



## **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

### **International Religious Freedom Report 2004**

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

The State Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the entity constitutions of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Federation) and the Republika Srpska (RS) provide for freedom of religion, and individuals generally enjoy this right in ethnically mixed areas or in areas where they are adherents of the majority religion; however, adherents of minority religions in non-ethnically mixed areas have had their right to worship restricted, sometimes violently. The new state-level Law on Religious Freedom, enacted in January, also provides comprehensive rights to religious communities and confers upon them a legal status not previously held in the country.

There was no overall change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report; however, there was some deterioration and some improvement in certain areas. Religious communities strongly supported refugee returns for their respective constituencies; however, there was a lack of movement on refugee returns. The return process suffered from a lack of funds, local governments' inability or unwillingness to provide necessary services to allow for sustainable returns, and a lack of employment opportunities. The new state Law on Religious Freedom protecting the rights of religious communities and creating a government registry allowing them to establish legal status was being implemented by the end of the period covered by this report.

Religious intolerance in the country directly reflects ethnic intolerance because of the virtually indistinguishable identification of ethnicity with one's religious background. Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) generally are associated with Islam, Bosnian Croats with the Roman Catholic Church, and Bosnian Serbs with the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Jewish community maintains a very small but important presence in Bosnian society. Despite the constitutional and legal provisions protecting religious freedom, some discrimination against religious minorities occurs in virtually all parts of the country. In some communities, local religious leaders and politicians contributed to intolerance and an increase in nationalist feeling through public statements and on occasion in sermons.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government and leaders from the four traditional religious communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of its overall policy to promote human rights and reconciliation.

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

The country's territory is divided into two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Federation) and the RS, with a separate administrative district comprising Brcko. The country has a total area of 19,781 square miles. In 2001, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that the population was 3.8 million, although a reliable census had not been conducted since 1991. Reliable statistics on the precise membership of different religious groups remain unavailable.

Ethnic groups identify very closely with distinct religions or religious/cultural traditions, including the predominantly Muslim Bosniaks, the predominantly Roman Catholic Croats, and the predominantly Orthodox Serbs. According to the U.N. Development Program's Human Development Report 2002, Muslims constitute 40 percent of the population, Serbian Orthodox 31 percent, Roman Catholics 15

percent, Protestants 4 percent, and other groups 10 percent. The small Jewish community has approximately 1,000 believers and maintains a special place in society by virtue of its long history of coexistence with other religious communities and its active role in mediating among those communities. There is an increasingly visible presence of more conservative missionaries who practice the Saudi-based form of Islam, Wahabbism, although the numbers remain very low.

The rate of religious observance remains relatively low among the traditional religious groups; however, some areas of significantly greater observance do exist, for example among Roman Catholic Croats in the Herzegovina region. The majority of Bosnian Muslims have a secular, European-oriented worldview and practice their religion only intermittently. For Bosnian Muslims, religion often serves as a community identifier, and religious practice is confined to occasional visits to the mosque or significant rites of passage such as birth, marriage, and death. Nevertheless, religious leaders from the three major faiths claim that observance is increasing among younger persons as an expression of increased identification with their ethnic heritage, in large part due to the national religious revival that occurred as a result of the Bosnian war. Leaders from the three main religious communities observed that they enjoy greater support from their believers in rural areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina rather than urban centers such as Sarajevo or Banja Luka.

Ethnic cleansing during the 1992-1995 war caused internal migration, which almost completely segregated the population into separate ethno-religious areas. Increased levels of returns in 2001-2002 slowed markedly in 2003-2004, leaving the majority of Serbian Orthodox adherents living in the RS and the majority of Muslims and Catholics still living in the Federation. Within the Federation, distinct Muslim and Catholic majority areas remain. However, returns of Serbian Orthodox adherents and Muslims in recent years to their prewar homes in Western Bosnia Canton and Muslims to their prewar homes in eastern Bosnia near Srebrenica have shifted notably the ethno-religious composition in both areas.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are eight Muftis located in major municipalities across the country--Sarajevo, Bihac, Travnik, Tuzla, Gorazde, Zenica, Mostar, and Banja Luka. The more conservative Islamic communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina are located in the Federation in cities such as Travnik, Boinja/Zavidovici, Tesanj, Maglaj, Bugojno, and Zenica. Bosnia's Roman Catholic community maintains its Bishops' Conference as an overarching organizational and regional structure, with bishops residing in Mostar, Banja Luka, and Sarajevo; the Franciscan order maintains its strongest presence in Central Bosnia near Sarajevo and in Herzegovina. The Serb Orthodox Church maintains greater influence in the eastern RS, with the most influential bishops servicing Trebinje and Bijeljina. The small Jewish community, like most other small religious groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina including Protestants, has its strongest support in Sarajevo.

