



## United Kingdom

### International Religious Freedom Report 2008

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There were some reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Violence declined in Northern Ireland. Anti-Semitic acts remain a concern. "Islamophobic" incidents declined, but there was a spike in July and August after the terror attacks of June 29-30, 2007, and the beginning of the inquiry into the July 7, 2005 bombings. Many mainstream Muslim leaders made vocal denunciation of the attacks, with some launching a media campaign called "Not in Our Name." In addition, public debate continued over the role of Islam in the country.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

#### Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 94,525 square miles and a population of 60.2 million. Christians make up 72 percent of the population, including the Church of England, Church of Scotland, the Roman Catholic Church, Protestants, and many unaffiliated Christian groups. In 2003 the Office of National Statistics estimated 29 percent of the population identified with Anglicanism, 10 percent with the Catholic Church, and 14 percent with Protestant churches. On December 26, 2007, a survey reported that the number of Catholics attending Sunday services has overtaken the number of Anglicans doing so. A September 2006 English Church Census reported that Methodists were decreasing as a percentage of the population, while members of the Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Pentecostal churches, many churches from Africa, and the Eastern Orthodox Church, almost entirely immigrants, were increasing.

Individuals with no religious belief comprise 15 percent of the population. Muslims comprise 3 percent of the population. The Muslim community is predominantly South Asian in origin, but other groups from the Arabian Peninsula, Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Levant are represented. In addition, there is a growing number of indigenous converts. Although estimates vary, the Government places the number of mosques in the whole country at one thousand. Groups comprising 1 percent or less of the population include Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, and Buddhists. Individuals from Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and Sikh backgrounds are concentrated in London and other large urban areas, primarily in England.

Attendance at religious services was significantly different from the number of adherents. According to a report released on May 8, 2008, by Religious Trends, only 4 million Christians attend services on a regular basis (defined as at least once a month) in the country. These figures do not include Northern Ireland, where higher percentages reportedly attend both Catholic (more than 60 percent) and Protestant (more than 35 percent) services. The Religious Trends report stated that more than 50 percent of Muslims regularly worship at mosques. Figures for Jews and other religious groups were unavailable.

Religious affiliation was not evenly distributed among ethnicities. According to the 2001 census, approximately 70 percent of the white population described themselves as Christians. Nearly 75 percent of black Caribbean respondents stated that they were Christians, as did 70 percent of black Africans. Meanwhile, 45 percent of

Indians were Hindus and 29 percent were Sikhs. Approximately 92 percent of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were Muslims.

In Northern Ireland, where divisions between nationalists and unionists evolved largely along religious lines, the 2001 census showed that 53.1 percent were Protestants and 43.8 percent were Catholics. Many Catholics and Protestants continued to live in segregated communities in Northern Ireland, although many middle class neighborhoods were mixed communities. The policy of the Government remained one of promotion of religious tolerance.

## Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

### Legal/Policy Framework

The law provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion; however, a British court ruled that a business could require a Christian to hide symbols of faith in the workplace, while not requiring other religious groups to do so. The 1998 Human Rights Act guarantees freedom of religion and bans discrimination based on religion.

The Racial and Religious Hatred Act of 2006, which came into effect in September 2007, includes "Incitement to Religious Hatred" among its prohibitions, and the penalties are similar to the "Incitement to Racial Hatred" provisions, included in previous laws that are used in other hate crime prosecutions. The Racial and Religious Hatred Act of 1998 defines "religious hatred" as hatred against a group of persons that may be determined by reference to religious belief or lack of religious belief. The act does not define religion or what constitutes a religious belief but leaves that determination to the courts. Offenses under the act must be threatening and intended to stir up religious hatred based on the following criteria: the use of words, behavior, or display of written material; publishing or distributing written material; the public performance of a play; distributing, showing, or playing a recording; broadcasting or including a program in a program service; or the possession of written materials or recordings with a view to display, publication, distribution, or inclusion in a program service. The act does not apply where words or behavior are used or displayed inside a private dwelling and does not apply to criticism or dislike of a religious belief. The maximum penalty for stirring up religious hatred is 7 years in prison. This act gives only constables the power to arrest persons in the context of these offenses, rather than allowing "citizens' arrests."

