



Spain

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

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The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

The Government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There continued to be concerns that Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Buddhists do not have bilateral cooperation agreements with the Government, which would provide the same benefits and privileges as other groups with "deeply rooted status." There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the Government during the reporting period. There is no state religion; however, Roman Catholicism was the dominant religion and enjoyed the closest official relationship with the Government.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The U.S. Government engaged with government and religious leaders on many topics throughout the year, from burial preservation issues to further integration of immigrant populations of diverse religious backgrounds.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 194,897 square miles and a population of 46.1 million.

No formal government census exists based upon religious beliefs, as the Constitution provides that no individual is obligated to answer questions regarding their ideology. Sociological data is collected, but cannot be categorized as statistically sound. The Center for Sociological Investigation (CIS), an independent government agency, periodically collects survey data on religious trends. A January 2009 CIS survey reported that 77 percent of respondents considered themselves Catholic; however, 54.7 percent of those persons stated that they almost never attend Mass. Religious groups that constitute less than 10 percent of the population include all other Christian groups: Eastern Orthodox; Protestant and evangelical denominations, including Christian Scientists; Jehovah's Witnesses; Seventh-day Adventists; and Mormons (members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). Also, fewer than 10 percent of the population are followers of Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Baha'ism.

The Episcopal Conference of Spain estimates there are 35 million Catholics in the country. The Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities (FEREDE) estimates there are 1.2 million evangelical Christians and other Protestants, 800,000 of whom are immigrants or live in the country at least six months of the year. A September 2008 study of the Union of Islamic Communities of Spain estimates that there are more than 1.2 million Muslims in Spain, attending 13 large Islamic centers ("grand mosques") and 480 worship centers or oratories throughout the country. Other government authorities report as many as 800 Islamic oratories. The Federation of Jewish Communities estimates that there are 48,000 Jews and 22 places of worship.

The Observatorio Andalusi calculated that although there are converts to Islam, more than two-thirds of Muslims are immigrants without Spanish nationality. Most are recent immigrants from Morocco (680,000), but there are also Algerians (47,000), Pakistanis (37,000), Senegalese (31,000), and immigrants from other Arab or Islamic countries. As of January 2008, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs reported that Moroccans are the second largest legal immigrant population, after Romanians, numbering over 645,000. The largest concentrations of Muslims are in the regions of Catalonia (300,000), Andalucia (120,000), Madrid (80,000), Valencia, Murcia, and the Spanish North African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla.

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) noted that a small number of Christians emigrated from countries such as Egypt and Lebanon. The country also has received a large influx of immigrants from Latin America, many of them Catholics. Most Orthodox Christians are from Eastern European countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, and Ukraine. Evangelical Protestant immigrants typically come from African and Latin American countries, according to government officials.

Entities may voluntarily register with the Ministry of Justice; religious freedoms are protected regardless of whether an entity is registered. As of April 20, 2009, the MOJ's Register of Religious Entities included 12,187 entities affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. There were 2,057 non-Catholic entities and 3,583 non-Catholic places of worship registered. These included 1,337 Protestant or evangelical church entities and 2,413 Protestant or evangelical places of worship; 13 Orthodox entities and 25 Orthodox places of worship; two Jehovah's Witnesses entities and 773 places of worship; one Mormon entity with 120 places of worship; one Unification Church; four Christian Scientist entities, 20 entities of Judaism with 22 places of worship; 563 Islamic entities with 160 places of worship; 11 entities of the Baha'i Faith with 12 places of worship; five entities of Hinduism; and 32 entities of Buddhism with 32 places of worship.

The number of non-Catholic churches and religious communities may be much larger than indicated. Some religious groups choose to register as cultural organizations with regional governments rather than with the National Registry of Religious Entities in Madrid.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion, although the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Buddhists do not have bilateral cooperation agreements with the Government that would provide the same benefits and privileges as other groups with "deeply rooted status." While there are no statutory or legal restrictions, some Muslim and non-Catholic Christian groups claimed that restrictions and policies at the local level precluded them from assembling to practice their beliefs.

Article 16 of the Constitution provides for religious freedom and the freedom of worship by individuals and groups. It also states, "No faith shall have the character of a state religion." However, in federal tax documents, the Government provides taxpayers the option of allocating a percentage of their income to the Catholic Church. This financing is also available for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) but not to other religious entities. Taxpayers may select a box on their income tax forms to contribute up to 0.7 percent of their income taxes to the Catholic Church or an NGO. In 2008 taxpayers contributed approximately \$314.8 million (€241.3 million) to the Catholic Church. This sum did not include additional state funding for religion teachers in public schools or for military and hospital chaplains.

