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Germany

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

July-December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report

Report

September 13, 2011

The Basic Law and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally enforced these protections.

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

The government made positive efforts to improve the integration of Muslims and other minorities into society, investigated and prosecuted criminal behavior by extremists directed at religious groups, and promoted tolerance education. Nonetheless, there continued to be concerns about societal and governmental (federal and state) treatment of certain religious minorities, notably Scientologists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Muslims.

There were reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, and practice. Right-wing extremists and Muslim immigrant youth committed politically motivated crimes against minorities including religious groups. Jewish cemeteries were desecrated. Muslim communities sometimes suffered societal discrimination when seeking to build new mosques; however, many members of government and civil society initiated discussions about Muslim integration and expressed their commitment to addressing the problem. Roman Catholic and Protestant churches continued to use "sect commissioners" to warn the public of dangers from some minority religious groups such as the Unification Church, Scientologists, Universelles Leben (Universal Life), and Transcendental Meditation practitioners. Scientologists continued to find "sect filters" used against them in education and employment, as well as discrimination in political party membership.

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The U.S. government placed particular emphasis on support for direct dialogue between representatives of minority religious groups and concerned government officials. The U.S. embassy engaged actively with Muslim communities,

including through public outreach, exchange, and other programs that promote religious tolerance, diversity, and greater understanding between religious groups.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 137,847 square miles and a population of 82 million. There are no official statistics on religious groups; however, unofficial estimates and figures provided by religious organizations provide a breakdown of the membership of various denominations. The data below were compiled from a variety of sources.

The Roman Catholic Church has a membership of 25.2 million. The Protestant Church, a confederation of the Lutheran, Uniate, and Reformed Protestant churches, has 24.5 million members. Together, these two churches account for more than three-fifths of the population.

Other Protestant Christian denominations and their membership include the New Apostolic Church, 363,300; Baptist communities (Evangelical Christian Baptists, International Baptist Convention, Reformed Baptists, Bible Baptists, and others), 75,000-100,000; and evangelical nondenominational Baptists, 84,000. Muslims number approximately 4 million, including 2.6 million Sunnis, 400,000 Alevis, and 226,000 Shia. There are approximately 2,600 Islamic places of worship, including an estimated 150 traditional architecture mosques, with 100 more planned. Approximately 45 percent of Muslim immigrants, who are predominantly from Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina, have become German citizens. Orthodox Christians number 1.4 million, including 450,000 Greek Orthodox/Constantinople Patriarchate; 250,000 Serbian Orthodox; 300,000 Romanian Orthodox; and 180,000 Russian Orthodox/Moscow Patriarchate. Buddhists number 245,000 and Hindus 97,500. Jehovah's Witnesses recorded 166,000 active missionary members and an estimated 40,000 nonactive members. The Church of Scientology operates 18 churches and missions, and according to press reports, has 30,000 members. However, according to the Offices for the Protection of the Constitution (OPC) in Brandenburg and Hamburg, the Church of Scientology has 5,000-7,000 members.

According to estimates, Jews number more than 200,000, of whom 104,241 were registered members of the Jewish community at the end of 2009. From 1990 to 2008, approximately 102,000 Jews and non-Jewish dependents from the countries of the Former Soviet Union (FSU) arrived, predominantly from Russia, joining the 25,000 to 30,000 Jews already in the country. A more restrictive immigration policy regarding Jews from the FSU decreased the number of Jewish immigrants to 704 in 2009 from 862 in 2008, 1,296 in 2007, and 1,971 in 2006. The new policy was designed in cooperation with Jewish organizations to better manage the integration of individuals into the Jewish community.

Approximately 28 million persons (one-third of the population) either have no religious affiliation or are members of unrecorded religious organizations.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

Please refer to Appendix C in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for the status of the government's acceptance of international legal standards <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/appendices/index.htm>.

The Basic Law and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally enforced these protections with some exceptions. Discrimination against and unequal treatment of some minority religious groups remained a problem at the local level, in part because of the legal/constitutional structure of church-state relations. The structure for managing church-state relations, established in 1949, has been gradually adapting to the country's increasingly diverse religious composition.