Missionary activity is limited but growing and includes a small number of representatives from the following organizations, some of which have their central offices for the region in Zagreb or another European city outside of the country: Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Methodist Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and Krishna Consciousness. In addition, Wahabbism, is slowly gaining adherents in Bosnia and Herzegovina in large part due to economic problems facing the impoverished Bosniak populace.

## **Section II. Status of Religious Freedom**

### *Legal/Policy Framework*

The State Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and individuals generally enjoyed this right in ethnically mixed areas or in areas where they were adherents of the majority religion; however, adherents of minority religions in non- ethnically mixed areas had their right to worship restricted, sometimes violently.

The State Constitution attempts to safeguard the rights of the three major ethnic groups, and by extension the three major religious communities, by providing for each group proportional representation in Government and in the military. As a result of the government structure created by the Dayton agreement, which ended the Bosnian conflict, parliamentary seats and most government positions are apportioned specifically to members of the three "constituent peoples" (Bosnian

Muslims, Bosnian Croats, and Bosnian Serbs). These stipulations result in a constitutional discrimination against "others" and sympathizers of certain faiths who do not fit neatly into these three groups. For example, the country has a three-member joint Presidency composed of one representative chosen specifically from each of the three major ethnic groups, with a chairmanship that rotates every 8 months. As an attempt to address this lack of opportunity for members of other religious faiths, the president of the Jewish community—again, by virtue of the Jewish community's general impartiality in the political arena—was by common consensus accorded the leadership of the important Civil Service Agency, which is tasked with selecting civil servants for government posts based on merit as opposed to political ties, ethnicity, or religious affiliation.

Bosnia's state-level Government does not officially recognize any religious holidays. Entity and cantonal authorities routinely recognize religious holidays celebrated by members of the area's majority religion, with government and public offices closed on those days.

The new state-level Law on Religious Freedom governs religion and the licensing of religious groups, and provides for the right of all to freedom of conscience and religion in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It grants churches and religious communities legal status and allows them concessions that are characteristic of a non-governmental organization (NGO). The law also creates a unified register for all religions within the Bosnian Ministry of Justice, while the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees is tasked with documenting every violation of religious freedom. According to the provisions of the law, 300 adult citizens may form a new church or religious community with a written application to the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice will issue a decision within 30 days of the application, and an appeal may be made to the Bosnian Council of Ministers. The new law will allow minority religions in the country to register legally and to operate without unwarranted restrictions. The law came into force in March and the establishment of the registry was underway by the end of the period covered by this report.

Political parties dominated by a single ethnic group remain powerful in the country. Most political parties continue to identify closely with the religion associated with their predominant ethnic group; however, many political parties claim to be multiethnic. Some clerics have characterized hard-line nationalist political sympathies as part of "true" religious practice, with the Roman Catholic Church being the most vocal in the political arena. The Roman Catholic Church maintains that the implementation of some international community-backed reforms, such as education reform, undermines the Bosnian Croat sense of nationhood. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church in the country and the nationalist Bosnian Croat party, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), jointly resisted efforts to unify the disjointed and ethnically based education system.

The lines dividing politics and religion are often blurred, particularly during an election season, when religious sermons and services are sometimes misused for campaigning purposes. Many political party leaders are former Communists who have manipulated the core attributes of their particular ethnic group, including religion, to strengthen their credibility with voters. For example, offices of local Bosnian Serb mayors in the RS are often decorated with religious icons, although few officials practice religion in any meaningful sense.