Based on the Protestant, Jewish, and Islamic religious groups' notorious arraigo (deeply rooted) status, representatives were able to enter into bilateral agreements with the Government in 1992. These agreements provide certain tax benefits and give civil validity to weddings performed by the religious groups. They also permit

the religious groups to place their teachers in schools and chaplains in hospitals, prisons, and the military. Protestant entities signed the accord as the Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities (FEREDE); Jewish entities signed as the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain (FCJE); and Islamic entities as the Islamic Commission of Spain (CIE). The CIE is composed of two federations: the Spanish Federation of Islamic Religious Entities (FEERI) and the Union of Islamic Communities in Spain (UCIDE).

In 2003 the Government expanded the concept of notorio arraigo faiths to allow other religious groups to sign bilateral agreements and granted the status to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, although without signing a bilateral agreement. In November 2007 the MOJ granted notorio arraigo status to the Buddhist entity, as it had to the Jehovah's Witnesses in January 2007; however, the Buddhist, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormon communities do not receive the same benefits and privileges granted the other religions with cooperation agreements. Although the Government has indicated that it would amend the laws governing tax benefits and privileges for religious groups to extend these benefits to all groups achieving notorio arraigo status, Parliament has not yet adopted this proposal. On May 7, 2008, Vice President Fernández de la Vega met with the Constitutional Commission of Congress to publicly announce the Government's plans for legal reform over the next four years, among them legal reform to promote religious freedom to make its laws consistent with the pluralistic society that the country has become. On April 14, 2009, President Zapatero announced that the reform of the Law of Religious Freedom would be sent to Parliament for debate. By the end of the reporting period, however, Parliament had not received the proposed legislation.

The Government has taken steps to integrate non-Catholic religious groups through the support or sponsorship of programs on interfaith dialogue, principally through the establishment of the Foundation for Pluralism and Coexistence. The foundation, which provides funds to minority and religious groups to promote religious equality and dialogue, most recently funded, in part, the following: publication of the fifth volume of "Religious Minorities in Castilla-La Mancha" in March 2009; the 7th Congress of the Union of Islamic Communities in Zaragoza in March 2009, which focused on the role of women in society and specifically Muslim women in Spanish and Aragon communities; the First International Congress on Protestant Reform and Liberties in Europe, March 31 to April 1, 2009; and Ibiza's First Islamic Congress in March 2009.

The foundation's funds, \$6.5 million (€5 million) in 2009, are used for cultural, educational, and social integration programs (not religious activities). The board includes representatives of most government ministries as well as members of concerned religious groups themselves. Beyond providing support and various seminars, the foundation published studies on religious minorities' social and cultural realities throughout the country. Studies have been completed in Andalusia and the Canary Islands and began in Murcia, Aragon, and Navarre. The foundation also hosts sports activities and provides language training and youth tutoring classes, all within the local communities. Muslim and Protestant leaders continue to cite the foundation's work as a positive step for integrating non-Catholic religious groups. The Government attributed significant increases in the number of non-Catholic religious organizations officially registering with the MOJ to this foundation, since registration was required to apply for foundation funds. Members of all religious groups also serve as members of a government Committee of Advisors on Religious Freedom.

Since 2004 Catalonia has had a regional working group called the Stable Group on Religions that is made up of the largest religions in Catalonia: Catholicism, Protestantism, the Orthodox Church, Islam, and Judaism. The group consists of three committees--one to support new arrivals, another for mediation and prevention, and a third for coordinating activities in correctional centers. The group also hosts intercultural dialogues and in December 2008 held a conference on the future of religious coexistence in Europe.

Some autonomous regions also have agreements with religious groups to encourage social integration. For example, the Catalanian government has agreements with the Islamic Council of Catalonia and Protestant, Jewish,

and Baha'i religious communities. These agreements are social rather than financial in nature and are intended to encourage social integration.