The Equality Act makes it illegal to discriminate on the grounds of "religion or belief" or the "lack of religion or belief" in the provision of goods, facilities and services, education, the use and disposal of property, and the exercise of public functions. The Equality Act established the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR), which is responsible for promoting an awareness of the Act's provisions, promoting equality and diversity, and working towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination and harassment. The CEHR has powers to investigate unlawful acts of discrimination and can bring legal proceedings against violators of the Equality Act's provisions. In Scotland, the CEHR's remit covers only human rights matters reserved for the Parliament and major government ministries. Human rights for matters "devolved" to the Scottish Parliament are covered by the Scottish Commission for Human Rights. The Equality Act allows the CEHR to cover devolved matters if it has the agreement of the proposed Scottish Commission.

Religious discrimination in employment and vocational training is illegal under the 2003 Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations. The 2001 Anti-Terrorism, Crime, and Security Act covers "religiously aggravated offenses," based on existing assault, harassment, criminal damage, and public order offenses. Those convicted of "religiously aggravated offenses" (where there is evidence of religious hostility in connection with a crime) face higher maximum penalties.

Under the 1990 Broadcasting Act and the 2003 Communications Act, religious bodies can hold local and national digital radio and digital terrestrial television licenses.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) reported a decrease in prosecutions for religiously motivated incidents since the previous reporting period. There were 29 cases classified as religiously aggravated offenses, which resulted in 26 convictions and 3 acquittals. Of the 23 cases in which the victim's religious affiliation is known, 17 were Muslim, 3 were Christian, 1 was a Sikh, and 2 were Jewish. The prosecuted charges ranged from harassment to assault. Overall crime involving possible religious motivation (which cannot be separated from crime considered possibly racially motivated) fell in all categories, ranging from minor assaults, which were down 1 percent for racially or religiously motivated, to vandalism that was racially or religiously motivated,

which fell 25 percent since the previous reporting period.

There are two established (or state) churches--The Church of England (Anglican) and the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian). The Act of Settlement, enacted in 1688, states that no Catholic, or person married to a Catholic, may ascend the throne. The monarch is the "Supreme Governor" of the Church of England, who must always be a member and promise to uphold the Church. The monarch's connection with the Church of England is the subject of ongoing public debate.

The monarch appoints Church of England officials on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Crown Appointments Commission, which includes lay and clergy representatives. The General Convention of the Church of Scotland appoints its own office bearers, and its affairs are not subject to any civil authority. The Church in Wales, the Scottish Episcopal Church, and the Church of Ireland are members of the Anglican Communion.

Those who believe that their freedom of religion has been infringed upon have the right to appeal to the courts for relief. The Government includes other religious groups in national events; for example, under the auspices of the Church of England, the Queen supported invitations to representatives of a broad range of religious groups to participate in the national Remembrance Day Service. The Government made efforts to address specific needs of different religious communities, such as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's annual provision of a special Hajj delegation to provide consular and medical assistance to the country's Muslims on pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia.

Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland do not have "official" religions. The 1921 Church of Scotland Act reorganized the Church as Scotland's national church based on a Presbyterian system but not dependent on any government body or the Queen for spiritual matters or leadership.

Immigration regulations require visa applicants who wish to enter the country as "ministers of religion" (a legal term used for visas) to demonstrate a level-four competence in spoken English on the International English Language Testing System. Visa adjudicators are permitted to waive the testing requirement at their discretion and where other evidence of English competency is provided for applicants educated in an English-speaking country. "Ministers of religion" are also required to have worked for at least one year in the last five as a "minister" and when applying for visas must also have one year of full-time experience or two years of part-time training following their ordination for religious groups where ordination is the sole means of entering the ministry. To obtain an entry visa a missionary must be trained as such or have worked previously as a missionary.

On May 8, 2008, blasphemy, a crime against Anglican doctrine only, was outlawed. Some supporters of the change expressed the hope that this would lead to the disestablishment of the Church of England. Others stated that this was the first step to the country becoming "un-Christian." While not usually enforced and essentially a legal anachronism, a case of blasphemy was brought against the stage production "Jerry Springer: The Opera." The case was dismissed by the Law Lords in December 2007.

Religiously motivated hate language is prosecuted under Section Five of the Public Order Act, which the Crown Prosecution Service applies to demonstrations where insulting and abusive language is used about religion. On May 10, 2008, the City Police of London summoned a teenager for calling Scientology a "cult" during a demonstration on that date at which he carried a placard saying "Scientology is not a religion, it is a dangerous cult." The charges were dropped on two counts: freedom of expression trumps for placards, and Scientology is not considered a religion under the law. The policeman who carried out the arrest was reprimanded.

The Government observes Good Friday, Easter Monday, and Christmas as national holidays.