In 2003, the RS Government spent approximately \$330,980 (600,000 KM) on assistance to religious groups. In 2004, the RS Government planned to allocate funds to all four traditional religious communities in the RS, but was forced to postpone the disbursement of most funds due to budgetary shortfalls. The RS plans to distribute the funds to the religious communities in the second half of 2004, and the majority will go to the reconstruction of religious facilities. The Islamic community in the RS is expected to receive approximately \$123,457 (200,000 KM) in the second half of this year and had already received \$18,519 (30,000 KM) in early 2004. The Jewish community is expected to receive funds for the reconstruction of a synagogue in Banja Luka.

Religious education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is largely decentralized, as is the education system generally. The canton and entity governments and the Brcko District authorities have responsibility for education; there is no national education ministry or policy. Public schools offer religious education classes, but with the exception of Brcko, schools generally offer religious instruction only in the area's majority religion. In theory, students have the option not to attend, but in practice, students of the majority religion face pressure from teachers and peers to attend the classes. For

example, the RS requires Serbs to attend religion classes but does not require attendance for Bosniaks and Croats. If more than 20 Bosniaks or Croats attend a particular school in the RS, the school is required to organize religion classes on their behalf. However, in the rural RS, there is usually no qualified religious representative available to teach religious studies to the handful of Bosniak or Croat students. It is similar in the Federation, where students of the ethnic majority are required to attend religious classes, either Bosniak or Croat, while the minority is not required to attend. In the Federation's five cantons with Bosniak majorities, schools offer Islamic religious instruction as a 2-hour per week elective course.

In Sarajevo, Tuzla, Travnik, and Zenica/Vares, Croat students may attend Catholic school centers. These centers have both primary and secondary schools, and although the principals are priests, the schools are open to all faiths and the majority of teachers are not religious. The curriculum is identical to the curriculum applied in schools in areas with a majority Croat population. In cantons with Croat majorities, all Croat students attend the "elective" 1-hour weekly Catholic religion course for primary and middle schools.

The new state-level Law on Religious Freedom reaffirms the right of every citizen to religious education. The law calls for an official representative of the various churches or religious communities to be responsible for teaching religious studies in all public and private pre-schools, primary schools, and universities throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, by the end of the reporting period, the Law on Religious Freedom had not been implemented. Its implementation could be difficult in Bosnia's often-segregated school systems, particularly at the municipal level.

The Office of the High Representative (OHR) endorsed a May 2000 declaration signed by the Federation and RS Ministers of Education calling for the introduction of countrywide courses on "Democracy and Human Rights" and the "Culture of Religion." The democracy course is being implemented as part of the official school curriculum in all Federation cantons, the RS, and Brcko.

The country's four traditional religious communities all have extensive claims for restitution of property that the government of the former Yugoslavia nationalized after World War II and did not return. The new state-level Law on Religious Freedom provides Churches and religious communities the right to restitution of expropriated property throughout the country "in accordance with the law." However, there is still no state-level law on restitution, and both entity governments have deferred any real attempt to resolve the issue of restitution.

#### *Restrictions on Religious Freedom*

The weak administrative and judicial systems effectively restrict religious freedom and pose major obstacles to safeguarding the rights of religious minorities. In some cases, the RS Government, local governments, and police forces made some improvements in protecting religious freedoms, although problems remained, including an atmosphere in which abuses of religious freedom may occur.

Deputies being sworn into the RS National Assembly may choose either a religious oath consistent with their religious tradition or a nonreligious civil oath. Deputies to the State and Federation Parliaments take nonreligious civil oaths.

The State Constitution provides for proportional representation for each of the three major ethnic groups in the Government and the military. Because of the close identification of ethnicity with religious background, this principal of ethnic parity in effect reserves certain positions in Government and the military for adherents or sympathizers of certain faiths. The military in the RS is staffed overwhelmingly by ethnic Serbs and only has Serbian Orthodox chaplains. The Federation military is composed of separate Bosniak and Croat units, as well as integrated units, and has both Muslim and Catholic chaplains. The Federation passed laws during the period covered by this report creating a state-level Ministry of Defense that would integrate the two entity-based armed forces under a unified command and control, but the mechanics of integrating the chaplain services still remained an open question at the end of the period covered by this report.

