muslim, Jewish, and “other”), and 6.0 percent not religious.

The U.S. government estimates the total population of Aruba at 121,000 (midyear 2021). According to 2010 census data, 75.3 percent of the population in Aruba identified as Roman Catholic, 4.9 percent Protestant, 1.7 percent Jehovah’s Witness, 12 percent “other,” 5.5 percent “none,” and 0.5 percent “unspecified.”

The U.S. government estimates the total population of Sint Maarten at 44,500 (midyear 2021). According to 2011 census data, 41.9 percent of the population in Sint Maarten identified as Protestant, 33.1 percent Roman Catholic, 5.2 percent Hindu, 4.1 percent another denomination of Christianity, 1.7 percent Jehovah’s Witness, 1.7 percent Evangelical, 1.4 percent Muslim or Jewish, 1.3 percent “other,” 7.9 percent “none,” and 2.4 percent “no response.”

Most Muslims in the Netherlands live in urban areas and are of Turkish, Moroccan, or Surinamese descent. The Muslim population also includes recent immigrants and asylum seekers from other countries, including Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Syria, Afghanistan, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. While there are no official

estimates, most Muslims are believed to be Sunni. The Reform Jewish Congregation, the largest Jewish community in the country, estimates there are 40,000-50,000 Jews. A Statistics Netherlands study from 2015 (the most recent available) estimates the number of Hindus at 10,000, of whom approximately 85 percent are of Surinamese descent and 10 percent of Indian descent. The Buddhist community has approximately 17,000 members, according to a 2007 report by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research, the most recent Dutch estimate available. Boston University's World Religion Database estimates there are 207,000 Buddhists in the country (1.2 percent of the population.)

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution prohibits discrimination on religious grounds and provides for the freedom of individuals to profess their religion or belief, individually or in community with others, provided it does not affect their responsibilities under the law. The constitution allows the government to restrict the exercise of religious beliefs outside of buildings or enclosed spaces to protect health, ensure traffic safety, and prevent disorder.

The law makes it a crime to engage in public speech that incites religious hatred and provides a penalty of imprisonment for up to two years, a fine of up to 8,100 euros (\$9,200), or both. To qualify as hate speech, statements must be directed at a group of persons; the law does not consider statements targeted at a philosophy or religion, such as "Islam" (as opposed to "Muslims"), to be criminal hate speech.

The law does not require religious groups to register with the government. Under the law, if the tax authorities determine a group is "of a philosophical or religious nature," contributes to the general welfare of society, and is nonprofit and nonviolent, they grant it exemptions from all taxes, including income, value-added, and property taxes.

The law bans full-face coverings – including niqabs and burqas, as well as other nonreligious attire such as ski masks and helmets – in schools, hospitals, public transportation, and government buildings. According to the law, authorities must first ask individuals violating the ban to remove the face covering or to leave the premises. Those refusing to comply may be fined 150 euros (\$170).

The law permits employees to refuse to work on Sundays for religious reasons, but employers may deny employees such an exception depending on the nature of the work, such as employment in the health sector. Members of religious communities for whom the day of worship is not Sunday may request similar exemptions.

The Council of State and the NIHR are responsible for reviewing complaints of religious discrimination. The Council of State is the highest administrative court in the country, and its rulings are binding. The NIHR serves as the government's independent human rights watchdog, responsible for advising the government and monitoring and highlighting such issues, including those pertaining to religion. The NIHR hears complaints of religious discrimination, often involving labor disputes, and issues opinions that do not carry the force of law but with which the involved parties tend to comply. If respondents do not comply with NIHR's opinion, complainants may take their case to a regular court.

Local governments appoint antidiscrimination boards that work independently under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. These local boards provide information on how to report complaints and mediate disputes, including those pertaining to discrimination based on religion. Parties involved in disputes are not forced to accept mediation decisions of the local boards.

The government provides funding to religious schools, other religious educational institutions, and religious healthcare facilities. To qualify for funding, institutions must meet government educational standards as well as minimum class size and healthcare requirements. The constitution says that standards required of religious or ideology-based (termed "special") schools, financed either in part or fully by the government, shall be regulated by law with due regard for the freedom of these schools to provide education according to their religion or ideology.

The constitution stipulates public education shall pay due respect to the individual's religion or belief. The law permits, but does not require, religious education in public schools. Teachers with relevant training approved by the Ministry of Education teach classes about a specific religion or its theology in some public schools, and enrollment in these classes is optional. All schools are required to familiarize students with the various religious movements in society, regardless of the school's religious affiliation. Religion-based schools that are government funded are free to determine the content of their religious classes and make them mandatory, provided the education inspectorate agrees that such education does not incite criminal offenses such as inciting hate speech or action.