Religious groups are not required to register with the Government. No church or religious organization, established or otherwise, receives direct funding from the Government, with the exception of "faith schools." The Government provides financial support—up to 90 percent of the total capital costs of the buildings and 100 percent of running costs, including teachers' salaries - to sectarian educational institutions that are commonly referred to as "faith schools" (see the Societal section).

The Government also helps fund the repair and maintenance of all listed places of worship for religious groups

nationwide and contributes to the budget of the Church Conservation Trust, which preserves "redundant" Church of England buildings of architectural or historic significance.

Most religious institutions are classified as charities, since the advancement of religion is considered to be a charitable purpose. Charities are exempt from taxes on most types of income and capital gains, provided that the charity uses the income or gains for charitable purposes. Charities also are exempt from the value-added tax. The Government has not classified the Church of Scientology as a religious institution and therefore has not granted the organization recognition for charitable status.

At the end of the reporting period, more than 30 percent of state schools had a religious character. Nearly all of the 6,949 "faith schools" are associated with Christian denominations, although there are 31 Jewish, 7 Islamic, and 2 Sikh schools. An additional two Jewish, three Islamic, and two Sikh schools have also been tentatively approved by the Government to open. In addition, several hundred independent schools of a religious nature receive no state support but must meet government quality standards. Controversy arose in 2006 over 100 Islamic schools when an Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted) evaluation of these schools showed many were "little more than places where the Koran was recited." The schools were given time to correct their deficiencies. A review is due in 2010. Some Christian faith schools also faced controversy. Some were accused of not following the national curriculum in science, teaching creationism instead. During the reporting period, a further controversy erupted when it was learned that some faith schools were not following an "open" admission policy as required by law, denying admission to both special needs children and those outside the faith of the school administrators. The Catholic Church and the Church of England have an agreement to voluntarily accept up to 25 percent of places for pupils from another religious group or no religious group.

Almost all schools in Northern Ireland receive state support. More than 90 percent of students attended schools that were either predominantly Catholic or Protestant. Integrated schools served approximately 5 percent of school-age children whose families voluntarily chose this option, often after overcoming significant obstacles to provide the resources to start a new school and demonstrate its sustainability for 3 years before government funding begins. Demand for places in integrated schools outweighed the limited number of places available. The May 8, 2007, devolution, or granting of power, authorized the Northern Ireland Assembly to decide on academic selection. Now there are more than 50 integrated schools, and the new Government permits existing schools to petition to change from sectarian to integrated. More petition for that status than are granted it. Some have accused the Government of a go-slow approach to avoid sectarian animus.

The law requires religious education for all children, ages 3 to 19, in publicly maintained schools. In England and Wales it forms part of the core curriculum in accordance with the Education Reform Act of 1988. In Scotland, religious education of some sort is mandated by the Education Act of 1980. However, the shape and content of religious instruction throughout the country is decided on a local basis. Locally agreed syllabi are required to reflect the predominant place of Christianity while taking into account the teachings and practices of other principal religions in the country. Syllabuses must be nondenominational and refrain from attempting to convert pupils. Schools with a religious designation follow a syllabus drawn up by the school governors according to the trust deed of the school. All parents have the legal right to request that their children not participate in religious education, but the school must approve this request.

Daily collective prayer or worship of "a wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character" is practiced in schools in England and Wales, a requirement that may be waived for students who obtain permission of the school authorities. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 permits sixth form students (generally 16-19-year-olds) to withdraw themselves from worship without their parents' permission or action. This new law does not exempt sixth form students from religious education classes. Non-Christian worship is permitted with approval of the authorities. Teachers have the right not to participate in collective worship, without prejudice, unless they work for a faith school.

After several controversial court decisions prohibiting full-face veils in school (but not head scarves) and the wearing of a Christian chastity ring, the Department of Education provided guidance that advises schools to "... act reasonably in accommodating religious requirements," under human rights legislation. Some Muslim groups, including the Islamic Human Rights Commission, said it was inappropriate for the Government to provide guidance that regulated Muslim communities in matters concerning the expression of their religious beliefs. But it is also legally possible under the act, according to the guidance, to have a school uniform policy that "restricts the freedom of pupils to manifest their religion" on the grounds of health and safety and the "protection of the rights and freedoms of others." The Government's guidance is meant to remind "head

teachers" to act with a degree of sensitivity when considering decisions that will impact the cultural complexion of their communities.

