

HUNGARY 2012 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution and most laws and policies generally protect religious freedom. However, the government imposed restrictions that affected minority religious groups, and the government's respect for religious freedom declined during the year. A new religion law, which took effect January 1, provides for freedom of conscience and religion, but deregisters more than 350 previously recognized religious groups. It also changes the criteria by which the state officially recognizes religious groups as "churches," creating a politicized process requiring a two-thirds vote of parliament for approval. The loss of church status had a significant financial impact on some religious groups, imperiling their ability to continue offering charitable social and health services. The extremist Jobbik Party increased its use of anti-Semitic rhetoric. Government officials routinely spoke out against anti-Semitic statements made by Jobbik members. However, some observers called on the government to speak out consistently, forcefully, and in a timely manner to take a clearer position against those who espoused intolerance. Observers also criticized the government for not speaking out against the rehabilitation of the reputation of anti-Semitic historical figures by some members of the governing coalition.

There were reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. The number of anti-Semitic incidents increased, prompting strong reactions from the Jewish community as well as from members of the government, civil society, and other religious groups.

The U.S. embassy enhanced its engagement with government officials and representatives of local and international civil society groups regarding religious freedom issues. The U.S. ambassador, the special envoy for Holocaust issues, the special envoy to monitor and combat anti-Semitism, and other U.S. officials regularly raised with senior government officials concerns about the new religion law and rising anti-Semitism. The embassy also supported numerous Holocaust education initiatives.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to the 2011 national census, the population is approximately 9.9 million. The government does not collect official data on religious affiliation. However, the 2011 national census included an optional question on religious

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affiliation; responses indicate the population is 37.1 percent Roman Catholic, 11.6 percent Hungarian Reformed Church (Calvinist), 2.2 percent Lutheran, and less than 1 percent Jewish. These four groups are considered the country's "historic" religions. Among the respondents, 16.7 percent indicate no religious affiliation and 1.5 percent indicate atheist; 27.2 percent offer no response. Religious groups constituting less than 5 percent of the population include Greek Catholics, the Faith Congregation (a Pentecostal group), Orthodox Christian groups, other Christian denominations, Buddhists, and Muslims.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and most laws and policies generally protect religious freedom. The constitution provides for freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including the freedom to choose or change one's religion; profess and teach one's religion; and perform religious acts, individually or with others, in public and private. The constitution's preamble expresses gratitude to the nation's first king who united the country with "Christian Europe" 1,000 years ago. The constitution separates church and state and stipulates that churches are autonomous, but that the state will cooperate with churches on community goals. Citizens have the right to sue the government for constitutional violations of religious freedom.

A new religion law, which took effect January 1, alters the registration process for religious groups from one led by the courts to one requiring the approval of parliament, thereby deregistering more than 350 previously registered religious groups. Under the former legislation, a court was bound to grant "church" status to religious groups founded by at least 100 individuals and possessing a charter and elected bodies for administration and representation. The new law deregisters all previously registered religious groups and requires that they re-apply for "church" status. The legal designation of "church" confers privileges on recognized groups, such as access to several forms of state funding and exemption from audits of their financial operations connected to religious activities.

Upon coming into effect, the religion law recognized 14 religious groups as "churches": the Hungarian Catholic Church, the Reformed Church, the Lutheran Church, the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities (MAZSIHISZ), the Unified Hungarian Jewish Congregation (Chabad), the Autonomous Orthodox Israelite Congregation of Hungary, the Buda Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Bulgarian Orthodox

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Church of Hungary, the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Hungary, the Hungarian Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Hungarian Diocese of the Unitarian Church, the Baptist Union of Hungary, and the Faith Congregation.