In November 2007 the Constitutional Court decided that denying the Holocaust is no longer an offense punishable by incarceration since, it claimed, it is permissible in the framework of freedom of speech. Until then, the law set a punishment of up to two years in prison for this offense. The Court also opined, however, that imprisonment for the offense of justifying the Holocaust--or genocide--is compatible with the Constitution. Discussions on this matter began following the 1996 trial of a bookshop owner in Barcelona, Pedro Valera, who disseminated neo-Nazi material. Valera was sentenced to five years in prison and fined. However, the High Court in Barcelona deferred implementing the sentence pending the decision of the Constitutional Court, which ultimately decided Varela should serve two years in jail for justifying the Holocaust and three additional years for inciting racial hate--for a total sentence of five years. Since the Constitutional Court did not announce their decision on the appeal until after seven years after proceedings had been initiated, the Barcelona Court reduced the sentence to seven months, arguing that the sentencing had expired.

The 2007 Law against Violence, Racism, Xenophobia, and Intolerance in Sport establishes sanctions, including closures, suspension, and demotion in divisional standings, against teams and stadiums for prohibited actions perpetrated by professional athletic clubs, players, or fans. The law resulted from a long history of fans insulting players based on their race or religion. In September 2008 the Commission levied a \$40,000 (€30,000) fine against the Vallecana soccer for collaborating with an ultra-right group and issuing 53 invitations for the group to attend a sporting event. For the two-year period of 2007-08, the Government sanctioned more than 1,200 parties and levied fines of \$600,000 (€466,000), mostly to individual spectators for inciting or involvement in altercations.

The Government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Epiphany (January 6), Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Assumption (August 15), All Saints' Day (November 1), Immaculate Conception (December 8), and Christmas (December 25). Many regional governments also establish local religious holidays. In the 1992 cooperation accords with the FCJE and CIE, the Government agreed to recognize Jewish and Islamic holidays and to allow members of both religious groups to (upon agreement by their employer) take Friday afternoons off from work, with pay, to observe the Sabbath. The 1992 accord with FEREDÉ also accommodates Protestant entities, such as the Seventh-day Adventists, that celebrate Saturday as the Sabbath by giving them Friday afternoon off from work, with pay, to observe the Sabbath.

The Law of Religious Freedom of 1980 implements the constitutional provision for freedom of religion. The 1980 law establishes a legal framework and certain privileges for religious organizations. Religious organizations voluntarily register in the Register of Religious Entities, maintained and regularly updated by the MOJ Office of Religious Affairs. To register with the MOJ, religious groups must submit documentation supporting their claim to be religions. If a group's application is rejected, the group may appeal the decision to the courts. If it is judged not to be a religion, it may be included on a Register of Associations maintained by the Ministry of Interior. Inclusion on the Register of Associations grants legal status as authorized by the law regulating the right of association. Religious groups not officially recognized by the Government have in certain cases been treated as cultural associations.

The first section of the Register of Religious Entities is called the "special section." Catholic entities and those non-Catholic churches, denominations, and communities that have a cooperation agreement with the state (Jews, Muslims, and Protestants) register in the special section. Catholic dioceses and parishes are not required to register to gain benefits under the 1979 cooperation agreement between the Holy See and the Government, since the Episcopal Conference manages the relationship with the Government on behalf of the entire Catholic community.

In general the Government placed no legal restrictions on opening new places of worship; however, representatives of minority religious groups sometimes had difficulty opening places of worship, most frequently because of

resistance from neighborhood groups. According to the MOJ Office of Religious Affairs, local governments are obligated to consider requests for land for public use, which may include land for opening places of worship. If a municipality decides to deny such a request, after weighing factors such as availability and the proportionate value added to the community, the city council must explain its decision to the requesting party. Local municipalities sometimes linger over these decisions, with some requests going unanswered for years. The Ministry continued its campaign to educate local governments about their responsibilities to minority religious groups. The Catalan regional government's director of religious affairs drafted a law that sets guidelines for municipalities to provide access to spaces to be used for religious purposes. By the end of the reporting period, the law had not been approved.

The law provides for optional Catholic education in public schools. Muslim and Protestant leaders have called for the Government to provide more support for public religious education in their respective religions, in accordance with the agreements signed with the Government in 1992. In 2004 the Government responded by approving legislation that mandates funding for teachers for courses in Catholic, Islamic, Protestant, and Judaic studies in public schools when at least 10 students request them. The courses are not mandatory. Those students who elect not to take confessional courses are obliged to take an alternative course covering general social, cultural, and religious themes. The development of curriculums and the financing of teachers for religious education, however, is the responsibility of the autonomous communities, with the exception of Andalucía, Aragón, the Basque Country, Las Canarias, Cantabria, and La Rioja, and the two autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, where religious education is the responsibility of the national Government.