In Northern Ireland, the Fair Employment Act bans employment discrimination on the grounds of religious or political opinion. A broad network of laws, regulations, and oversight bodies work to ensure that there is equal opportunity for employees of all religious groups. All public sector employers and all private firms with more than ten employees must report annually to the Equality Commission on the religious composition of their workforces and must review their employment practices every three years. Noncompliance may result in criminal penalties and the loss of government contracts. Victims of employment discrimination may sue for damages. In addition, the 1998 Northern Ireland Act stipulates that all public authorities must show due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity, including on the basis of religious belief. Each public authority must report its plans to promote equality to the Equality Commission, which is to review such plans every 5 years. In the rest of the country, the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations prohibit employment discrimination based on religious belief, except where there is a "genuine occupational requirement" of a religious nature.

It is government policy to ensure that public servants are not discriminated against on the basis of religious beliefs and to accommodate religious practices by government employees whenever possible. For example, the Prison Service permits Muslim employees to take time off during their shifts to pray. It also provides prisoners with Christian, Jewish, and Muslim chaplains. The Advisory Group on Religion in Prisons monitors policy and practice on matters relating to religious provision. The military generally provides military personnel who are adherents of minority religious groups with chaplains of their faith.

The Race, Cohesion, and Faiths Directorate, of the Department of Communities, is responsible for addressing racism, extremism, and hate and for promoting interfaith activity in England and Wales. According to this directorate, the Government asserts the right to exclude individuals, such as international religious leaders of minority religious groups, from the country on the grounds that their presence is not conducive to the public good, even where the public expression of religious or other beliefs by that individual is part of the reason for exclusion. The term "public good" is not defined in this context by the Government.

A February 6, 2008 report by the Muslim and Imams National Advisory Body (MINAB) indicated it was meeting with more and more success in its community consultations at mosques designed to engage Muslims in moderate, nonviolent interpretations of Islam. It also reported that it was especially successful in talking to women and young Muslims about the practice of Islam in the country, the Government's policies towards Islam, and the role of MINAB in the future. It also reported that its draft constitution, which would include standards for training and education of imams, was being vetted during these mosque meetings. At the end of the period covered by this report, MINAB's draft Constitution and Practices were completed, but the Government had put implementation on hold.

#### Restrictions on Religious Freedom

On June 7, 2008, the Church of England issued a critical report, written by academic experts at Cambridge University's VonHugel Institute and endorsed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and 75 percent of the Anglican Church's bishops, that documented the Government's discrimination against Christianity, while supporting minority religious groups, especially Islam (see in the Legal/Policy Framework section a description of the laws that restrict visas for clergy and missionaries and a description of the blasphemy law, which was outlawed on May 8, 2008.)

Various studies and surveys across the country found that many schools did not meet the intent and requirements of the collective worship directive. Parents and students in favor of the law said that it helps students understand the religious orientation of the country and the society in which they are living. There were some students and parents opposed to the policy and some teachers' organizations took exception to the requirement for collective worship and asked the Government to review the current policy.

During the period covered by this report, however, conflicting rulings by schools, school boards, employment tribunals, and courts on what is and is not permitted dress in schools and places of employment caused anger, confusion, lawsuits, and other protests. Several Members of Parliament called for a new "Rights Law" to address these matters and bring together the various versions of human rights, equality, and antidiscrimination laws and Law Lords' rulings.

Some imams in mosques have advocated terrorism and have subsequently been arrested. On November 8, 2007, the head of the security services announced that 2,000 persons in the country were suspected of supporting terrorists. Authorities admitted to monitoring mosques, which some Muslims cited as discrimination.

Members of the Muslim community complained that police targeted them for suspicion, arrest, and "stop-and-search" disproportionately more than any other group, under powers granted by antiterrorism laws. The Muslim community also criticized the 28-day detention powers for terrorism suspects.

Several studies have shown that Muslims suffer serious discrimination from both authorities and societal actors. The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) continued to work closely with Muslim groups to address concerns about the way police treated Muslims. National and regional forums were a key element of this effort. The IPCC publicized its services among Asian communities via advertisements, community meetings, and media articles.

On June 30, 2008, police in England and Wales were accused of discrimination against Muslims in that they were "wholly absent" from antiterror and other specialist squads that were a key stepping-stone to promotion. This came as part of a report that the majority of police jurisdictions refused to cooperate with a nongovernmental organization (NGO) and Asian Police Association survey on conditions for Asian officers.