Approximately 71 percent of government-funded schools have a religious, humanist, or philosophical basis. The Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science is responsible for setting national curriculum standards with which all schools must comply and for monitoring compliance.

Courts may issue fines and arrest warrants against a spouse who refuses to give a spouse a religious divorce.

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

Government Practices

In response to a parliamentary request to screen foreign funding of mosques and Islamic institutions in order to counter what he said was the influence of Salafist and extremist ideology, Minister for Legal Protection Sander Dekker proposed legislation on June 8 that would require oversight of all donations from outside the EU to any civil society organization. Dekker rejected a parliamentary proposal to include an index of “unfree countries” that could be influencing the Netherlands through funding. He said, however, “Propagating hatred against dissenters, inciting violence and extremism, or spreading anti-democratic ideas, there is no place for that in the Netherlands. Organizations that are involved in this must be fought vigorously.” As of year’s end, the bill had not been put forward for parliamentary debate.

Authorities said the government continued working with various Muslim communities to reinforce their “resilience” against Salafist doctrine, including meeting with community representatives to discuss the challenges faced by mosques, providing training on how to recognize signs of radicalization, and supporting Muslim youth exposed to polarization, radicalization, and extremism.

During the year, authorities rarely enforced the law banning full-face coverings in schools, hospitals, public transportation, and government buildings. Public transportation representatives reported a decrease in the number of women wearing niqabs or burqas using public transportation. A May report by the Ministry of Social Affairs stated that most women surveyed who wore a niqab or burqa said they did not use public transportation and those that did experienced some form of discrimination. The respondents stated they felt insecure and were subjected to increased physical and verbal abuse, such as attempts to forcibly remove their full-face covering in some public places where the face covering ban did not apply, such as parks and shops. One respondent reported that while she was crossing the

road with her daughter, a bicyclist ran into her daughter, which the respondent said was due to her wearing a burqa. Another woman, making a similar assertion, said someone in an electric wheelchair ran over her son's hand in a market. When the law banning full-face covering passed in 2019, the government said it would evaluate it in 2022, but the NGO Report Islamophobia in 2020 called for an earlier evaluation. This had not occurred by year's end.

The government continued to require asylum seekers requesting a residence permit to sign a statement of "participation in civic integration." The statement informed immigrants of their rights and obligations and of the country's fundamental values, including freedom of religion.

The Central Body for Accommodating Asylum Seekers, the agency charged with overseeing asylum centers, said it prohibited religious proselytizing in the centers to avoid inflaming tensions among different religious groups housed together in an already sensitive environment. Other than inside the asylum centers, the government permitted proselytizing within society.

Local and national authorities, the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security, and police said they consulted closely on security issues with representatives from religious communities. Local governments, in consultation with the national government, continued to provide security to all Jewish institutions. The volunteer organization For Life and Welfare said it also provided private security to Jewish institutions and events.

Local governments continued to provide security to mosques and Islamic institutions as necessary, and local authorities worked with Islamic institutions on enhancing the security of mosques and other religious institutes, as well as their visitors. The national government continued to support this local approach and developed materials to assist religious institutes and local governments in implementing such measures. The national government continued to disseminate the 2019 "Security of Religious Institutes" manual, which was developed in consultation with the Muslim community, local governments, and police.

In April, the government proposed updates to legislation that would allow mayors to close local religious facilities such as churches and mosques for a maximum of 10 days to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council of State said that a profession of religion or belief within such buildings was constitutionally protected, but this protection did not exclude restrictions that would protect public health. Leader of the Reformed Christian Party Kees van der Staaij disagreed with

the bill and said it “[detracted] from the church’s position as a constitutionally protected place.” As of year’s end, the bill had yet to be put forward for parliamentary debate.

In an August 4 interview, member of parliament Esther Ouwehand, leader of the Party for the Animals (PvdD), announced plans to propose legislation that would ban animal slaughter without prior stunning. At year’s end, PvdD had not put forward such legislation. On July 19 (Eid al-Adha), Party for Freedom (PVV) leader and member of parliament Geert Wilders tweeted, “Tonight begins the barbaric festival of sacrifice for Muslims...As far as the PVV is concerned, we must ban this sickly ‘party’ [the Eid]...as soon as possible.” In 2019, the Council of State had said legislation to ban animal slaughter without prior stunning “constitutes a serious infringement on freedom of religion, violates the human rights of Jews and Muslims,” and should therefore not be introduced. The Council stated the interest of protecting animal welfare did not outweigh the freedom of religion.