According to the law, all other religious groups may apply for recognition to parliament's Committee for Human Rights and Religious Affairs if they meet the criteria listed in the law, including at least 100 years of international operation or 20 years of operation in the country; at least 1,000 signatures; religious activity as a primary aim; a formal statement of faith and rites; bylaws; a deed of foundation and internal rules; and elected or appointed administrative and representative bodies. In addition, a religious group's activities may not conflict with the constitution, pose a threat to national security, or violate basic human rights, such as the right to physical and mental health and the protection of life and human dignity. According to the law, the committee is required to request the opinion of the president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences as to whether an application meets the criteria. The committee will then submit a legislative proposal to parliament concerning recognition of the religious groups listed in the proposal. A two-thirds vote of parliament is required for official church recognition. Parliament is not required to state a reason for rejecting a religious group's application for recognition.

In response to domestic and international criticism, parliament voted on February 27 to grant church status to an additional 18 of 84 applicants, including the United Methodist Church in Hungary, the Hungarian Society for Krishna Consciousness, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), the Hungarian Church of Jehovah's Witnesses, five Buddhist groups (recognized as a single umbrella organization), and two Muslim groups (also recognized as a single umbrella organization). Parliament voted to reject the applications of 66 religious groups, including groups that appeared to meet the basic criteria for church status stipulated in the new law, for no stated reason. At year's end, the annex of the amended religious law listed a total of 27 "churches, religious congregations, and religious communities." Because this figure included the Buddhist and Muslim umbrella organizations, the list comprised 32 individual religious groups recognized as churches.

According to the new law, formerly recognized churches that applied for registration by December 20, 2011, but did not receive parliamentary approval by February 29, 2012, retained their church status until February 29, after which their status changed to that of an association. Additionally, the law requires that these religious groups officially request to change their legal registration to "association"

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by April 30, and that the courts respond to the requests by June 30. The law states that failure to meet the April 30 deadline for requesting association status, or rejection by the court of association status, will result in the termination of the former church's status without legal successor and liquidation of the group's assets, which will accrue to the state. A court's rejection of a deregistered church's application to become an association is subject to appeal. Any religious group not recognized as a church can reapply for recognition one year from its previous application.

According to the law, previously registered religious groups that were not recognized under the new law and that failed to submit a request for recognition by December 20, 2011, would qualify as associations effective January 1. The law required that these groups either initiate a request to change their legal registration to "association" by February 29 or state that they do not intend to continue operating. The law required that the courts respond to these requests within 30 days of that date. Failure of a religious group to request a change in status to that of an association by the February 29 deadline, or rejection by the court of association status, resulted in the termination of its status without legal successor and liquidation of its assets.

Land owned by a religious group that loses status as a recognized church and becomes an association is retained by the association, the legal successor of the church. However, deregistered churches recognized as associations are prohibited from acquiring new agricultural land.

By law, an association that primarily performs religious activities is not entitled to use the broad term "church" (Hungarian "egyház") in its official name.

Religious groups operating as associations are subject to different accounting laws than those applicable to recognized churches. Both associations and churches must keep a record of the sources of their donations, but associations are subject to audit by the state at any time, while churches are exempt from audit of any financial resources connected to religious activities. In general, the government has greater latitude to inspect the records and activities of associations than churches. In addition, religious associations must convene their governing boards annually, in accordance with laws governing associations.

Taxpayers may choose to donate 1 percent of their personal income taxes to any recognized church. Religious groups with association status may receive a similar 1 percent tax allocation designated for civil society organizations; however, they

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must compete with approximately 23,000 other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) also eligible for taxpayer contributions. Thus, taxpayers who wish to support deregistered churches recognized as religious associations must choose between donating 1 percent of their income taxes to their religious association or to other charitable causes. Only recognized churches may use taxpayer donations to pay the salaries of individuals who provide religious services; these individuals are in turn exempt from personal income tax. The government allocates public funds to religious groups with church status to match the amount of their taxpayer contributions. The government makes matching funds available to religious associations through a tender process.