On June 2, 2008, the West Midlands Police prevented two evangelical Christian pastors from passing out leaflets and talking to Asian youths in a primarily Islamic area of Birmingham. The police threatened the pastors with arrest for committing a hate crime. The press reported that the officers would receive more training. The police officials' view that the pastors risked a beating by Muslim residents confirmed a widely publicized statement made by the Right Reverend Michael Nazir-Ali, the Church of England's Bishop of Rochester, who said on January 6, 2008, that there are "no-go" neighborhoods in the country where non-Muslims risked attack. The Bishop received death threats for his statement.

On May 17, 2008, a Wales tribunal sided with Mark Sheridan of Conwy, awarding him damages for being discriminated against due to not affiliating with a specific religious group. Sheridan took a job as administrator in a Christian-only center for learning disabilities but found himself uncomfortable following the center's guidelines that required employees to espouse a Christian ethos to their clients. When the center fired him for not fulfilling the job requirements, Sheridan took them to court.

On April 25, 2008, the Leeds County Court ruled in favor of Muslim prisoners. Thirteen out of 200 Muslim prisoners at Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) Leeds sued for damages after accusing the prison of religious and racial discrimination including harassment, assault, and denial of access to services. The court ruled that there was sufficient evidence of a policy of discrimination.

On March 8, 2008, a Jewish faith school was sued by the father of a boy who was denied admission because he was insufficiently Jewish (his mother was born a Catholic). The lawsuit accused the school of ethnic and religious discrimination, since other students came from families who were "born Jewish" but who either did not practice their faith or were atheists, while his family practiced regularly. The Government is a party to the lawsuit since, in addition to it being a state supported school, the United Synagogue has the Government's authority to determine the "Jewishness" of applicants.

On January 23, 2008, a State School Council in Wales was sued by the family of a Sikh girl who was denied the right to wear a Kara bracelet on the grounds that the school does not permit jewelry. The Law Lords, the country's highest court, previously ruled that Sikh children could wear turbans and ceremonial trousers to school. A specific ruling on Kara bracelets and Kirpans (ceremonial daggers) had not been made by the end of the period covered by this report.

On January 8, 2008, Nadia Eweida, a Christian, lost her case in an employment tribunal, which found in favor of her employer, British Airways (BA). In 2006 Eweida was instructed not to wear a cross while on duty. She refused and was put on unpaid leave. BA, which had a long-standing policy that banned religious jewelry, subsequently changed its policy in early 2007 to accommodate "small, inconspicuous pieces of religious adornment" and reinstated her. She filed her claim anyway. The tribunal ruled that the policy was evenly applied, so no discrimination occurred. Eweida and her supporters maintained that she was discriminated against because Muslim and Hindu employees were allowed to wear turbans, bangles, and facial markings. The court ruled that these items were essential to religious practice, whereas wearing the cross was not.

Beginning on December 1, 2007, the country's marriage registrars were required to perform marriages of all applicants who were legally qualified. This was a change from previous policy that permitted registrars who objected due to their religious beliefs from being required to perform them. Several Christian and Muslim registrars feared they would be penalized for refusing to officiate in same sex marriages.

On October 24, 2007, the press reported that officials of the Somerset County Council Social Services threatened a Christian couple, who served as foster parents for 28 children, with removal from the list of caretakers unless the couple agreed to actively promote homosexuality if one of their foster children were gay. Because the couple's religious views prevented them from agreeing to the provision, the pastor and his wife removed themselves from the list of foster home caregivers, and social services moved their foster son from their home to a children's unit.

On November 1, 2007, Andrew McClintock, a Christian magistrate for 18 years who wished to remove himself from cases involving adoption by gay couples, lost his appeal before an employment tribunal. McClintock resigned because he believed he was discriminated against but took his case to the Court of Appeal; the case remained ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report.

On October 25, 2007, the family of 11-year-old Elliot Stewart sued Durham County Council, which denied Elliot a bus pass because he is not Catholic. Pupils attending faith schools are permitted a pass only if they are attending a school of their faith and live too far to walk. Students who do not belong to the faith of the school but attend a faith school out of preference, rather than religious conviction, must pay their own way. The family contended that was religious discrimination. The case remained ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report.

On July 16, 2007, the High Court ruled that a school that punished a Christian secondary school student for her persistence in wearing a "chastity ring" was not infringing on her religious rights. The court agreed with the school, which said that the ring ban did not constitute "unlawful interference" with her Christian beliefs. They noted that this ring differed from headscarves worn by Muslim students, and Sikh students' trousers and kara bracelets, which were considered religious requirements. The judge refused permission to appeal, although the student can petition the appeal court to hear the case.