The national entities registered with the MOJ are responsible for the selection of teachers for their particular religion. Either the national Ministry of Education or the regional entity responsible for education certifies teachers' credentials. Teachers must hold teaching degrees, have training in Spanish law, and be fluent in Spanish. For the Muslim community, the Islamic Commission selects religion teachers.

During the 2007-08 academic year, the Government employed 41 teachers of Islam and approximately 15,000 teachers of Catholicism in public schools. UCIDE estimated that there were 120,000 Muslim students who would take classes in Islamic education if possible, requiring a minimum of 314 religion teachers.

In 2006 the Government financed the creation and printing of the first Spanish textbook on Islam to be used by first-grade students. The Foundation for Pluralism and Coexistence financed the project developed by UCIDE. Additional editions for higher primary levels were in production. Although the book was available for use by all school districts (as well as the general public through bookstores), its use can be mandated only in the regions where the national Government has jurisdiction over religious education.

There are no restrictions placed on parents who want to provide their children religious home schooling or enroll them in private religious schools.

Although the law favors the Roman Catholic Church in many respects alluded to above, tensions continued between some members of the Government and leaders of the Catholic Church. When the Government announced its plan to introduce a new abortion law providing greater legal protection for women and doctors, the Church responded, holding an open-air Catholic mass that hundreds of thousands of persons attended and Pope Benedict XVI addressed via video. Although Parliament commenced action on easing the abortion law, the law had not been implemented by the end of the reporting period.

Restrictions on Freedom of Religion

The Government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for

religious freedom by the Government during the period covered by this report.

There were isolated instances of local and regional government policies that had the effect of restricting some individual religious groups. The Islamic and Protestant federations continued to report that the building permit process for new mosque and church construction could be difficult and lengthy, especially for building sites in central urban locations. The Islamic Commission reported that sometimes new mosque construction was forced into less visible suburban areas, primarily because of resistance from neighborhood groups. Leaders of the Jewish community also complained about difficulties in securing permits and approvals to construct new places of worship. The municipality of Girona denied permits for the construction of a mosque after 1,500 residents in the prospective neighborhood signed a petition against it. The neighbors argued that the neighborhood was overcrowded and that the mosque would further constrict their mobility. Local authorities claimed that the prospective site did not meet the "complicated" building codes and that it would present problems with "coexistence." A similar argument was made by residents of Ripoll, and a permit was denied because the prospective site's street was too narrow. Complaints from residents in Salt resulted in the closure of the town's mosque in 2008. In Seville Muslims reported having been repeatedly denied land to construct a mosque. Municipal officials initially approved building plans and allocated land in March 2008. After protests, however, the municipality reneged on its promise despite the fact that \$260,000 (€200,000) had already been invested to prepare the land for construction.

While it was reported that FEDERE's president demanded "equal treatment" of Protestants by the Government, the official statement at the conclusion of FEDERE's 2007 Protestant conference focused on the religious group's progress. In mid-April both President Zapatero and Vice President Fernández de la Vega announced that the Government would unveil a "Law of Religious Freedom" reform shortly. Although it was not presented to Parliament by the end of the reporting period, the premise of the reform is to recognize and enforce religious plurality.

The Islamic Cultural Center of Valencia (CCIV) president reported that as of May 2009, there were numerous interviews and discussions with the Valencia city council but no determination on their October 10, 2008, second application (first filed in 2004) for a gratis transfer of land to build an Islamic cultural center with space for prayer and other public services, such as language training (Spanish and Arabic) and vocational courses. According to the CCIV president, the new center was needed to replace CCIV's facilities, which were spread among three properties and insufficient to accommodate needs.

Municipal governments are the competent authority with respect to cemeteries and burials, and religious groups, particularly Muslims, have reported difficulty in gaining satisfactory treatment and reburial of disinterred remains as well as access to cemeteries designated for particular religions. The national Federation of Jewish Communities created and shared with the MOJ a nonbinding protocol for the national and local governments to follow in addressing such issues. According to the protocol, an agreement is entered into with each individual municipality once it is determined that a cemetery contains Jewish remains, but within the framework agreed upon by the FCJE and MOJ.

In June 2007 construction workers in Tarrega uncovered an ancient Sephardic Jewish cemetery from which the skeletal remains of 158 persons were subsequently disinterred without religious supervision. On July 7, 2008, the FCJE, Barcelona city officials, and officials from the Department of Heritage reached an agreement, and the reburial of all remains was completed.