In early post-war years, RS authorities frequently did not intervene to prevent the violent obstruction of efforts to rebuild some of the 618 mosques and 129 churches in the RS that were destroyed or significantly damaged during the 1992-1995 war. Local police also subsequently failed to conduct a serious investigation into several of the incidents. More recently, the RS Government has mediated a number of disputes between religious communities and local governments, resulting in the issuance of permits in virtually all of the outstanding reconstruction cases from 2001-2002, including permits for all five mosques being reconstructed in Bijeljina, for mosques in Trebinje, and for other disputed cases. In Zvornik, the Islamic community and the city continued negotiations over an alternative mosque site, although by the end of the period covered by this report, the negotiations had failed to reach a satisfactory conclusion and the issue continued to be a source of contention.

In July 2003, the Federation's Human Rights Chamber transformed itself into a component of the Constitutional Court. The Human Rights Chamber had been established under the Dayton Agreement and issued rulings that at times affect religious freedom, particularly regarding religious properties. Before its transfer of authority to the Constitutional Court, the Human Rights Chamber in June 2003 found Travnik municipality in the Federation to be in violation of Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The municipality had returned property to the Islamic community but not to the Roman Catholic community. The Chamber ordered the Federation to expedite relocations of public schools housed in the Roman Catholic school building in Travnik by June so that remaining portions of the building could be returned to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese. As of June, the impasse over the school in Travnik remained unresolved.

In the absence of a law governing property restitution, municipal and cantonal authorities have broad discretion regarding disposition of contested property nationalized under the Communist government of the former Yugoslavia. Many officials use property restitution cases as a tool of political patronage, rendering religious leaders dependent on politicians to regain property taken from religious communities. Outstanding and publicly thorny restitution cases include the presence of a Serb Orthodox Church on the property of a Bosnian Muslim woman in the RS town of Konjevic Polje, despite the absence of local Serb residents; the presence of an Islamic mosque on the former property of a Serb Orthodox Church in Bradina; and the presence of a Serb Orthodox Church in the middle of a majority Islamic community in the RS town of Divic.

#### *Abuses of Religious Freedom*

The RS Government, local governments, and police forces frequently allowed an atmosphere in which abuses of religious freedom could take place, although there was marked improvement from previous years as demonstrated by the relative lack of religious and ethnically motivated incidents in the country during the tense security crisis in nearby Kosovo and Serbia and Montenegro in March. The absence of a police force willing to protect religious minorities, and a judicial system willing to prosecute crimes against those minorities posed major obstacles to safeguarding minority rights. While new officers continue to be accepted into the police academies under strictly observed ethnic quotas, the goal of establishing effective, professional, multiethnic police forces throughout the country will take years of concentrated effort. Administrative and financial obstacles to rebuilding religious structures impeded the ability of religious minorities to worship freely and delayed the return of minority refugees in many areas.

A significant number of citizens remained displaced internally or as refugees abroad following the 1992-1995 war. Virtually all had fled areas where their ethno-religious community had been in the minority or had ended up in the minority as a result of the war. Although organized and spontaneous returns significantly increased in 2001-2002, they began to fall sharply in 2003-2004.

A variety of incidents directed at religious targets in all three ethnic majority areas were reported throughout 2003 and the first half of 2004. In August 2003, a group of intoxicated youths in Livno threw bottles and shouted insults at the Podhum mosque. The youths were arrested and fined. In August 2003, 17 gravestones were vandalized at the St. Mihovil and St. Marko cemeteries in Sarajevo; the Bosnian tri-partite presidency quickly condemned the acts of vandalism and 3 Bosnian Muslim youths were arrested soon thereafter.

In September 2003, unknown perpetrators seriously damaged a portion of the minaret and support

structure at the Ali-Aqa mosque in Derventa. In a likely related attack, the windows of the nearby Saint Juraj Catholic Church were smashed on the same evening. Also in September 2003, unknown perpetrators smashed two windows of the Catholic Parish Church in Zenica. In October 2003, a hand grenade was discovered at the construction site of the Osman-Pasha mosque in Trebinje. In November 2003, an unknown assailant fired shots at a mosque in the village of Cela near Prijedor during Ramadan.

Incidents directed at Bosniak Muslims during the last months of the period covered by this report included: In January, unknown assailants fired shots and caused damage to the mosque in the village of Polje near Bosanska Dubica using automatic rifles. In March, unknown perpetrators bombed a mosque in the predominately Bosnian Serb town of Gradiska, just 3 days after arsonists set a Serb Orthodox Church on fire in the Federation. Political leaders from all circles publicly condemned the attack and the local police commander was quickly replaced. In March, unknown perpetrators smashed the windows of the mosque in Banja Luka, while a Bosnian Muslim graveyard memorial was damaged near Tuzla in April.