Citing a limited broadcast spectrum, the Government continued to prohibit religious groups from holding a national sound broadcasting license, a public teletext license, an additional television service license, and radio and television multiplex licenses.

According to a 1999 decision of the Charity Commission for England and Wales, a quasi-judicial, independent body established by law as the regulator and registrar for charities, the Church of Scientology does not fall within the charity law definition of a religious group. The Church of Scientology has not exercised its right of appeal. As a result, Scientology chapels do not qualify as places of worship, and Scientology ministers are not considered ministers of religion, which affects their legal rights regarding visas and immigration. The Prison Service does not recognize Scientology as a religious group for the purpose of facilitating prison visits by ministers, although prisoners who are registered as Scientologists may practice their religious beliefs and have access to a representative of the Church of Scientology. Ministers of the Church of Scientology and the Unification Church of Reverend Moon are not issued visas as ministers since their organizations are not accepted as religious groups. Adherents and those wishing to learn about either group may apply for visas as visitors or students, respectively. There were no reports of specific visa denials during the reporting period.

On July 3, 2007, Prime Minister Brown announced plans for constitutional reform. Catholic religious and political leaders again urged repeal of the Act of Settlement, which does not allow the monarch and spouse to be Catholic. A 2001 Home Office study suggested that the establishment status of the Church of England causes "religious disadvantage" to other religious communities and while some Anglican bishops are included in the House of Lords, membership in a given religious group does not confer a political or economic advantage on individual adherents, beyond this instance.

In relation to their percentage of the Northern Ireland population (44 percent), Catholics were underrepresented in the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). Since 1999 ongoing government-mandated measures to increase Catholic representation in the PSNI increased this proportion, currently comprising more than 20 percent.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees 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 of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

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

On May 12, 2008, a Christian couple, denied the right to be foster parents because they would not condone homosexuality, was granted reconsideration of their case. They charged the Derby City Council with religious discrimination since their refusal to "tell vulnerable youngsters that being gay was OK" as required by foster care guidance, was based on their religious convictions. This was in contrast with the Chard, Somerset couple (see Restrictions), but there was no guarantee that the couple's reapplication would be approved.

On May 8, 2008, pagan prisoners were permitted a "wand or decorated flexible twig" to perform their rituals. This ruling came after pagan prisoners complained that Muslim prisoners were permitted a prayer rug, and they were being denied equal treatment based on discrimination.

On May 8, 2008, blasphemy as a crime, which was limited to violations of Church of England teaching, was outlawed (see Legal/Policy Framework).

On February 1, 2008, Prime Minister Brown announced the formation of a Muslim Women's Advisory Group. The goal of the group is to act as a link to women in the Muslim community and to supplement the MINAB in advocating for a moderate form of Islam that engages with Government and society. This followed the November 29, 2007, announcement by the country's Muslim leaders of a set of guidelines for all mosques, Islamic schools, and centers. The purpose is to remove extremists, encourage women's rights, and teach civic engagement.

On January 30, 2008, the Government announced that a separate inspectorate of faith schools would be instituted. Islamic and Christian schools would therefore be judged on different standards from state and non-sectarian independent schools. Objections have been raised, however, due to the poor preparation for Western life many private Islamic schools give students. Similarly, many scientists expressed concerns that students taught in Christian schools would not be able to function well in higher education if taught creationism instead of evolution and geology. Many Muslim students and parents also supported the teaching of creationism.

On January 8, 2008, the Office of Judicial Complaints announced a formal reprimand against Magistrate Ian Murray, who walked out of court on June 27, 2007, rather than try a case with a Muslim woman in a full-face veil. He appealed on grounds that the law requires testimony by persons who can be identified.

A Christian family from Pakistan, who feared they would be killed if they returned home, and whose claim for asylum was denied, was granted a reprieve just before Christmas 2007. Their appeal had not been ruled upon at the end of the period covered by this report.

On September 11, 2007, Ian Paisley, Protestant First Minister of Northern Ireland, shook hands with Catholic Irish President Mary McAleese, a historic step in the long process of reconciliation. The Consultative Group on the Past, which was announced in June 2007 and is coheaded by a former head of the Church of Ireland and a prominent Catholic, announced in May 2008 that it would deliver its report to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The Consultative Group indicated it was committed to addressing the legacy of the past in a way that would promote greater reconciliation and that for true reconciliation to occur all secretarian groups would have to declare that violence of the past would never happen again.