The new religion law continues to afford both churches and religious associations the right to assume operation of public schools through a formal transfer agreement with the central government. Municipalities, religious groups, or school boards can initiate such transfers, but they can only be executed if the designated religious group is able to collect the signatures of at least 50 percent of the parents and adult students. Churches and religious associations operating public education institutions receive the general “normative subsidy” provided to educational institutions by the state, but only churches are entitled to receive automatically a “supplementary subsidy” as well. According to the law, deregistered religious groups recognized as associations would continue to receive the supplementary state subsidy until August 31. As of September 1, only religious associations that had reached an individual agreement with the Ministry of Human Resources received the supplementary state subsidy. The human resources minister decides on applications for the supplementary subsidy based on the recommendations of the regional office of the central government and the local municipality (or national minority self-government in the case of a minority educational institution) and contingent upon the applicant’s pledge to assume the provision of public services from the government. The government conducts biennial inspections of religious schools to ensure standards conform with those of government-run schools.

Registered churches and religious associations have the right to provide religious education in public schools if requested by students or parents. Religious instruction is not part of the curriculum in public schools, but the government permits primary and secondary school students to enroll in extracurricular religious education classes. Optional religious instruction is usually held after the normal school day and taught in school facilities by representatives of various religious groups. The four “historic” churches provide the majority of after-hours religious instruction. Private schools are not obligated to provide religious education.

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Religious groups are entitled to determine their own policies on religious instruction provided in the schools they operate.

Treaties signed with the Vatican in 1990, 1994, and 1997 regulate relations between the state and the Roman Catholic Church, including financing of public services and religious activities and the settlement of claims for property seized by the state during the Communist era. These agreements also serve as a framework for regulating state relations with other religious groups.

Restricting another person from freely exercising his or her religion through violence or threats is a crime punishable by up to three years in prison. Abusing a person because of his or her religious affiliation is punishable by five years in prison. The criminal code classifies violence committed against a member of the clergy as violence against an “individual providing public service” and punishes the offense more severely, with a maximum prison sentence of ten years.

Public incitement of hatred against any national, ethnic, racial, or religious group is a felony punishable by imprisonment for up to three years. In addition, physical assault motivated by national, ethnic, racial, or religious affiliation is a felony punishable by up to five years in prison.

A law passed on April 16 automatically suspends the immunity of a member of parliament (MP) who incites hatred against communities, denigrates national symbols, or publicly denies crimes of Communist or National Socialist regimes.

The law prohibits public denial, expression of doubt, or minimization of the Holocaust, genocide, and other crimes committed by the National Socialist and Communist regimes, and punishes such offenses with a maximum sentence of three years in prison.

The criminal code includes a ban on public display of symbols of totalitarianism, specifically the swastika, SS badges, arrow crosses, sickle-and-hammer symbols, and five-pointed red stars. The ban is inconsistent with the European Convention on Human Rights, according to a November 2011 ruling by the European Court of Human Rights.

The state operates a military chaplaincy for the four “historic” religious groups. Military personnel from all churches and religious associations have the right to the free exercise of religion in private and public. The Ministry of Defense funds and maintains the chaplaincy.

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Penitentiaries must allow the free practice of religion for inmates. However, a public prosecutor or judge may restrict the practice of religion during criminal proceedings. Detainees have the right to unrestricted contact with representatives of registered churches. Detainees in special security regimes may only participate in individual spiritual care and are excluded from community spiritual programs. The government's Prison Pastoral Service, which carries out religious activities in penitentiaries, includes the "historic" religious groups (Catholic, Reformed, and Lutheran churches as well as MAZSIHISZ), all of which have unrestricted access to prison facilities to provide religious services for inmates. Access for other registered churches and religious associations is granted at the discretion of prison authorities. Rejection of access requests can be appealed to the Ministry of Interior.

The government is a member of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Easter Monday, Whit Monday, All Saints Day, and Christmas.

Government Practices

There were no reports of abuses of religious freedom; however, the government imposed restrictions that affected minority religious groups. International and domestic observers expressed serious concerns about the new religion law. Government officials spoke out against anti-Semitic statements made by members of the extremist Jobbik Party. Some observers called on the government to speak out consistently, forcefully, and in a timely manner to take a clearer position against those espousing intolerance. Observers also criticized the government for not speaking out against officials seeking to rehabilitate the reputation of anti-Semitic historical figures.