In October 2008 a Sephardic Jewish cemetery was discovered during construction at a school in Toledo. Local authorities agreed to halt construction pending negotiations amongst interested parties. In late April, the FCJE confirmed that the Toledo government and international rabbinical authorities, with the assistance of the Ministries of Justice and Foreign Affairs, had come to an agreement as to the disposition of remains. The negotiated compromise called for the reburial of remains in a portion of what was the original cemetery under supervision of

Spanish rabbinical authorities and continuation of construction on the remaining land. The reburial was completed on June 21, 2009.

In November 2008 the MOJ and Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces convened training for municipal officials and intercultural dialogue regarding democratic values and religion, bringing together local and regional authorities with members from all religious faiths to discuss the application of religious freedom within their communities. The two-day dialogue included discussions regarding respect for places of worship, the procedures for obtaining permits to construct or use existing structures as places of worship, and burial sites. Throughout the reporting period, the MOJ reported that it was working to increase cooperation between local governments and Islamic communities to address granting public land for use as cemeteries and for other religious and cultural purposes, because local and municipal governments had the authority to do so.

In its 2009 budget, the Government allocated \$1,115,000 (€820,000) to finance religious assistance for inmates. In 2006 the Council of Ministers provided official guidance regarding the provision of evangelical, Jewish, and Islamic religious services for prisoners inside jails. Muslim leaders reported that prison officials generally provided access for prayer assistants to visit Muslim prisoners, and according to the MOJ, Muslim, Protestant, and Jewish religious assistance was accessible within prisons. Such a right was established in the 1980 Religious Freedom Law, and inmates receive religious assistance upon request. The Government funds religious assistance for the Catholic and Muslim religious groups within the prison system, but not for Jewish or Protestant groups. This is a reflection of the 1992 bilateral agreements or cooperation agreements entered into between each of the religious groups and the Government. The 1992 cooperation agreements take precedence over the 2006 action taken by the Council of Ministers. According to the 1992 cooperation agreements between the Government and the Jewish and Protestant groups, religious assistance is paid for by the community, not the Government. The Muslim cooperation agreement provides for government funding for religious assistance. In order for the Jewish and Protestant faiths to receive equal funding, the cooperation agreements must be amended or a new law adopted. Amendment of the cooperation agreements is unlikely since, according to the Ministry of Justice, it was initially the groups' decision not to include government funding for such assistance in the agreements.

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

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 who had not been allowed to be returned to the United States.

Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom

On January 27, 2009, government and Jewish community leaders held a ceremony in observance of the Holocaust for the fifth consecutive reporting year in Madrid.

On December 17, 2008, the country became a member of the "Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research." The country became an "invitee" of the Task Force in 2005 and obtained "observer" status in 2006.

On November 25 and 26, 2008, Madrid's first International Seminar on Anti-Semitism took place. According to a 2008 Pew survey entitled "Unfavorable Views of Jews and Muslims on the Increase in Europe," Spain has the most negative view of Jews of the other Western countries studied (United States, Britain, France, Poland, Russia, and Germany). The seminar aimed to address anti-Semitism, both within the country and outside its borders and served as an open call to the public to look at the roots and current manifestations of anti-Semitism.

The authorities of Lleida (Catalonia) approved the construction of a new mosque on a 0.5 acre (2,000 square meter) lot in the industrial suburb of Segre. When completed, this 555-person capacity mosque will be the first mosque in Catalonia built in modern times.

On July 16-18, 2008, the Muslim World League (MWL), under the patronage of Saudi King Abdullah, held its interfaith conference in Madrid. Spanish King Juan Carlos hosted the event, and although the guest list was not all-inclusive, there was a wide range of participation including Sikhs, Buddhists, Hindus, and Shinto followers. The event was described as a "step in the right direction," on the part of the MWL and an important opportunity to open the lines of communication between Muslims and those of other faiths. Subsequently, the MWL and the Holy See appeared to agree on a revised version of the outcome document from the conference, known as the Madrid Declaration. The declaration condemns terrorism, upholds equality regardless of religion, and encourages renewed interreligious dialogue.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

As in the previous reporting period, there were some reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, but prominent societal leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom. Acts of anti-Semitism, including graffiti aimed at Jewish institutions, continued during the reporting period. The growth of the immigrant population at times led to social friction, which in isolated instances had a religious component. Muslims continued to experience some societal prejudice, and some citizens blamed recent immigrants for increased crime rates in the country.