On February 7, 2008, the Archbishop of Canterbury, spiritual head of the Church of England, stated that incorporating some aspects of Shari'a law into the Common Law was inevitable. His statement, while intending to convey a positive message of accommodating the changing face of the country, provoked considerable public debate.

#### Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

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

There were reports of "Islamophobic" behavior, often following terrorist incidents or public discussion of aspects of the Muslim community's practice, such as the wearing of the veil. During the second half of 2007, there were continuing anti-Islamic incidents in the form of verbal and physical assaults, vandalism, arson, literature, and Internet postings. This societal abuse and discrimination intensified following incidents such as the June 30, 2007, attacks in London and Glasgow involving Muslim medical practitioners working in the country. Hindus and Sikhs, misidentified as Muslims, were also targets of such incidents. Government and religious leaders of all religious groups cautioned the public not to engage in such hate crimes and reiterated that the majority of the country's Muslims were peaceful and law-abiding citizens.

On August 10, 2007, an imam was beaten at the Islamic Cultural Center in Regent's Park, London. The attack was one of several in July and August that occurred after the terror attacks in London and Glasgow. Scottish police indicated a 25 percent increase in "Islamophobic" incidents between June and July 2007.

On November 19, 2007, Muslim teenager Bushra Noah, of London, who wears a headscarf, filed suit against the owner of a hair salon for denying her a job based on her religious beliefs. The owner of the salon insisted that her stylists must display their hair as part of promoting her business. At the end of the period covered by this report, the case remained ongoing.

Plans for Tablighi Jamaat, an Islamic missionary group, to build a large mosque in London's East end sparked controversy over the size, design, and site, as well as the association of two of the transit system suicide bombers with the group. The proposed site's proximity to the entrance to the 2012 Olympics venue led to press speculation that the project would be delayed until after the Olympics end. Further controversy ensued when an Anglican clergyman's YouTube report opposing the mosque was met with a death threat in the form of an obituary posted on YouTube. At the end of the reporting period, the project was on hold.

Apostasy remains a potential source of serious tension in the Muslim community. The Policy Exchange released a poll in early 2008 showing that more than one-third of young Muslims believe that apostasy should be punished by the death penalty. The popular press continued to publish stories of Christian converts being discovered and threatened by their families. A group of men from Birmingham pled guilty to charges of conspiracy to kidnap a soldier and behead him as a traitor to Islam, as evidenced by his military service.

According to the Community Security Trust, an anti-Semitic monitoring NGO, there was a 23 percent decrease in violent assaults where religion might have been a factor, from 54 to 42, during the second half of the reporting period, while incidents of verbal abuse and vandalism saw a 9 percent increase, from 244 to 266. However, the IPCC report covering 2006-2007-- part of the period covered by this report-- indicated that authorities prosecuted 823 alleged hate crimes related to faith in that period, a 25 percent decrease from the previous 2-year period.

The Community Support Team, a NGO within the Jewish community, and a police unit that encourages community policing in London, reported a slight decrease in acts of anti-Semitism, although the number remained significantly higher than a decade earlier -- a figure at odds with the Community Security Trust report and a report by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, which states that anti-Semitic incidents in the country have doubled in the last decade.

A February 14, 2008, European Jewish Congress report stated that an elderly rabbi in the northeast of England was walking along a pavement when a car and driver mounted the pavement at street speed, knocked him over, then reversed and tried to run him over again. The rabbi required hospital treatment for injuries to his head, arms, and legs. The driver of the car was not identified. In another assault at approximately the same time, a Jewish student was walking through east London at night when a group of attackers shouted anti-Semitic abuse at him and threw a glass bottle that hit him on the head, requiring stitches.

There were many well-publicized manifestations of anti-Semitism at soccer matches, particularly in games involving some London clubs located in areas where there are large Jewish communities. Songs about concentration camps and gas chambers became regular features at matches. Following the appointment of a Jew, Avram Grant, as manager of the Chelsea team on July 8, 2007, the club received anti-Semitic hate mail, including a parcel containing a harmless white powder to threaten his life, and also sexual threats towards his wife.

On April 4, 2008, a European Jewish Congress report mentioned that gravestones at a Jewish cemetery in east London were smashed in what police called an anti-Semitic attack.

The Policy Exchange think tank released a November 6, 2007, report, revealing that hate literature is available in one-quarter of the country's mosques and Islamic centers, calling Jews and Christians the enemies of Islam and urging Muslims to segregate themselves from non-Muslims since "unbelievers" are regarded as second class. Some texts also called for Holy War against "tyrants and oppressors," which is "best done through force." The study concluded that "Saudi Arabia is the ideological source of much of this sectarianism."