Religious organizations are not required to register with the state, and groups may organize themselves for private religious purposes without constraint. Religious organizations must register in order to qualify as nonprofit associations with tax exempt status. State-level authorities review registration submissions and routinely grant tax-exempt status. Their decisions are subject to judicial review. Organizations that apply for tax-exempt status must provide evidence, through their own statutes, history, and activities, that they are a religious group. Local tax offices occasionally conduct reviews of tax exempt status.

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Religion and state are separate, although a special partnership exists between the state and those religious communities that have the status of a "corporation under public law." Any religious organization may request that it be granted "public law corporation" (PLC) status, which, among other things, entitles it to name prison, hospital, and military chaplains and to levy a tithe (averaging 9 percent of income tax) on its members that the state collects. PLCs pay a fee to the government for this tax service; however, not all avail themselves of it. The decision to grant PLC status is made at the state level based on certain requirements, including an assurance of permanence, the size of the organization, and an indication that the organization is not hostile to the constitutional order or fundamental rights. An estimated 180 religious groups have been granted PLC status, including the Protestant and Catholic churches, the Jewish community, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Seventh-day Adventists, Mennonites, Baptists, Methodists, Christian Scientists, and the Salvation Army.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have been granted PLC status in 12 federal states: Berlin, Bavaria, Brandenburg, Hamburg, Hesse, Lower-Saxony, Mecklenburg-West Pommerania, Saarland, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein, and Thuringia. Baden-Wuerttemberg, Rhineland-Palatine, Bremen, and North Rhine-Westphalia have not granted PLC status, and attempts by the Jehovah's Witnesses to alleviate these states' concerns about the organization have been unsuccessful.

Muslim communities remained an exception in lacking PLC status. In principle the federal government favors states granting public law corporation status to Muslim communities but has indicated that Muslims should agree upon a single organization with which the states and the federal government can negotiate. In 2007 the four largest Muslim organizations formed the Muslim Coordination Council (KRM), which claims to represent the country's Muslims. Whether and when this group would meet legal requirements for registration as a PLC remained unclear and was to be decided at the state-level.

Achieving PLC status has potential implications for Muslims who wish a traditional Islamic burial, which consists of burial in a shroud facing Mecca, in a cemetery permanently dedicated only to Islamic burials. These conditions conflict with some states' laws or customs, which require a coffin be buried in a cemetery in a rented plot, which will be turned over every 30 or 60 years. Few Islamic cemeteries existed. Twelve of the 16 federal states allowed burial without a coffin during the reporting period. On December 9, the Berlin House of Representatives adopted the first state law to permit burials that fully meet Muslim requirements.

By the end of the reporting period, eight states had enacted laws banning female Muslim teachers from wearing headscarves at work, after the Federal Constitutional Court cleared the way in 2003 for state legislation. New legislation generally used language that could be applied to wearing any symbol that could be interpreted as rejecting constitutional values or supporting oppression. Courts upheld headscarf bans in several cases. The Federal Supreme Court ruled in 2003 that banning headscarves is within state legislative jurisdiction, and subsequently Baden-Wuerttemberg, Bavaria, Bremen, Lower Saxony, North-Rhine Westphalia, and Saarland passed headscarf bans for teachers in public schools, while Berlin and Hesse passed laws to ban headscarves for all civil servants. Politicians also debated a ban of the burqa (a loose garment covering the entire body and having a veiled opening for the eyes worn by some Muslim women), although very few women wear the burqa.

The criminal code addresses the insulting of faiths, religious societies, and ideological groups. An incitement intended to disturb the public order is punishable by up to three years' imprisonment and a fine. However, prosecutions had not resulted in significant numbers of convictions.

The government subsidized some religious organizations for historical and cultural reasons. In view of the country's culpability for the Holocaust, the states have accepted as a permanent duty the obligation to provide financial support to the Jewish community, including support for reconstruction of old synagogues and construction of new ones.

Newer churches and mosques do not generally receive subsidies for maintenance or construction. State governments also subsidize various institutions affiliated with public law corporations, such as religious schools and hospitals, which provide public services.