In May, the Ministry of Education told media that an Islamic primary school would be established in the predominantly Christian community of Westland. The school had not been established by year’s end. In 2020, the town voted to remove a budget line item set aside for the school, citing the fact that the school had not submitted an application.

The government continued to require imams and other spiritual leaders recruited from abroad to complete a course on integrating into Dutch society before preaching in the country. This requirement did not apply to clergy from EU countries and countries with association agreements with the EU, such as Turkey, whose Religious Affairs Directorate appointed approximately 140 Turkish imams to serve in the country. The government continued to sponsor leadership courses intended to facilitate imam training in Dutch.

The national railway, Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS), announced in a June 3 report that it had paid 5,498 applicants a total of 43,877,500 euros (\$49.75 million) through its 2019-2020 Holocaust compensation program in recompense for the railway having transported more than 100,000 victims to transit camps during World War II. Of the approved applications, 804 were from living direct survivors. NS received 7,791 total applications from 35 countries, mostly from the Netherlands (4,936), Israel (1,195), and the United States (668). NS reported it also donated five million euros (\$5.67 million) to the Holocaust memorial centers

Camp Westerbork, Camp Vught, Camp Amersfoort, and the Oranjehotel as an expression of remembrance for all the victims.

In March 12 and June 25 letters to parliament, Education Minister Ingrid van Engelshoven responded to a December 2020 evaluation of the national art work restitution policy done by the ad hoc Kohnstamm Committee. In her first letter, she stated that the government would no longer use the “balancing principle” – which weighed the interest of museums against claimants – in artwork restitution review. Instead, claimants would be given priority. In her second letter, van Engelshoven announced a pledge of 1.5 million euros (\$1.70 million) annually for four years to support the implementation of the art work restitution policy, the resumption of systematic provenance research, and a new policy under which the government would return “heirless art” with Jewish provenance currently under state control to the Jewish community. The CJO welcomed van Engelshoven's response, which CJO chair Ronny Nafthaniel described as “righteous.”

The country is a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). The government continued to state that it accepted the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism but that it was not legally bound by it. The government said it shared indicators from this definition with police and the Public Prosecutor’s Office so they could take the indicators into account when dealing with incidents of antisemitism. The government said it used the IHRA definition as a practical tool for registration and detection of criminal offenses that could have a discriminatory element.

On June 24, the government presented the annual update of its *National Action Plan Against Discrimination*, which outlined the need to strengthen efforts to combat racism and discrimination, including anti-Islamic sentiment and antisemitism, developed in consultation with experts in the field of antidiscrimination.

For the third consecutive year, the government spent one million euros (\$1.13 million) on projects to counter antisemitism, with emphasis on improving incident reporting and response and focusing on capacity building, resilience, awareness, and supporting local antidiscrimination boards to better help victims submit complaints. The government supported projects by the Anne Frank Foundation and the government’s own *Project Cyber: Hate Speech*, which trained an estimated 8,000 youth to recognize discrimination, including antisemitism, online.

In 2020, parliamentarians Gert-Jan Segers of the Christian Union Party and Dilan Yesilgoz of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) proposed a nonbinding plan of action to combat antisemitism more effectively. In response to the VVD proposal, in 2021 the government allocated funds to improve authorities' ability to monitor antisemitism, encourage the filing of complaints about antisemitic incidents, and establish educational programs on the Holocaust and Jewish heritage in schools. One project built the capacity of antidiscrimination facilities to support victims of antisemitism and other forms of discrimination, including helping them report incidents to the police. Segers and Yesilgoz said they advocated a targeted approach to combat antisemitism because, in their view, a generic antidiscrimination strategy would be ineffective.

The government's first national coordinator for countering antisemitism, Eddo Verdoner, began his duties on April 1. CJO chair Ronny Naftaniel said the appointment of Verdoner was "a proof of confidence" in the government's commitment to fight antisemitism; he added that Verdoner was "pre-eminently the person who can form a bridge between the policy of government and the civil society organizations that are active in this area." Verdoner stated he wished to work on the criminalization of Holocaust denial, on Holocaust education, and on commemorating and celebrating Jewish history in the country. He said, "The Netherlands must learn to cherish its Jewish past. This includes explaining the past, how antisemitism arose, Luther and the Inquisition, and how hatred of Jews ultimately led to the Shoah. We have to keep fighting so that the persecution of the Jews remains central during the [annual Remembrance of the Dead] ceremony on May 4." The national coordinator reports directly to the Minister of Justice and Security and is charged with working to strengthen cooperation between government and civil society organizations. The position lasts for one year and may be renewed after the government reviews the office's effectiveness. On July 13, parliament passed a nonbinding motion to extend the term of the national coordinator for two years.