Among the more than 350 religious groups that lost their status as recognized churches, 177 groups (such as dioceses and monastic orders) were already associated with one of the 32 currently recognized churches, 114 were granted association status, and 11 were rejected for association status by the court for failing to provide the requested documents by the deadline set during the court proceeding. The court initiated liquidation of the assets of 46 religious groups previously recognized as churches which failed to initiate their status change in court by February 29.

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Government officials stated that the new religion law was necessary because nonreligious organizations were registering as churches to receive tax exemption and state subsidies. In March the Venice Commission, an advisory body of the Council of Europe, released an opinion questioning the necessity of the new religion law. The Venice Commission observed that freedom of thought, conscience, and religion was one of the foundations of a democratic society and that freedom of religion and conscience covered more elements than merely granting privileges, state subsidies, and tax benefits to recognized churches.

Domestic and international human rights and religious groups criticized the new religion law for stripping more than 350 religious groups of “church” status. Critics also stated that it discriminated among religious groups and politicized the recognition of religious groups. On August 13, the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights challenged the law in the Constitutional Court on the basis that provisions for recognizing churches violated the principle of separation of powers, the right to fair legal procedure, and the right to legal remedy. Numerous religious groups, human rights groups, and individuals also challenged the law at the Constitutional Court and at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The cases remained pending at the end of the year.

On December 28, the Constitutional Court retroactively annulled the section of the transitional provisions to the constitution that referred to parliament’s role in church recognition. This decision had no immediate effect on the religion law, but established the possibility that the Constitutional Court could review the constitutionality of parliament’s role in recognizing religious groups based on a challenge to the law.

Members of some religious groups alleged backroom deals and lobbying surrounding the compilation of the list of the original 14 religious groups recognized by the religion law and the February 27 vote that recognized 18 additional religious groups as churches but rejected 66 others. The president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences opted not to offer an opinion to parliament on the religious groups that applied for church recognition. Some government officials suggested that the recognition of some religious groups was blocked because other religious groups lobbied against them.

Some religious groups formerly designated as churches noted that the process of transitioning to association status was not automatic and the interim period of not having their legal status confirmed by court was a prolonged one. Some

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deregistered religious groups stated that they did not receive a response from the courts regarding their application for association status by the June 30 deadline, leaving them uncertain whether their assets would be liquidated. At year's end, 38 applications for association status by deregistered religious groups remained pending in court.

The loss of church status had a significant financial impact on some religious groups, imperiling their ability to continue offering charitable social and health services. Leaders of religious groups that lost their church status also expressed concern that their role in society was being marginalized.

Of the 32 individual churches recognized by the parliament, 31 requested to be listed on the 2011 personal income tax return form as eligible for the 1 percent donation for churches. Taxpayers donated a total of 3.8 billion forints (\$17.5 million) collectively to the 31 churches, which the government supplemented with an additional 3.8 billion forints (\$17.5 million).

Of the 66 formerly recognized churches that had applied for registration by December 20, 2011 but did not receive parliamentary approval by February 29 (and thus became associations), 57 were eligible for the 1 percent donation designated for churches on 2011 personal income tax returns (this was the last year they would be eligible for this benefit). The state transferred the 1 percent donations for these associations upon the completion of the court procedure for the change of their status. At the end of the year, 19 of the 57 formerly recognized churches had completed their change to association status and received the 1 percent donation, worth a total of 31 million forints (\$142,600). These religious associations were also eligible for the matching subsidy that the government provided to recognized churches.

By January 31, the government had transferred the 1 percent donation designated for churches on fiscal year 2010 personal income tax returns to the 31 recognized churches that had requested to receive the donation and to 57 formerly recognized churches. The group of 88 religious groups collected approximately 4.9 billion (\$22 million) forints from taxpayers, which the government doubled to 9.9 billion forints (\$44 million) collectively.