The 2003 State Agreement on Cooperation between the federal government and the Central Council of Jews supplements the funding received by the Jewish community from the states. The Central Council receives approximately 5 million euros (\$6.7 million) in annual funding to help maintain the Jewish cultural heritage, restore the Jewish community, and support integration and social work for the community. The central council reports annually to the government on use of the funds. The agreement emphasizes that the Central Council of Jews supports all branches of Judaism with the funds provided. In addition, the federal government provides financial support for the Hochschule fur Judische Studien in Heidelberg, the Rabbi Seminar at the University of Potsdam, and the Leo Baeck Institute. The federal government also covers 50 percent of the cost for maintaining former Jewish cemeteries in the country.

Authorities strongly condemned all anti-Semitic acts and devoted significant resources to investigating incidents and prosecuting perpetrators, although arrests and prosecutions were infrequent. The state also provided 24-hour police protection at synagogues and many other Jewish institutions.

The government maintains a stated position of neutrality in religious matters since there is no official faith or state church. It does not declare religious holidays as national holidays. Individual states determine which religious holidays are observed, and these vary from state to state.

Most public schools offer Protestant and Catholic religious instruction in cooperation with those churches, as well as instruction in Judaism if enough students express interest. The number of Islamic religion classes in public schools continued to grow. Participants in the federal government-sponsored Islam Conference agreed in principle that Islamic education should be made widely available. Education is a state responsibility, and in part because no nationally recognized Islamic organization exists that could assist in developing a curriculum or providing services, the form and content of Islamic instruction varied from state to state. Organizations providing Islamic instruction do not have PLC status.

All states offer religious instruction and ethics courses. In most states students who do not wish to participate in religious instruction can substitute ethics courses. In Berlin and Brandenburg, the ethics course is compulsory, while the course on religion is voluntary. Religion and ethics courses are treated equally in Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, and Thuringia, meaning a student can choose either one.

Islamic religious instruction for the estimated 750,000 to 900,000 Muslim students in the public school system remained controversial. Although no Muslim group had PLC status that would entitle it to offer Islamic courses, state governments recognized the demand and worked with local Muslim organizations to establish such courses. Hesse's state government launched an Islamic education pilot project based on the Alevi branch in August 2009 in five elementary schools. Additionally, the government formed a working group to investigate how a full Islamic education program in all schools could be implemented.

Since 2008 North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) has introduced regular religion classes for Alevis at 15 public elementary schools for 213 students. NRW began a pilot program in 1999 in which Muslim teachers teach courses on Islam. In the 2009-10 academic year, 10,541 students (more than in any other German state) participated in these classes at 133 different public schools. The Bavarian state government's courses for the five-year pilot project on Islam, which began in March 2009, continued. A total of 265 Bavarian schools, most of them elementary schools, offered Islamic instruction for about 10,500 pupils and employed approximately 70 teachers, most of them from Turkey.

The government of Lower Saxony's plans to institute training for imams in the state continued. The University of Osnabruck hosted two programs: a two-semester program to train elementary school teachers to provide Islamic education in public schools and a newly inaugurated program to instruct imams in German language, culture, and current affairs. The imam continuing education program began in October with 30 students, twice as many as originally anticipated. The federal government planned to launch a three-year bachelor of arts program to educate imams for 400-500 students at four locations in 2012. The government chose the universities of Munster, Tubingen, and Osnabruck to host centers for Islamic studies and planned to provide 16 million euros (\$21.4 million) over the next five years for the centers.

In the spring the University of Munster created a second chair for training secondary school teachers in Islamic religious instruction, filled in July by an applicant approved by the KRM.

A plan by Benjamin Idris, imam of the Muslim community in Penzberg, to develop a Muslim Center in Munich ("ZIEM") comprising a community center, mosque, library, and an academy for the education of imams, was rejected by Bavaria's interior ministry, although the Munich city administration, including the Christian Social Union caucus, supported it. The ministry suspected the Penzberg community of being affiliated with Milli Goerues and the Muslim Brotherhood, organizations that are highlighted in the annual report of Bavaria's OPC. Bavaria's OPC continued to assert that the Muslim community in Penzberg was closely affiliated with fundamentalist Islam. Penzberg's Muslim community unsuccessfully appealed this ruling to the Bavarian state court.