In September, Justice Minister Grapperhaus stated to parliament that "publicly condoning, denying, or grossly trivializing genocide, war crimes, and the Holocaust" would become punishable offenses under Dutch law. The announcement was in response to demands from the European Commission in 2020 and National Coordinator Verdoner earlier in September 2021 for the country to explicitly criminalize Holocaust denial. While Holocaust denial had not been explicitly referenced as prohibited by law previously, the Supreme Court had ruled in past cases that it was punishable as a criminal offense. The government did not propose legislation regarding the Minister's announcement during the year.

Mayors and aldermen in larger cities, including Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague, said they continued to meet at regular intervals with the Jewish community to discuss security issues and other topics of interest. These city governments continued to support a range of projects, such as educational programs to teach primary schoolchildren about the Holocaust and to counter prejudice against Jews. Amsterdam, with the largest Jewish population in the country, remained particularly active in such programming, which comprised mostly virtual presentations during the year because of COVID-19 restrictions.

Government and security officials reported they met throughout the year with the Jewish community to discuss matters of concern, such as security, antisemitism, and animal slaughter. The CJO, Netherlands-Jewish Congregation, Netherlands Alliance of Progressive Judaism, Christian NGO Only Jesus Christian Ministries (OJCM), and NGO Center for Information and Documentation on Israel (CIDI) took part in these meetings.

PVV leader Wilders continued to pursue a campaign calling for the “de-Islamization of the Netherlands,” advocating a series of measures including closing all mosques and Islamic schools, banning the Quran, and barring all asylum seekers and immigrants from Muslim-majority countries. He used social media to disseminate his message. Wilders’ Twitter account contained a number of entries criticizing Islam. For example, on October 16, Wilders posted, “And while the Netherlands continues to Islamize, including [allowing] headscarves in our own parliament..., I say: #stopislam!” On July 26 he posted, “Stop Islam. Stop Muhammad. Stop immigration of non-Western immigrants. Stop mosques. Stop Islam education. Stop Muslim violence.... The less Islam in NL the better.”

The Forum for Democracy Party (FvD) stated that freedom of expression should prevail over freedom of religion. According to its election platform, the party opposed foreign funding of religious schools and institutions, as well as the wearing of niqabs and other full face-coverings in public.

Citing freedom of expression, authorities in Amsterdam permitted a weekly demonstration of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement at Dam Square. CIDI reported the demonstrations frequently used antisemitic slogans, such as equating Zionism with racism.

Government ministers, including Prime Minister Mark Rutte, spoke out against antisemitism in speeches, such as at the annual Auschwitz and Kristallnacht commemorations. During the October 13 Malmö International Forum on

Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism in Sweden, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations Ollongren announced four commitments the government had pursued during the year: appointing the first national coordinator for countering antisemitism; pledging to explicitly criminalize Holocaust denial and other hate speech; emphasizing Holocaust awareness and Jewish culture in the education system; and committing the country to host the headquarters of the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure and financially contributing to its establishment.

The Anne Frank Foundation continued to organize government-sponsored and government-funded projects, such as the “Fan Coach” project that sought to counter antisemitic chanting at soccer matches by educating fans on why their actions were antisemitic. Another foundation initiative, the “Fair Play” project, promoted discussion about countering discrimination, including religious discrimination, among soccer fans, particularly youth and young adults. The foundation also provided materials for teaching about antisemitism in schools and a virtual library to showcase stories of youth who had experienced discrimination, including antisemitism.

An Amsterdam appellate court ruled on July 21 that the 2019 Dutch version of the Nashville Statement on marriage and sexuality, a 2017 publication by an evangelical Christian group in Tennessee that rejected homosexuality and transgender identity, did not incite discrimination. The court ruling on the case, filed by the Transgender Network Netherlands and Netherlands Network for Sexual Diversity, followed a March 2020 statement by the Public Prosecutor’s Office that the language of the statement did not constitute a criminal offense because the freedoms of religion and expression were constitutional rights. More than 250 individual Protestant leaders in the Netherlands had signed the Dutch version of the statement, which had been adapted from its U.S. progenitor. The Protestant Church in the Netherlands, the representative body of Protestant churches in the country, rejected it.

On September 19, King Willem-Alexander unveiled the Amsterdam-based National Holocaust Memorial of Names, which listed the name, birthday, and date of death of each of the more than 102,000 Dutch Jews, Sinti, and Roma who perished during the Holocaust. Prime Minister Rutte and State Secretary of Health, Welfare, and Sport Paul Blokhuis, responsible for Holocaust issues, also attended. During the unveiling, the Prime Minister said in his remarks that “Antisemitism is never far away,” and called for vigilance.