On March 2, 2009, a trial in Barcelona began against the owners of Kalki bookstore and publishing house for allegedly selling books and products of Nazi ideology justifying the Holocaust. The case was ongoing, but the prosecutor requested five- to seven-year jail sentences for the owner of the bookstore, the publishing house, and the president of the Society of Indoeuropean Studies, a Nazi ideological association which disguises itself as a nonprofit group. The prosecutor is also asking for fines ranging from \$9,500 to \$14,000 (€7,200 to €10,800) for each offender.

On January 30, 2009, a man associated with the extremist "Republican Social Movement" attacked the façade of the Synagogue Shlomo Ben Adret in Barcelona with a bat. He was subsequently detained by the regional police force. On January 8, anti-Semitic graffiti appeared on the Chabad Lubavitch Jewish Studies Center of Barcelona. In response to these acts, the president of the autonomous community of Catalonia, where Barcelona is located, promised to put an end to any anti-Semitic acts in Catalonia. He made the statement before the Parliamentary ceremony honoring Holocaust victims and further stated that he was attentive to the need to stop anti-Semitism and pledged to guarantee peaceful habitation to all regardless of beliefs. In response to these acts and demonstrations occurring throughout the country in reaction to the Gaza conflict, Foreign Minister Moratinos warned against anti-Semitism, stating that criticism of Israel should not take anti-Semitic undertones. According to news reports, some representatives of the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) participated in "anti-Israel" demonstrations.

Jewish community leaders reported that while violence against Jews was rare, they were concerned about anti-Semitic vandalism and Holocaust denial. In one such case, on December 14, 2008, British Historian David Irving gave a speech entitled "The Other Hitler" in a Barcelona bookstore explaining his theories of Holocaust denial. The Mossos d'Esquadra (local police force) observed the event to ensure that his words did not encourage xenophobic acts or justify genocide. In 2006 Irving was sentenced to three years in jail in Austria for denying the existence of the Holocaust.

In January 2009 the Madrid Association of Atheists and Freethinkers initiated a campaign using municipal buses to advertise its message: "God probably does not exist. Stop worrying and enjoy life." A similar campaign took place

in Barcelona during January as well. The Evangelical Church responded to the "anti-God" messages, purchasing competing publicity on a municipal line and espousing the message, "God exists. Enjoy life in Christ."

The Government released the results of its third annual survey of the Muslim community on February 11, 2009. Although 31 percent of those surveyed affirmed the existence of rejection or suspicion of the Muslim faith, 84 percent of respondents said they had encountered no obstacles to practicing their religion in the country. As previously reported, the majority of Muslims were forced to worship in converted buildings, often called "garage mosques," because there were few buildings dedicated to Islamic worship for their growing numbers, and some locales resisted giving Muslims land and the necessary legal permissions to build.

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. U.S. embassy officials also meet with religious leaders of various denominations.

The Embassy continued to facilitate regular exchanges between U.S. and local religious associations to foster dialogue and promote religious tolerance and freedom. Through the Mission's Muslim Engagement Working Group, the Embassy and Barcelona Consulate continued contact with various Muslim communities throughout the country to better understand the challenges and obstacles faced by this population. During the reporting period, the Mission hosted two U.S. Speaker programs--engaging Muslim and non-Muslim audiences in discussions of Islam within the European context--and cosponsored an international conference that resulted in the launch of a European Muslim Media Network. The previous Ambassador hosted an Iftar reception for members of the Muslim community, at which the imam of the Islamic Cultural Center of Madrid and the imam from the Al-Saud Mosque in Marbella presided over the breaking of the day's fast. Also present were several representatives from the Government responsible for religious freedom issues and academic experts in the field of Muslim affairs. The Mission also facilitated contacts between the Interfaith Youth Core, the recipient of a State Department grant to conduct training for young leaders in promoting religious pluralism, and various religious associations, which led to the identification of a partner organization in Barcelona to cohost the event.

In addition to public outreach, embassy and consulate officials intervened formally with the Government on granting appropriate treatment of historic Jewish cemeteries and encouraging the passage of law that would grant all "notorio arraigo" religions equal tax status. The Embassy coordinated meetings between prominent Jewish leaders and governmental authorities to facilitate negotiation concerning the proper disposition of remains in the recently discovered cemetery in Toledo. The ensuing dialogue ensured that the wishes of the Jewish population world-wide were well understood in the context of negotiating the local agreement. Encouraging the Government to follow through on its planned revision of the Law of Religious Freedom that would grant equal tax status to religions, the Embassy repeatedly raised the issue with the Vice President and Minister of Finance, Minister of Justice, and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.