The 100 formerly recognized churches that failed to submit a request for recognition by December 20, 2011 (and qualified as associations effective January 1) were no longer eligible for the 1 percent donation designated for churches on 2011 personal income tax returns but could collect 1 percent donations designated

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for civil associations. In the 2011 tax return forms, 28 of the 100 groups received 1 percent donations for civil associations from taxpayers. The state transferred these 1 percent donations upon the groups' completion of the court procedure to change their status to that of an association. Six of the 28 groups completed the court procedure to change their status to that of an association and received the 1 percent donation, worth a total of 1.48 million forints (\$6,800).

The government provided 35 billion forints (\$161 million) in additional funding to churches for a range of activities, including maintaining public art collections; support for religious instruction, education, and culture; annual compensation for non-restituted religious property ("annuity in perpetuity"); and assistance to church personnel serving the smallest villages. The four "historic" religious groups continued to receive 93 percent of total state financial support provided to religious groups.

Local governments transferred 147 preschools and schools to church administration. The Roman Catholic Church took over 63 institutions, the Reformed Church 34, the Baptist Church (and Hungarian Baptist Aid) 32, the Lutheran Church eight, and other religious groups 10. At year's end, churches operated 850 of the country's 10,233 public education institutions (approximately 8 percent).

Four deregistered churches recognized as religious associations operated eight private schools. Three of these groups (the Hungarian Evangelical Brotherhood, the Dzsaj Bhim Buddhist Community, and the Christian Family Congregation) reached an agreement with the Ministry of Human Resources on the supplementary state subsidy provided for the operation of educational institutions. The application of the Alliance of Love religious association remained pending at year's end.

Jewish groups expressed concern over an increase in actions by members of the governing parties at the local and national levels aimed at rehabilitating the reputation of historic figures known for anti-Semitic views and support of fascism. Some members of the Jewish community stated that the government sent mixed messages by condemning societal anti-Semitism while condoning or actively participating in these rehabilitations.

In May the village of Kereki erected a statue of former Regent Miklos Horthy, under whose leadership hundreds of thousands of Jewish citizens were deported to Nazi concentration camps. In June the town of Gyomro renamed a park after

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Horthy. In October the Budapest City Council named a street after Pal Teleki, an openly anti-Semitic prime minister who introduced the first anti-Semitic laws in Europe after World War I (in 1920) and under whose term as prime minister parliament adopted the second anti-Jewish law (1939) and began drafting the third anti-Jewish law (1941).

In May Parliament Speaker Laszlo Kover, former Culture State Secretary Geza Szocs, and Jobbik Party leader Gabor Vona, participated in a ceremony in Romania honoring writer Jozsef Nyiro, who served from 1941 to 1945 as a member of parliament first under the Horthy regime, and then during the Hungarian fascist Arrow Cross regime. Although government officials stated that Speaker Kover participated in the ceremony in a private capacity, funding for the ceremony was provided from the parliament's budget.

In June the government adopted the framework of a new national educational curriculum that provoked negative reactions from the Jewish community. While Jewish groups applauded the curriculum drafters for soliciting and incorporating their input on anti-Semitism, the history of the country's Jewish communities, and the state of Israel, they criticized the inclusion of Hungarian writers from the World War II era widely considered to be anti-Semitic, including Jozsef Nyiro, Albert Wass, and Dezso Szabo. The state secretary of education refused to alter the framework. Although government officials stated that the writers should be appraised based on their literary merit alone, some Jewish leaders remained concerned that the curriculum provided no contextual information about these writers' political activities to help teachers decide whether and how to teach about them. The curriculum and new textbooks remained under discussion at year's end.

In June Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel repudiated a high state decoration conferred in 2004. In his letter to Parliament Speaker Kover, Wiesel expressed dismay about the participation of government and Jobbik Party members in the Romania ceremony honoring Nyiro, as well as the practice of naming public spaces after Horthy and the inclusion of extreme-right intellectuals in the national curriculum. In his response to Wiesel, Kover stated that the Allied Control Commission in 1945 and 1947 had cleared Nyiro of charges of fascism and anti-Semitism, and such ideas did not surface in Nyiro's literature.