Areas remained where the law and Islamic practices conflicted, including the call to prayer, Islamic ritual slaughtering, and the segregation of older boys and girls during gym classes.

The legal requirement that children attend school, confirmed by the Constitutional Court and the European Court of Justice in 2006, continued to be a problem for some advocates of homeschooling for religious reasons, due to concerns about sex education and the teaching of evolution.

There were no new developments in Ministry of Defense efforts to develop a Muslim chaplaincy. The efforts failed because of inability to reach agreement with multiple Muslim groups on a plan. Separately, the ministry developed a code of conduct to facilitate Islamic practices for an estimated 3,000 Muslim soldiers, which remained in effect.

The General Act on Equal Treatment prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, ethnic origin, race, religion, disability, age, and sexual identity. In 2002 the Federal Constitutional Court defined the government's warning function with respect to nontraditional religions, ruling that the government could characterize nontraditional religions as "sects," "youth religions," and "youth sects," and is allowed to provide accurate information about them to the public; however, the government may not defame these religious groups by using terms such as "destructive," "pseudoreligious," or "manipulative."

Since 2005 applicants for citizenship in Bavaria have been required to fill out a questionnaire regarding their affiliation with organizations under observation by the state OPC, including Scientology.

In 2008 the Federal Interior Ministry introduced a nationwide naturalization test. The Central Council of Muslims welcomed it, since it ended earlier state attempts to include questions on morals and social values, which had been seen as discriminating against Muslims. According to the census and latest statistics, the number of immigrants naturalized in 2008 dropped to 94,500, approximately 18,600 fewer than in 2007 when 113,000 persons became citizens. This was the lowest total since the country's reunification.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The federal government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period. Some state governments and federal agencies did not recognize certain belief systems, including Scientology, as religions; however, the absence of recognition did not prevent their adherents from engaging in public and private religious activities.

The federal and state OPCs in Baden-Wuerttemberg, Bavaria, Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg, and Lower Saxony continued to monitor the Church of Scientology's activities. Federal and some state authorities continued to classify Scientology as a potential threat to democratic order, resulting in discrimination against Scientologists in both the public and private sectors. Several states published pamphlets about Scientology (and other religious groups) that detail the church's ideology and practices. States defended the practice by noting their responsibility to respond to citizens' requests for information about Scientology as well as other subjects. The pamphlets warn of the dangers the church poses to democracy, the legal system, and human rights.

In response to concerns about Scientology's ideology and practices, government agencies at the federal and state levels and private-sector entities established rules or procedures that discriminate against Scientology as an organization and/or against individual members of the church.

Scientologists continued to report instances of societal and governmental discrimination. Over the last decade, the Church of Scientology has filed legal challenges against many practices used to discriminate against its members in public and private life. These have included suits to prohibit monitoring of the church by state OPC offices, against the use in hiring practices of the so-called sect filter, and against workplace discrimination. The courts rendered final, binding decisions on two key issues: the religious bona fides of Scientology and the improper use of so-called sect filters to blacklist and boycott Scientologists in the public and private sector.

In July the Chamber for Industry and Handicraft for Munich and Upper Bavaria issued bidding documents containing a "sect filter" declaration that excludes Scientologists or companies that employ Scientologists from obtaining the contract.

In August the German Federation of Women in Business began using a "sect filter" as part of its application forms. Scientologists cannot become members of the federation. Pursuant to the terms of the "filter," individuals and companies who employ Scientologists also are banned.

In August a Scientologist who applied for a position with the City of Munich was told he had to sign a "sect filter" declaring he was not a Scientologist; otherwise, he would not get the job.

On August 31, the Hamburg interior ministry disbanded its Working Group on Scientology. However, a spokesperson for the ministry stated that "(t)he fight against Scientology will continue, only structured differently." The spokesperson emphasized that the working group's former director would continue to "educate the public and government institutions about Scientology's dangerous practices" and that Hamburg's Office for the Protection of the Constitution would continue to be tasked to counsel individuals, companies, and school drop outs.

On November 24, Bavarian Interior Minister Joachim Herrmann presented a new edition of the ministry's 60-page brochure entitled "The Scientology System," warning against this "organization, which is clearly hostile to the constitution and in opposition to basic principles of German democracy."