In March, the press reported that a Serb Orthodox priest in the eastern RS town of Pale stated publicly that it is the duty of each Orthodox priest to protect and help indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic. The priest allegedly called for the return of the Chetnik tradition and the reawakening of the Serb "consciousness."

There were also incidents directed at Bosnian Croats during the last months of the period covered by this report. In April, there was an attempted arson at the Chapel of Saint Anthony in the northern Bosnian town of Zivinice, while an unknown perpetrator that same month damaged gravestones in a Catholic cemetery in Zenica. In March, vandals damaged 14 crosses on the premises of the Catholic Church in Stolac near Mostar.

During Easter 2004, the Catholic Church seminary in Sarajevo was stoned. In April, unknown perpetrators vandalized a Catholic cemetery in Banja Luka.

The Banja Luka District Court continued criminal proceedings for war crimes against the 11 former police officers from Prijedor in connection with the 1995 abduction and murder of Father Tomislav Matanovic and his parents. In September 2003, the District Court judge scheduled to try the Matanovic case resigned; by year's end, it was unclear if and when the trial would begin. In late January, the public prosecutor charged the suspects with war crimes against the civilian population. There were no further developments in the period covered by this report.

Incidents directed at the Roman Catholic Church during the last months of the period covered by this report included: On April 5, there was an attempt to set fire to the Catholic Chapel in Zivinice in the Tuzla Canton, in northeast Bosnia. Police did not arrest any of the perpetrators. On April 13, unknown perpetrators broke into the Travnik Parish church in Ovcavero and stole \$4000 (6,000 KM).

There were incidents directed against members of the Bosnian Serb Orthodox community during the period covered by this report. In March, unknown perpetrators in the Federation's Bugojno municipality set the roof of the Serb Orthodox Church on fire, resulting in minor damage and no injuries. The incident occurred at a time of heightened tensions as a result of serious security problems in Kosovo. Senior local politicians from all ethnic groups quickly condemned the arson attack.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### *Forced Religious Conversion*

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

### *Abuses By Terrorist Organizations*

There were no reported abuses targeted at specific religions by terrorist organizations during the period covered by this report.

### *Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom*

In September 2003, former U.S. President Bill Clinton officially opened the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial and Cemetery, which serves as an important part of the reconciliation process in the country. Senior politicians as well as religious leaders paid homage to the victims of Srebrenica in a solemn event that was well attended by many ethnic and religious groups. The RS police ensured that no major security incidents occurred, although graffiti with slogans praising Bosnian Serb war criminals was found on posters near the Memorial site. Serb Orthodox leaders and senior RS politicians were notably absent from the event, demonstrating an unwillingness to come to grips with the tragedy of Srebrenica.

Relations among religious communities in the Croat-dominated Stolac municipality in the Federation continued to improve over the period covered by this report. In August 2003, the reconstructed Carsjska mosque in Stolac was officially opened during a ceremony that drew thousands of believers, including the highest Muslim official in Bosnia Reis ul-ulema ef Cerić. Some tensions remain between the Catholic and Muslim communities, as evidenced by the absence of Bosnian Croat municipal officials and representatives from the Catholic Church at the opening of the mosque. There have been no recent incidents of violence against returnees, although minor acts of vandalism against religious facilities still occur.

The reconstruction of three destroyed mosques began in Croat-dominated west Mostar. One of the mosques in west Mostar was still under construction by the end of the period covered by this report, while another was successfully completed and inaugurated in May; however, no Catholic Church officials attended the opening. The third mosque in Balinovic was completed but recently was attacked by vandals. Finances, more than religious discrimination, hampered further work on mosques in the Mostar area.

In June 2003, a foundation stone was laid for the reconstruction of Esmā Sultana's mosque in Jajce, and the Travnik mufti in April expressed satisfaction with the pace of reconstruction. The mosque, originally constructed 340 years ago, had been destroyed in 1993.