Members of the extremist Jobbik Party, which held 12 percent of parliamentary seats, increased their use of anti-Semitic rhetoric. Government officials routinely spoke out against anti-Semitic statements made on the floor of parliament and elsewhere by Jobbik party members. The president of the World Jewish Congress

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called on the government to dismiss officials who expressed intolerance of religious and ethnic minorities, and the national director of the Anti-Defamation League urged parliament to strengthen enforcement of ethics rules.

On April 3, Jobbik MP Zsolt Barath gave a speech in parliament reviving a 19th-century blood libel case in which members of the Jewish community were accused of the ritual murder of a girl who had disappeared in the village of Tiszaeszlar. Prime Minister Orban, several members of the governing and opposition parties, and heads of the “historic” religious groups condemned the speech. On April 11, the Central Investigative Chief Prosecutor’s Office launched an inquiry into Barath’s remarks; the office closed the inquiry in September after determining Barath had not committed a crime.

In May a far-right Web site published test results of a Jobbik Party representative who in 2010 had undergone genetic testing “to ensure he did not have a Roma or Jewish ethnic background.” On August 8, the Budapest police launched an investigation against the company performing the test for the misdemeanor of “quackery” following an official report by the National Public Health and Medical Officer Service. The case remained pending at year’s end. In November Jobbik MP Marton Gyongyosi made a speech calling for a list of MPs and government officials of Jewish origin, alleging they constituted a threat to national security. Several MPs and government leaders attended a rally to protest Jobbik’s anti-Semitism, and a week after Gyongyosi’s statements, Prime Minister Orban publicly denounced them. In December police arrested independent MP Balazs Lenhardt for burning an Israeli flag during a rally organized by several far-right groups outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). During the rally, protesters chanted anti-Semitic epithets. An MFA statement condemned all forms of racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia.

On July 17, the Buda Central District Court ordered the house arrest of Laszlo Csatory for war crimes. Csatory, who served as a police commander in Kassa (now Kosice), Slovakia during World War II, was suspected of having played a key role in deporting approximately 15,700 Jews from Kassa to Auschwitz in 1944. The investigation was ongoing at year’s end.

On February 1, the government reached an agreement with MAZSIHISZ, the Autonomous Orthodox Israelite Congregation of Hungary, and Chabad-Lubavitch Hungary (EMIH) regarding the allocation of an annuity in perpetuity for unrestituted property. According to the agreement, MAZSIHISZ will allocate 150 million forints (\$682,000) from its 1.5 billion forint (\$6.9 million) annual budget

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derived from the annuity in perpetuity to EMIH, and 190 million forints (\$864,000) to the Autonomous Orthodox Israelite Congregation of Hungary. MAZSIHISZ criticized the government for interfering in internal matters of the Jewish community, while the other groups welcomed the decision.

By the end of October, the government completed the transfer of approximately \$21 million to the Hungarian Jewish Heritage Foundation (MAZSOK) to compensate for Jewish heirless and otherwise unclaimed properties and for the “relief and rehabilitation” of Holocaust survivors under a 2007 agreement. Pursuant to a subsequent agreement with the conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (“Claims Conference”), MAZSOK distributed one-third of the funds to survivors in need residing in the country, while two-thirds were to be transferred to and distributed by the Claims Conference to assist needy Hungarian survivors living outside the country.

By the end of the year, MAZSOK had distributed nearly the entire five-year restitution payment (approximately \$7 million) designated for those survivors living in the country. However, the government and MAZSOK continued to contest the accounting documentation submitted by the Claims Conference on expenditures from the 2008-2010 restitution funds (approximately \$8.4 million) allocated for survivors living outside of the country. As a result of the dispute, MAZSOK withheld the 2011 and 2012 shares of the restitution payment for Hungarian survivors abroad (\$5.6 million). Drawing on the interest from the withheld funds, MAZSOK’s board of trustees transferred \$100 to each of the 7,800 survivors living in the country as a one-time payment. By the end of the year, MAZSOK had failed to implement the distribution of the 2011 and 2012 restitution funds among survivors living abroad either by signing a new contract with the Claims Conference for 2011 and 2012 or by any other means. The government, MAZSOK, and the Claims Conference continued their discussions on releasing the funds.