On October 15, Benno Troostwijk, a Dutch Holocaust survivor, unveiled a monument in the city of Leeuwarden memorializing the 544 Jewish Holocaust victims of that city. Chief Rabbi of the Council of the Inter-Provincial Chief Rabbinate Binyomin Jacobs warned against antisemitism in a speech during the unveiling and mayor of Leeuwarden Sybrand Buma welcomed the monument.

In a September 19 open letter, leading Jewish organizations, including CJO, CIDI, and Dutch Auschwitz Committee, called on parliamentary parties to speak out against the use of Holocaust comparisons in political debates and messaging in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, urging the parties “to take [on this] responsibility.” While the letter did not name the FvD party, several politicians from FvD had made such comparisons, equating the persecution of Jews during the Holocaust with government measures against the pandemic. On July 23, party leader Thierry Baudet tweeted, “For anyone wondering how things went in the 1930s/40s, which witnessed the exclusion of population groups and a step-by-step increase in totalitarian state control, for anyone wondering where he/she would have been at that time, now is your chance to find out!” After CIDI and CJO filed legal action against Baudet for this and other similar tweets, the Amsterdam Court ordered on December 15 that Baudet delete his tweets comparing government COVID-19 measures with the Holocaust. Baudet complied with the order but characterized it as an “insane, incomprehensible verdict.” CIDI welcomed Amsterdam Mayor Femke Halsema’s condemnation of the wearing of “yellow stars” by some demonstrators during a September 5 protest in Dam Square against COVID-19 control measures.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were reports of violence, threats, discrimination, verbal abuse, and vandalism against Jews and Muslims. Agencies collecting data on such incidents stated many occurrences went unreported or were reported to NGOs but not to police. The data collected by agencies often differed because of varied reporting, collection, and analysis methods. Because religion and ethnicity are often closely linked, it was difficult to categorize many incidents as being solely based on religious identity.

The editor-in-chief of a prominent daily, *De Volkskrant*, issued a statement in April in which he apologized for publishing a caricature depicting a Jewish political pollster and entrepreneur as a puppet master. The editor said the image and trope “recall too many memories of antisemitic caricatures of the Nazi period and therefore should never have been published.” The chairman of the Central Jewish

Board of the Netherlands said the image was reminiscent of *Volkischer Beobachter*, a German Nazi party daily in the 1930s.

Media reported on June 1 that the State Academy of Fine Arts in Amsterdam removed a series of banners about Israel made by resident artists, including one that read, “from the river to the sea,” after protests by local Jews. “This chant [phrase] isn’t about supporting a Palestinian state, but [is] all about expelling the Jews from Israel [from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea],” wrote the chair of CJO on Facebook. The university said it was not aware of the “meanings of the phrase,” and that it deeply regretted allowing the banner’s display.

CIDI and CJO filed charges against the organizer of a military-themed fair on August 28 in the town of Houten that featured the selling of Nazi and Holocaust memorabilia, including a Star of David identity card. CJO chair Nafthaniel called the incident “disgusting.” The national coordinator for countering antisemitism told media he asked the Justice Minister to change the law so that fairs could not sell such items, but the law was not changed as of year’s end.

On September 11, media reported that a group of 10 youths taking part in a protest of COVID-19 restrictions in the city of Urk and dressed in clothing strongly reminiscent of Nazi uniforms made a mock arrest of another youth who appeared to be wearing a prisoner uniform displaying the Star of David. Police arrested four of the youths, who were armed, for illegal firearms possession. In a statement, the municipality of Urk said the youths were demonstrating against government COVID-19 restrictions but that their behavior was “highly objectionable,” “highly inappropriate,” and hurtful to many people. According to media, the youths later apologized publicly.

An unknown assailant vandalized Amsterdam's HaCarmel Kosher Restaurant February 26 by painting the slogan “Find Jew” in English on the restaurant’s front window. CJO denounced the incident as “cowardly.” This was the eighth incident targeting the restaurant since 2018 and the fourth time the same graffiti text was spray-pointed on the restaurant since its establishment in 2001.

In May, demonstrations related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict included reports of antisemitic incidents, according to CIDI. In one case, a Jewish man said several boys greeted him with a Nazi salute. During another demonstration, participants chanted, “O Jews, the army of Mohammed is coming again.” Media also reported on May 16 that unknown individuals defaced a Jewish monument in the city of Cuijk with white paint and the text, “Free Palestine.” The monument

memorialized 13 Jews who were deported and killed during the Holocaust. CIDI Director Hana Luden told media, “Jews in the Netherlands are Dutch Jews and they are not responsible for events elsewhere.”