A large number of Muslim organizations, including some that profess to be engaged solely in peaceful religious, social, and/or cultural activities, were under observation by state and federal OPCs.

Muslim teachers wearing headscarves continued to be a concern, as several states ban public school teachers from wearing headscarves.

In January 2009 the Federal Court in Leipzig rejected the appeal of a 2008 ruling by the Baden-Wuerttemberg Higher Administrative Court in Mannheim that a Muslim elementary school teacher in Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt must remove her headscarf during class. The case was later appealed to the Federal Constitutional Court and was pending at the end of the reporting period.

On May 27, Berlin's Higher Administrative Court reversed a court ruling from September 2009 that had allowed a 16-year-old Muslim student to perform midday prayers at school. The higher court ruled that one pupil's rights could not be put before the good of the group as a whole. It also argued that in a school with students of various religious beliefs, neutrality was required to ensure a proper learning environment. The ruling was appealed to the Federal Administrative Court; the case was pending at year's end.

Some religious groups expressed opposition to the government's prohibition of home schooling. During the year local authorities brought criminal charges against some parents who refused to enroll their children in government-licensed schools for religious reasons. State authorities generally permitted groups to establish private schools so long as they met basic curriculum requirements.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were reports of abuses of religious freedom.

On April 7, two Baptist women from a Paderborn community were arrested for preventing their children from participating in sex education lessons. One of the women and her husband had been fined 120 euro (\$161) each in 2008 for refusing to allow their children's participation in a theater project of the school. They lost the appeal but refused to pay the fine, for which they were each sentenced to eight days in prison.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees in the country.

Section III. Status of Societal Actions Affecting Enjoyment of Religious Freedom

There were reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, and practice.

In 2009 the federal OPC recorded 18,750 right-wing "politically motivated crimes" (PMCs) with extremist motivation (a decrease of 5.8 percent compared with 19,894 in 2008). This included 891 violent crimes (down 14.5 percent from 1,042 in 2008). The Federal Criminal Investigation Office defines PMCs as offenses related to the victims' ideology, nationality, ethnicity, race, skin color, religion, worldview, ancestry, sexual orientation, disability status, parents, or social status. The 2009 OPC report included 4,734 left-wing PMCs, 707 PMCs by foreigners, and 761 PMCs of other types. The report listed 195 right-wing extremist organizations and groups (compared to 156 in 2008). Authorities estimated membership in these groups, plus right-wing extremists who remained unorganized, at 26,600 (versus 30,000 in 2008).

A degree of anti-Semitism based on religious doctrines and historical anti-Jewish prejudice continued to exist. Far-right political organizations claimed that Jews were the cause of negative modern social and economic trends, such as globalization. While most anti-Semitic acts were attributed to neo-Nazi or other right-wing extremist groups or individuals, recent high-profile anti-Semitic incidents indicated that Muslim youths were increasingly involved in attacks on and harassment of Jews.

The 2009 OPC report recorded 1,502 right-wing PMCs with extremist and anti-Semitic motivation in 2009 compared to 1,477 in 2008. Among these the number of violent crimes dropped from 44 to 31. Federal authorities generally took action against anti-Semitic offenses.

The most widespread anti-Semitic acts were the desecration of Jewish cemeteries or monuments with graffiti that included the use of swastikas. According to the Federal Interior Ministry, there were 38 desecrations of Jewish cemeteries in 2009, compared with 53 in 2008 and 30 in 2007.

On May 6, Udo Pastoers, a member of the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD), was found guilty of sedition by the municipal court (Amtsgericht) in Saarbruecken. Pastoers received a suspended 10-month sentence and was fined 6,000 euros (\$8,040). According to the court, Pastoers insulted people of Turkish and Jewish descent in his Ash Wednesday speech in February 2009. The court ruled that Pastoers' language went "beyond the right of freedom of expression." On October 19, Pastoers filed an appeal in Saarbruecken's regional court.