The government continued to process petitions under legislation that allowed compensation claims from individuals whose immediate relatives were killed in the Holocaust or in Soviet forced labor camps; lost their lives between 1939 and 1989 due to politically motivated actions of government authorities; or performed forced labor due to racial, religious, or political discrimination during World War II. The government received more than 97,600 claims by the 2006 deadline. By the end of the year, the government had paid 3.36 billion forints (\$15.5 million) in claims to 16,645 applicants.

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The Constantinople Patriarchy Hungarian Exarchy, head of the Hungarian branch of the Greek Orthodox Church, continued to contest the restitution of property occupied by Russian Orthodox groups since the 1950s. The Exarchy claimed that a Russian Orthodox group had illegally taken a church in Budapest in the 1950s that had belonged to the Greek Orthodox community since the 18th century. In the 1990s, the government returned the property to the Russian Orthodox Church as part of the restitution process. After exhausting all legal options in the country, the Exarchy turned to the ECHR to challenge the decision. In 2007, the ECHR declared the Greek Orthodox community's case "inadmissible."

On July 1-6, for the second consecutive year, the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation organized training at the Central European University for teachers on combating prejudice, promoting tolerance, and teaching about the Holocaust. The approximately 30 participants of the week-long training program created multimedia educational materials and later used them in their classrooms.

The Vatican-Hungarian Joint Committee held two sessions during the year to continue routine work on amending the bilateral treaties to reflect the current legal environment.

The government transferred two billion forints (\$9.2 million) to churches to complete compensation for subsidies withheld from schools operated by churches in previous years.

A Ministry of Public Administration and Justice official responsible for Jewish affairs consulted with leaders of Jewish congregations and NGOs on Holocaust education in public schools, the restoration of abandoned Jewish cemeteries, and the distribution of restitution funds for Holocaust survivors. On December 27, the government transferred these responsibilities to the prime minister's office.

In an October 18 ceremony, the minister of interior and the Israeli ambassador posthumously presented the "Righteous Among the Nations" award of the Jerusalem-based Yad Vashem Institute and the Hungarian "For Courage" honors to 11 individuals who risked their lives during the Holocaust to save Jews.

The government declared 2012 "Raoul Wallenberg Year" to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Jews in the country during the Holocaust. Senior officials, including the president, attended and gave remarks at several of the events, which included international conferences, photo exhibits, and concerts. Hungarian embassies throughout the

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world, in cooperation with Israeli and Swedish diplomatic representations, organized approximately 100 Wallenberg commemorative events.

In December the government announced the formation of the Hungarian Holocaust 2014 Memorial Commission to plan events in memory of the 70th anniversary of the deportation of Hungarian Jews to concentration camps. The cabinet asked Jewish groups as well as several foreign ambassadors, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' president, and the ministers of interior, foreign affairs, human resources, defense, and public administration and justice to assist with this work.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, and prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom.

Anti-Semitic incidents increased, prompting strong reactions from the Jewish community as well as from members of the government, civil society, and other religious groups. Some Jewish leaders stated that Jobbik's increased use of anti-Semitic rhetoric in parliament contributed to a public culture condoning anti-Semitism. According to a poll released by the Anti-Defamation League in December, the percentage of the population with anti-Semitic attitudes rose to 63 percent from 47 percent in 2009.

In June MAZSIHISZ reported a verbal assault on retired Chief Rabbi Jozsef Schweitzer on the street in Budapest. President Janos Ader visited Rabbi Schweitzer at his home the next day and condemned the incident in an open letter to all citizens. Other government officials and heads of the "historic" religious groups also condemned the incident and expressed solidarity with the rabbi. In October an assailant beat a local Jewish community leader outside a prayer house in Budapest. The perpetrator was sentenced to two years in prison.