In September, The Hague Court sentenced The Hague city council member Arnoud van Doorn to 120 hours of community service for sedition and incitement of violence against individuals based on three tweets he posted from 2018 and 2019. His tweets encouraged the “destruction” of “Zionists” and “the enemies of Islam.”

Members of the Jewish community stated persons who were recognizable as Jewish because of their dress, for instance wearing a kippah or a Star of David necklace, were sometimes targets of confrontations. In one incident, a man complained to a national railway representative about an individual on a train who called a group of Jewish men wearing kippahs, “Cancer Jews.” The railway representative replied that it was not a good idea to walk around wearing such clothing.

The Jewish community again stated it was concerned about increasing antisemitism, noting an increase in online conspiracy theories, such as blaming a global elite, including the Jewish community, for using the COVID-19 pandemic to destroy Dutch society.

On April 2, mosques in Alkmaar, Culemborg, Deventer, Enschede, Amsterdam, and Rotterdam received diapers containing letters with the text, “An Easter gift for our whiners in society,” fragmented verses from the Quran, and a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammed. Researcher Roemer van Oordt of the NGO Muslim Discrimination Monitor said these cases reflected “a structural problem,” and stated that many mosques hesitated to report such incidents due to fear of negative reactions or previous poor experiences with law enforcement. CJO chair Naftaniel told the media the situation was “unacceptable,” stated his support for the Muslim community, and called on the government to take the issue “seriously.” In response to 10 complaints from different mosque boards, the Public Prosecution Service said the acts were not punishable under the law because insulting or criticizing a religion (as opposed to a group of individuals) was permitted under freedom of expression legislation.

On April 3, police arrested a man for arson after he set a mosque under construction on fire in the city of Gouda. The secretary of the mosque, Fouad Khouakhi, told media the community was concerned. Police reported the suspect

was known to police and emergency services for “confused behavior.” Farid Azarkan, leader of the Denk Political Movement party which is widely considered to be left-wing and pro-immigrant, asked on Twitter, “What can we do as a society to stop [such incidents against mosques]?” The mosque was repaired using funds raised by the community.

The anti-Muslim organizations Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West and Netherlands in Resistance demonstrated on January 24 in the city of Eindhoven, despite the mayor refusing them a permit. Police used force, including tear gas, to break up the crowd, which authorities estimated was in the hundreds. Police also arrested several dozen people.

Municipal antidiscrimination boards recorded 82 incidents of antisemitic discrimination in 2020 (the latest data available), compared with 78 incidents recorded in 2019. Most concerned aggression against Jews, including slurs or disputes between neighbors, soccer-related incidents, or vandalism.

Police recorded 517 antisemitic incidents reported to them in 2020 (the latest data available), constituting 8 percent of all discriminatory incidents registered by police. There were 768 antisemitic incidents reported to police in 2019. CIDI and the police said that one explanation for this decrease was that soccer games, sometimes marked by incidents of antisemitism, were played without spectators in 2020 due to COVID-19 protection measures.

The National Expertise Center for Discrimination, a section of the Public Prosecutor’s Office dealing exclusively with cases of discrimination, reported that it processed 157 new cases of discrimination in 2020 (compared with 123 new cases in 2019). Nineteen percent of the new cases in 2020 were related to antisemitism, compared with 40 percent in 2019, while 11 percent involved anti-Muslim sentiment. In 2019, three-quarters of antisemitic incidents reviewed by the Center for Discrimination and police related to antisemitic statements and chants by soccer fans, mostly concerning the Amsterdam-based soccer team Ajax, whose fans and players are nicknamed “Jews,” although the team has no relationship with the Jewish community.

CIDI reported 135 antisemitic incidents in 2020 (the latest data available), compared with 182 in 2019. These included 26 incidents of direct confrontation between strangers, 29 incidents occurring during the course of daily life (such as at school, work, or among neighbors), 15 incidents of vandalism, 25 incidents of written statements, and 40 incidents directed against the Jewish community (as

opposed to individuals). The NGO attributed the decrease in incidents in 2020 to the lack of public gatherings, such as sports events, in which antisemitic incidents tend to occur, due to the pandemic. The report did not include incidents of online hate speech but, according to CIDI, Jews were “portrayed as the cause and/or beneficiaries of the coronavirus with an alarming and growing frequency.”

In 2020 (the most recent data available), MiND Nederland, the government-sponsored, editorially independent Registration Center for Discrimination on the Internet, reported it received 40 complaints about Dutch-language antisemitic expressions on the internet, which constituted 5 percent of all reported discriminatory expressions it received that year but fewer than in the previous year (75 complaints; 11 percent). The organization gave no explanation for the decrease. CIDI did not report complaints of antisemitic content on the internet. Instead, CIDI stated it would create separate surveys to show the nature, extent, and development of online antisemitism.