On June 19, members of a Jewish dance troupe were forced off stage during a neighborhood street festival in Hanover, Lower Saxony, after a group of children and teenagers pelted the dancers with stones and used a bullhorn to scream anti-Semitic remarks. One of the dancers was injured, and the dance group subsequently ended their performance. The assailants were reportedly of Lebanese, Palestinian, Iraqi, Iranian, and Turkish origin. The police identified nine suspects shortly after the incident. The police arrested a 19- and a 14-year-old on June 22 for interrogation, and four more suspects on June 24--one nine- and two 11-year-old boys, as well as a 16-year-old.

On June 28, two Israeli tourists were overheard conversing in Hebrew at a Berlin nightclub. Another guest, apparently of Palestinian descent, asked them where they were from. When one of the tourists, a 22-year-old man, replied, "from Israel," the man attacked him and his companion. The situation escalated when a Turkish-born bouncer intervened and attacked the Israelis with pepper spray. The tourists were able to flee; they required medical treatment. Law enforcement officials assumed that the attack was anti-Semitic in nature. The bouncer and the man who attacked the Israelis, whose identity was unknown, were being investigated for aggravated assault and battery.

On July 7, the Gera Administrative Court in Thuringia ruled that the mayor of Gera did not have the right to call for a demonstration against an NPD-organized neo-Nazi rock concert scheduled for July 10. The court ruled that the call for the demonstration violated the mayor's duty to be neutral. State parliament representatives from the Left Party criticized the decision, stating that there should not be any neutrality regarding the Nazi ideology.

On July 28, visitors to the Web site of the Buchenwald/Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camp Memorial Foundation were redirected to a Web site denying the holocaust. Another foundation Web site was deleted. According to the foundation, the attackers left messages such as "brown is beautiful" and "Wir kommen wieder" (we'll be back). The Federal Office of Criminal Investigation launched an investigation, which was pending at the end of the reporting period.

On August 29, the funeral hall of the Jewish cemetery in Dresden-Johannstadt (Saxony) was subjected to an arson attack. The entrance door was set on fire by unknown perpetrators. An investigation was pending.

On September 1, the Leipzig Federal Court of Justice (as a court of last instance), rejected a revision and confirmed a ban on the Kiel-based right-wing extremist group German Youth Faithful to the Homeland (HDJ), on the grounds that the organization was similar to the Nazi-era Hitler Youth and directed against democracy and the country's constitution. In March 2009 then federal interior minister Wolfgang Schaueble banned the HDJ for distributing racist and Nazi propaganda. Searches were also carried out in Berlin, Brandenburg, Lower Saxony, and Saxony in an effort to confiscate the HDJ's assets.

On September 7, Rhineland Palatinate police forces searched offices and apartments of the neo-Nazi group HNG (Hilfsorganisation fuer nationale politische Gefangene). With approximately 600 members, the HNG is the largest neo-Nazi group in the country. Police officers raided four apartments in Mainz, including the garden shop of Ursula Mueller, the chairperson and, along with her husband Curt Mueller, central figure of the HNG. According to Rhineland Palatinate Minister of Interior Karl Peter Bruch, Mainz was considered to be the nucleus of the organization.

On October 13, three Jewish teenagers were insulted with anti-Semitic slogans on a public bus in Cologne-Pesch (North Rhine-Westphalia) by a group of juveniles. When they left the bus, they were spit on and kicked. Police were investigating four suspects aged between 11 and 15.

On October 30, unknown perpetrators attacked the new synagogue in Mainz (Rhineland-Palatinate). The perpetrators threw a Molotov cocktail at the synagogue but missed. There were no injuries or damages. An investigation was pending.

On November 14, the apartment of the state chairman of the Jewish communities in Lower Saxony was shot at with an air gun. Three windows of other apartments were damaged, but no one was injured. A police investigation was pending.

On November 19, the historic Jewish cemetery in Wattenscheid (North Rhine-Westphalia) was vandalized. More than 25 grave stones were overturned and smeared with paint, swastikas, Nazi symbols, and anti-Jewish slogans. In addition, a commemorative plaque for the former synagogue and a glass stele commemorating Shoa victims in other parts of the city were painted with swastikas. A police investigation was pending.