In Vogosca, a suburb of Sarajevo, the first cornerstone for the construction of a new Catholic Church was laid in Spring 2004, the first such new construction in Sarajevo since the end of the war. In Bosniak-dominated Bradina, Konjic municipality, the Islamic community agreed to remove a mosque that had been constructed on someone else's land, although there has been no action taken to remove the illegal mosque by the end of the period covered by this report.

Although in April 2003, Foca Mayor Nedeljko Pavlović and Gorazde Mufti Hamed Efendić agreed to the reconstruction of a Muslim religious facility in Foca, a notoriously hard-line Serb municipality in the RS, there was no indication that reconstruction had begun, in large part due to a lack of funds. Several mosques have been reconstructed in the RS over the last year including in Kotarsko near Doboj, in the village of Sjenina near Doboj, Kozarac near Prijedor, in Srebrenica, two in Banja Luka (although not officially opened), in Bosanski Novi, and in Bosanska Gradiska. Mosques in Kopaci, Ustipiraca, and two in Zvornik remain under reconstruction as of this reporting period. In April, the RS Ministry for Urban Planning approved the reconstruction of the Carsijska mosque in Prijedor.

A new mosque was constructed in Kupres, and there are preparations for the reconstruction of mosques in the RS villages of Kratina, Isbisno, and Popov Most in the Foca municipality as well. Approximately 30 percent of the largest mosque in Bijelina, the Atika mosque, had been completed, although reconstruction on the other four mosques had not begun by the end of the period covered by this report. On December 20, 2003, the seat of the Islamic community in Bratunac was reconstructed and opened.

Reconstruction of a Catholic church in Prijedor neared completion during the period covered by this report.

### **Section III. Societal Attitudes**

Until the 19th century, most of the country's residents identified themselves by religious affiliation. With the rise of Balkan nationalism in the 19th century, the country came to identify itself in ethnic as well as religious terms. This tendency increased during the Communist era when the regime discouraged religious affiliation. Under the Communists, most of the country's population identified themselves by ethnic group or simply as "Yugoslavs." Only with the adoption of the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution could Muslims identify themselves as such in the census. Since the country's independence, there have continued to be persons who decline to accept either ethnic or religious identification and consider themselves simply Bosnians.

Religious buildings, clerics, and individual believers in any area where they constitute a religious minority bear the brunt of retaliation for discrimination and violence perpetrated by other members of their religious/ethnic groups in areas where those groups constitute the majority. Because they are powerful symbols of religious identification and ethnicity, clerics and religious buildings are favored targets. Most religious leaders severely criticize violence and nationalism against their own group but can be less vocal in condemning acts against members of other groups.

The 1992-1995 war was not a religious conflict. However, the association of ethnicity and religion is so close that the bitterness engendered by the war and the approximately 270,000 deaths it caused contributed to mutual suspicion among members of all three major religious groups.

Despite the constitutional and legal provisions for religious freedom, some discrimination against religious minorities occurs in virtually all parts of the country. Discrimination is significantly worse in the RS, particularly in the eastern RS, and it remains a serious problem in Croat-dominated areas of the Federation; discrimination appears also to have worsened in some Bosniak-majority areas where more conservative Islamic communities reside.

While Sarajevo, the Bosniak-majority capital of the country, has preserved in part its traditional role as a multiethnic city, complaints of discrimination remained during the period covered by this report. Media reports increasingly discussed the "Islamicization" of Sarajevo and some non-Muslims reported feeling "out of place" in the nation's capital. Youths and hooligans generally are responsible for the majority of acts of vandalism in Sarajevo and across the country. While religious leaders applaud growing religious sentiment among youth, the scars of the war, economic woes, and a recent history of segregation as a result of post-war returnee movements has in many places also injected a streak of nationalism in the younger generation that at times is targeted against religious communities.

Numerous buildings belonging to the Islamic, Serbian Orthodox, and Roman Catholic communities were damaged or destroyed during the 1992-1995 war, usually in a deliberate attempt at ethnic intimidation. The religious buildings destroyed during the war included 618 mosques and 129 churches in RS territory. RS authorities frequently did not intervene to prevent the violent obstruction of efforts to rebuild many of the mosques and churches. Despite the issuance of building permits these last several years on the part of Federation and RS authorities, the religious communities lack funds to rebuild religious facilities. In response, the Islamic community in April planned to file charges with the Federation Constitutional Court seeking damages from the RS for the destruction of its mosques during the war.