Authorities reported most antisemitic incidents occurred in the immediate living environment of those targeted, often involving insults from neighbors or antisemitic graffiti or written threats on walls, mailboxes, or personal property. Approximately 76 percent of antisemitic incidents in 2020 tracked by police and the Public Prosecutor’s Office (the most recent data available) involved slurs, including the use of the word “Jew” as an insult. Police reported 17 incidents of vandalism involving swastikas or antisemitic texts sprayed on property and Jewish monuments in 2020, compared with 148 such incidents in 2019. Police attributed the decrease to fewer people on the streets in 2020 due to COVID-19 lockdowns. Police also reported 27 antisemitic incidents (5 percent) in 2020 involving a form of physical violence, such as pushing or shoving. In several cases, violence was directed at public officials as they carried out their official duties. Four of the threats and two of the violent incidents took place during demonstrations about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in May.

The NIHR reported receiving 90 complaints of religious discrimination in 2020 (the most recent data available) compared with 109 in 2019. These were mostly in the workplace, and the NIHR issued opinions in 21 cases. In one case, the NIHR judged that a fitness center discriminated on the grounds of religion by not allowing a patron to wear her headscarf in the facility. In another, the NIHR ruled that the bank Bunq B.V. discriminated on the basis of religion by not allowing religious organizations to open business accounts.

In February, CIDI repeated its recommendations for the government to combat antisemitism more effectively, namely: improve education on the Holocaust and Judaism; help teachers recognize and combat antisemitism; require social media platforms to improve and effectively enforce their hate-speech policies; combat antisemitic bullying; improve knowledge about antisemitic crimes; train police and officials on antisemitism awareness; identify antisemitic incidents more clearly; accelerate reporting procedures for such incidents; encourage victims to report incidents; promote digital citizenship and media awareness to discourage online hate speech; hold individuals accountable for online hate speech; and promote effective measures for social media companies to prevent and combat antisemitism. CIDI called for national soccer association KNVB to take measures to counter discrimination, including antisemitic chanting, during matches.

In September, the Brussels-based NGO Action and Protection League issued the results of its European antisemitism survey based on data from December 2019-January 2020. According to the survey, 2 percent of 1,000 respondents ages 18-75 in The Netherlands said they had negative feelings towards Jews. Thirteen percent said they would be “totally uncomfortable” or “uncomfortable” with having Jewish neighbors. The survey cited stereotypical statements about Jews and asked respondents the degree to which they agreed or disagreed. The proportion who responded “strongly agree” or “tend to agree” with the following statements were: “the interests of Jews in this country are very different from the interests of the rest of the population” (11 percent); “there is a secret Jewish network that influences political and economic affairs in the world” (11 percent); “Jews have too much influence in this country” (5 percent); “Jews will never be able to fully integrate into this society” (11 percent); “Jews are more inclined than most to use shady practices to achieve their goals” (6 percent); “many of the atrocities of the Holocaust were often exaggerated by the Jews later” (11 percent); “Jews are also to blame for the persecutions against them” (5 percent); “Jews exploit Holocaust victimhood for their own purposes” (11 percent).

In 2020 (the most recent data available), municipal antidiscrimination boards around the country registered 391 other (not antisemitic) religious discrimination incidents, of which the majority targeted Muslims, compared with 279 such incidents in 2019. These included physical and verbal harassment and vandalism. Multiple incidents concerned physical and verbal harassment of women on the street because they were wearing a headscarf, as well as incidents involving anti-Muslim stickers and posters. For example, in one case, an individual said to a woman wearing a headscarf, “Take off your headscarf, dirty Muslim.” A suspect

arrested for painting swastikas on a mosque told the police, “I am for Hitler,” and “The Jews and the Arabs are [expletive] people.”

Using different methodology than that of the police, antidiscrimination boards registered a significantly higher number of anti-Muslim incidents in 2020 than in 2019 – 307 (79 percent of all incidents), compared with 192 in 2019 – half of which occurred in the labor market and workplace, often involving women who were discriminated against for wearing a headscarf. For example, there were reports of clients or customers who expressed a preference to be served by non-Muslims over Muslims wearing a headscarf, and in one case (also reported by the NIHR), a Muslim woman was told that she would not be hired because of her headscarf.

MiND Nederland registered 39 inflammatory statements made against Muslims on the internet in 2020, compared with 64 in 2019. The organization gave no explanation for the decrease.