On December 7, unknown perpetrators smeared a memorial for the former Jewish synagogue in Magdeburg (Saxony-Anhalt) and the wall of the Jewish cemetery with Nazi slogans and symbols. The memorial for the synagogue had been subject to a similar attack on November 14. A police investigation was pending.

The rise of a substantial Muslim minority at times continued to engender social conflict with religious, ethnic, and cultural overtones. Commonly, this included local resistance to mosque construction, leasing land for Muslim cemeteries, or disagreements over whether Muslims may use loudspeakers in residential neighborhoods to call believers to prayer. Authorities argued that many disputes also appeared to be related to compliance with construction and zoning laws; private groups (with some Interior Ministry financing) sought to better educate Muslim groups about these laws. Muslim groups, however, argued that such rules were often abused or that local opposition was motivated by anti-Muslim bias. Noise and traffic levels as well as security concerns were also factors in neighborhood disputes.

Berlin was the center of several arson attacks against mosques. The Sehittik mosque in Berlin-Tempelhof was subject to four arson attempts on June 16, August 1 and 10, and November 19. There were no injuries; a police investigation was pending.

On November 27, the Al-Nur mosque in Berlin-Neukolln was subject to an arson attack, but only minor damages were sustained.

On December 9, the Islamic Cultural Center of Iranians in Berlin-Brandenburg, located in Berlin-Tempelhof, was subject to an arson attack. The center's façade was damaged by the fire, but no one was injured.

Berlin's police launched a special working group to investigate the series of attacks.

The Catholic Church and the Protestant Church continued publicly to oppose Scientology. Additionally, several public and private organizations continued to issue public warnings about Scientology after-school study programs. The sect commissioners investigated "sects, cults, and psycho groups" and publicized what they consider to be the dangers of these groups to the public. Protestant sect commissioners were especially active in their efforts to warn the public about alleged dangers posed by the Unification Church, Scientology, Bhagwan-Osho, Transcendental Meditation, and Universal Life. Print and Internet literature of the sect commissioners portrayed these groups unfavorably.

The Universal Life group reported that sect commissioner portrayals of the group promoted intolerance and that these portrayals were frequently repeated by media and municipal authorities; the latter then denied members of the group access to market stands and sales booths in municipal facilities, lecture halls, and information stands in public places.

Scientologists in Hamburg continued to report discrimination due to the use of "sect filters," stating that the Bundesagentur für Arbeit (Federal Employment Office) continued to use "filters," as did many small and medium-sized businesses. A sect filter is defined as an assurance a new employee has to sign stating that he or she has no contact with Scientology, has not participated in its training courses, and rejects its doctrines. The Hamburg Chamber of Commerce continued to use the "filter" in its mediation department.

Since the 1990s four of the major political parties (the Christian Democratic Union, Christian Social Union, Social Democratic Party, and Free Democratic Party) have banned Scientologists from party membership. Scientologists have unsuccessfully challenged these bans in courts.

In April 2009 several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) started a campaign to encourage young voters to counter right-wing extremism, with the goal of keeping the NPD out of parliament. Jewish NGOs, such as the Central Council of Jews, provided input and assistance on a variety of government-sponsored tolerance education programs focusing on anti-Semitism and xenophobia. The country is an active member of the 25-country Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research.

Hesse sponsors and is home to several interreligious federations, including the Interkultureller Rat (Intercultural Council), which promotes dialogue between native and nonnative residents, and the multifaith Religious Council, which seeks to improve sensitivity to religious needs, such as in hospitals.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The U.S. mission engages in activities that promote a more positive attitude toward the Muslim community. It has extensive contact with religious groups and meets frequently at multiple levels with representatives of religious groups to discuss their concerns. The mission has an active Muslim engagement program that includes student and other exchanges, outreach efforts, and speakers. As part of its outreach program, the mission regularly hosts activities and meetings with Muslim communities, Jewish communities, and interfaith dialogue groups such as the House of Religions in Hannover, Lower Saxony (a group which regularly brings Protestant Christians, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Bahais together).

In response to anti-Semitic crimes, members of the U.S. embassy closely followed the government's responses and expressed the U.S. government's opposition to anti-Semitism. Mission officers maintained contact with Jewish groups and continued to monitor closely incidents of anti-Semitic activity.

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