In the immediate postwar period, the major religious communities avoided reconstruction of the more symbolic religious facilities in the country, such as the Ferhadija mosque in Banja Luka, the Aladza mosque in Foca, and the monastery Plehan near Derventa, but there is now some movement on rebuilding these mosques. After violent efforts to obstruct the reconstruction of Osman Pasha Mosque in Trebinje, the rebuilding process finally commenced in June although violent acts against the mosque occurred during period covered by this report. Reconstruction of the Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka had not begun by the end of the period covered by this report, but the Islamic community had all the necessary permits and was collecting money for its construction.

Acts of anti-Semitism against the small Jewish community in the country are significantly less frequent than in other parts of Europe. However, Jewish leaders state that there is a growing tendency in the country to mix anti-Israeli sentiment with rare acts of anti-Semitism, as the general public and media often fail to distinguish between criticism of Israeli policy and anti-Semitic rhetoric. Following the terrorist attack against a mosque in Turkey during the period covered by this report, the Jewish community was quickly granted police security at its synagogues and no incidents were reported.

Despite the lack of overt anti-Semitic acts, there were two particularly vocal websites in Bosnia and Herzegovina that allowed their audience to express their resentment against non-Muslims. They advocated the boycott of American and Jewish companies and both called for Muslims to avoid interacting with Christians and Jewish persons.

Leaders of the Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, and Jewish communities have committed themselves publicly to building a durable peace and national reconciliation. The leaders of these four communities participate in the Interreligious Affairs Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which operates with the active involvement of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, a U.S.-based NGO. Although the traditional religious communities have not wavered in their commitment to national reconciliation, there were rifts between the faiths on the Council during the period covered by this report. The Roman Catholic Church "froze" its relations with the Council over differences regarding the signing of a bilateral agreement with the Vatican. The Serb Orthodox Church pulled out of the Interreligious Council entirely due to differences of opinion on political and security matters, primarily dealing with NATO's early April raid on Orthodox Church premises in Pale in search of indicted war criminals, when a Serb priest and his son were accidentally injured. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Office of the High Representative seek to facilitate interfaith meetings at the local level as well.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government and leaders from all three major religious communities in the context of its overall interfaith dialogue and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Government supports the return of refugees, democratization, and protection of human rights throughout the country. The U.S. Government also encourages leaders from all major religious communities to promote a multiethnic society that is conducive to religious freedom. Strong U.S. Government support for full implementation of the Dayton Accords and a politically moderate, multiethnic Government is intended, over time, to improve respect for religious freedom in the country.

During the period covered by this report, the U.S. Government succeeded in encouraging the State Constitutional Court to assume human rights cases, including those involving religious freedoms, to promote high-level national attention to such cases. The Ambassador frequently meets with the principal religious leaders, individually and collectively, to urge them to work toward moderation and multiethnicity. The Ambassador has been involved actively as a member of the Executive Board of the Srebrenica Foundation, which oversaw the construction of a Memorial and Cemetery dedicated to victims of the 1995 massacre of Muslims in Potocari. The U.S. Government provided approximately \$1 million (1.62 million KM) to help establish the Srebrenica Memorial and Cemetery in Potocari. International and U.S. Government involvement in this issue has helped advance the process of interethnic reconciliation.

The U.S. Embassy funded the development of the countrywide democracy courses on "Democracy and Human Rights" and the "Culture of Religion," using its SEED funds and continues to support its implementation. The comparative religion course, "Culture of Religion," was still under discussion at the end of the period covered by this report.

In addition, the Embassy engages in an active outreach program with the religious communities at all levels, including hosting speaking engagements by visiting U.S. academics and lecturers, and creating university linkage affiliation focusing on comparative religious studies. The Embassy publicly criticizes instances of religious discrimination and attacks against religious communities or buildings (most recently, the Ambassador strongly condemned the March arson attack against the

Serb Orthodox Church in Bugonjo) and encourages leaders from all ethnic groups and members of the international community to respond equally strongly. The U.S. Agency for International Development provides funding to train lawyers and judges on human rights, including religious freedom, and provides much-needed infrastructure assistance to areas with high rates of refugee return to promote the sustainability of return.

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