Although authorities, the KNVB, soccer teams, and the Anne Frank Foundation had multiple agreements in place to discourage antisemitic behavior at soccer matches, participants reportedly did not always carry out the terms of the agreements. For example, one agreement stipulated that if antisemitic chanting arose during a match, teams would ask fans to stop immediately and if they did not, they would suspend the match; however, matches were rarely suspended or paused. On July 25, CIDI sent an open letter to the management of the Rotterdam-based Feyenoord soccer team, calling for action against antisemitic murals in Rotterdam against Steven Berghuis, who is not Jewish and who transferred from Feyenoord to the Ajax team. Feyenoord publicly distanced itself from these murals, which featured Jewish caricatures and a Star of David.

Media reported on April 21 that fans of the Arnhem-based soccer team Vitesse chanted, “ Hamas, Hamas, Jews to the gas” at a rally before a match in Arnhem with the Ajax team. The director of the Vitesse team condemned the chants. Police examined film footage of the event to identify the fans involved.

In April, the Hague City Court fined a Sunni imam from the al-Madina Mosque 675 euros (\$770) for insulting a religious group when he called those of other faiths “pigs” and said Ahmadi Muslims were “worse than animals” in 2017. According to media reports, the judge viewed the imam’s statements as “unnecessarily offensive,” and ruled that the conviction did not infringe on the imam’s freedom of expression.

The Security Pact Against Discrimination – a movement established by Muslim, Jewish, and Christian, and humanist organizations to combat antisemitism, anti-Muslim sentiment, and other forms of discrimination – organized online and in-person events, including “solidarity” visits to mosques by non-Muslims, to promote mutual solidarity. The group’s membership included the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, the representative body of main Christian churches in the country, and several NGOs, including the Turkish Islamic Cultural Federation, Humanist Alliance, Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam, National Council of Moroccans, and Platform to Stop Racism and Exclusion.

CIDI reported it continued to work with educators who conducted online classroom programs to counter prejudice against Jews and other minorities, working with a network of teachers to improve education on the Holocaust with Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust remembrance center. CIDI organized online symposia and lectures.

NGOs such as OJCM and Belief in Living Together continued to promote interfaith dialogue among Jews, Muslims, and Christians. For example, the Liberal Jewish Community of Amsterdam continued its youth outreach project entitled “Get to Know Your Neighbors,” which explained Jewish practices to participating students. The Yalla! Foundation promoted mutual solidarity to counter anti-Muslim sentiment and antisemitism through meetings, guest lectures, and social gatherings.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

In meetings with the Ministries of Justice and Security; Social Affairs and Employment; and Education, Culture, and Science, as well as with local governments and parliamentarians, staff from the U.S. embassy in The Hague and the consulate general in Amsterdam emphasized the importance of religious freedom and tolerance and discussed Holocaust restitution, kosher and halal slaughter, and measures to safeguard religious freedom and religious sites.

The embassy and consulate general highlighted the need for religious tolerance and interfaith understanding and discussed issues of religious integration and countering violent extremism in outreach to youth, academics, and religious leaders from various backgrounds, including Muslim, Jewish, and Christian, as well as community organizations such as CJO, CIDI, the Dutch Muslim Council, the Organization of Jewish Communities in the Netherlands, the Jewish Cultural

Quarter, and Platform Islamic Organizations Rijnmond (SPIOR), the umbrella organization of Rotterdam mosques.

In January, at the annual Holocaust remembrance event hosted by the Dutch Auschwitz Committee in Amsterdam, the embassy sponsored a wreath on behalf of the United States as a member of the IHRA to show solidarity with the Jewish community and U.S. support for religious tolerance. The Charge d' Affaires met with National Coordinator on Countering Antisemitism Verdoner on April 20 to discuss ways to combat online antisemitism, including antisemitic COVID-19 conspiracy theories, and support the national coordinator's mandate.

During a November 9 visit to Amsterdam hosted by CJO, the Charge d' Affaires highlighted the importance of Holocaust legacy issues such as restitution, awareness education, and combating antisemitism – including the political use of comparisons between the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands and anti-coronavirus measures – with a variety of individuals, including Dr. Emile Schrijver, the director of the Jewish Historical Museum, and National Coordinator Verdoner. The Charge paid her respects at the National Holocaust Memorial of Names in Amsterdam with Verdoner and they together attended the annual Kristallnacht commemoration.

During Ramadan, the Charge d' Affaires held an April 26 virtual teleconference with representatives of the Dutch Muslim Council, including its president Muhsin Korktas, to extend holiday greetings and discuss the importance of communication and the exchange of opinions across society to counter anti-Muslim sentiment.

On October 28, an embassy official met with representatives from SPIOR and Rotterdam-based mosques Aya Sofia and an-Nasr to discuss challenges facing the Muslim community, such as religious freedom, halal slaughter, religious education, interfaith dialogue, and civic participation.