There were 187 reported instances of disturbing the peace around or vandalism of Jewish and Christian properties, nine in houses of worship, and 178 in cemeteries. During the first half of the year, vandals damaged a number of Holocaust memorial sites, including the Raoul Wallenberg statue in Budapest. Government officials condemned these incidents. On July 22, vandals destroyed 57 graves in the Jewish cemetery of Kaposvar. Prime Minister Orban sent a letter of support to the head of the local Jewish community, while the state secretary for religious, ethnic, and civil

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society relations publicly condemned the crimes. The police investigation remained pending at the end of the year.

The weekly radical magazine *Magyar Forum* and the official weekly publication of the Jobbik party, *Barikad*, continued to publish anti-Semitic articles. NGOs reported that the government monitored the content of Web sites with anti-Semitic content to enforce the prohibition against public display of such symbols as the swastika and the World War II-era Hungarian fascist regime's arrow cross.

Prime Minister Orban wrote to a member of the U.S. Congress on July 3, in response to a letter in which the congressman and a large number of fellow members of Congress had voiced concerns about rising anti-Semitism and the Jobbik Party. Orban noted that the "focal point" of Hungarian anti-Semitism was a news portal located in the United States and asked for assistance in "terminating anti-Semitic provocations in Hungary supported from the United States of America."

Christian churches and the Jewish community continued to organize events under the auspices of the Christian-Jewish Society, which brought together religious scholars for discussions. The society organized 64 lectures on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Religious groups demonstrated willingness to work together across a wide range of areas to achieve common social and political goals. On December 23, volunteers from the MAZSIHISZ youth group and the Hungarian Islamic Community jointly delivered donated food to impoverished residents of the village of Vilmany in the northeastern part of the country.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. ambassador, visiting U.S. government officials, and embassy staff met with government leaders to discuss religious freedom concerns, especially the new procedures for recognizing churches and the increase in anti-Semitic incidents. Embassy officials and visiting U.S. officials regularly met with leaders of the "historic" religious groups, smaller religious groups, and groups previously registered as churches that lost their status under the new religion law.

U.S. embassy officers closely tracked anti-Semitic incidents and the government's response and regularly consulted with leaders of religious groups to assess the situation. The embassy continued to speak out against anti-Semitism and hate speech and urged all parties to do the same.

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In January the U.S. special envoy for Holocaust issues attended the opening ceremony for the Raoul Wallenberg commemoration and met with senior government officials, representatives of the Jewish community, and civil society groups to discuss restitution to Hungarian Holocaust survivors. Throughout the year-long commemoration, the ambassador and other embassy officials attended and supported nearly every event related to Raoul Wallenberg.

In July the U.S. special envoy to monitor and combat anti-Semitism met with senior government officials, MPs, the deputy prosecutor general, Jewish congregations, civil society groups, and members of the press to promote tolerance and urge the importance of actively combating anti-Semitism. The ambassador also attended a rally in December against anti-Semitic remarks made in parliament by a Jobbik MP. A deputy assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights, and labor met with government officials and leaders of minority religious communities in May. Two additional visitors from the State Department's Office of the Special Envoy on Holocaust Issues and the Office of International Religious Freedom also met with a variety of government officials and religious leaders.

The ambassador and other U.S. embassy officials attended a variety of other events to honor Jewish culture and commemorate victims of the Holocaust. Some of these activities included screenings at the embassy, at a Hungarian school, and at American Corners throughout the country of a film exploring one town's experience of the Holocaust through the eyes of its survivors. The embassy provided a grant for a Holocaust survivor to speak at schools, meet with government officials, and visit an embassy-sponsored tolerance camp. An embassy official spoke at the opening of an exhibition in Pecs on "Jewish Life before the War" and at the opening of an exhibition at the Holocaust Memorial Center. The embassy also supported events organized by the NGO "Subjective Values," including one in commemoration of Kristallnacht. On September 14, the ambassador delivered remarks at the Henryk Slawik Memorial Conference in honor of a Polish rescuer of Hungarian Jews.