Press reports from June 23, 2008, stated that a man who sent hate mail to Jewish community leaders after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks avoided jail. Ashraf Ali posted abusive letters to synagogues, many of which contained anti-Western comments and threats against Jews. One of his letters to the London-based Jewish Chronicle contained a white powder which was later found to be harmless. Ali also targeted the Southampton Hebrew Congregation in Mordaunt Road, Southampton. Police stated that Ali's actions had caused distress among the Jewish community.

On October 13, 2007, Oxford University invited Holocaust denier David Irving to speak at an event, creating controversy among those who supported free speech and those such as the Oxford Jewish Society who felt that the speaker would violate the legal restrictions of fomenting hate language and violence.

Numerous cases were reported citing controversial Internet message boards where anti-Semitic messages are defended as protected speech.

On March 5, 2008, Asian youths beat Canon Michael Ainsworth in response to his request to lower their voices on the grounds of St. George-in-the-East, Shadwell. Muslim leaders and their congregations strongly condemned the attack. Bishop of London Richard Chartres said at the time that clergy in Shadwell, East London were "vulnerable to attacks."

On January 5, 2008, an employment tribunal awarded \$54,000 (£27,000) in damages to two Catholic men in Northern Ireland fired from their hotel jobs because of their religion. They had filed a grievance against a Protestant employee who was protected by Protestant paramilitaries. The employer chose to risk a lawsuit rather than anger the paramilitaries. The tribunal rebuked the employers, stating that extortion was no excuse for religious bias in employment.

On December 23, 2007, the *Observer* reported that a Catholic priest in Glasgow, Father Stephen Dunn, requested police protection after a campaign of anti-Catholic vandalism and threats in his parish. This followed a report by the Scottish Police that violence against Catholics in Scotland was twice as common as violence against Protestants. Such sectarian violence has a long history in Scotland, but until this report anecdotal evidence suggested that conditions were improving. Scottish police reported only this incident and one other during the period covered by this report that could be classified as "sectarian," meaning Protestant crime on Catholic victims or vice versa. Many of the soccer match-related crimes in Glasgow are sectarian; for example, Celtic's supporters are largely Catholics and Rangers' supporters are largely Protestant. However, the police do not report this as religion-based crime. Scottish police also reported 40 religion-based crimes against Muslims; all were verbal abuse. There were also 3,645 incidents of race-based crime. The vast majority of victims were Muslim, but under Scottish law, the basis of the crime is that the victims look different. However, this type of crime saw an 8 percent increase that, given the anger against South Asians and Muslims over the terrorist bombing in Glasgow last year, the police characterized as a decline.

On October 10, 2007, the press carried reports of Manchester City Airport authorities' suspending a Catholic airline employee for displaying a picture of Jesus on an office wall shared by a Muslim co-worker who complained. An investigation and intervention by the airport chaplain led to the employee's reinstatement without prejudice and plans for workplace sensitivity training about religious beliefs.

On August 20, 2007, a Catholic school in Wolviston denied admission to a Sikh applicant. Four-year-old Maya Kaur had attended the preschool there for two years. The parents were told that since the school was full and they were not Catholic, she would have to enroll somewhere else. The parents offered to raise their child as a Catholic if she could stay in the school she had been in since she was 2 years old, but the Catholic Church said they welcomed adult converts but not minor children. Local school officials offered to mediate. Kaur's father threatened legal action. The school claimed that under the country's law, faith schools with openings are permitted to have religious test admission policies. Kaur insisted that since his daughter was already there, in

the preschool, her place should have been held.

According to bmi airline, in 2007 Saudi Arabia eased its restrictions, permitting personal Bibles, kept hidden, to be carried by visitors. This resolved the issue in the employment tribunal case involving the bmi flight attendant to whom the airline denied the right to carry a Bible on flights to Saudi Arabia. The case was dropped.

A Jewish BA employee, Daniel Rosenthal, filed a grievance over BA's refusal to permit him to observe the Jewish Sabbath. The employee was widely supported in his position by both Jewish and non-Jewish religious leaders. BA indicated that the employee had sought and obtained a transfer into a section (customer services) that at times required weekend work and offered to assist transferring him to another position, which he refused, according to press reports in late December 2007.

Government funding of "faith schools," institutions funded by the state but administratively controlled by religious organizations, has become an increasingly sensitive subject within the country. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), an education union, has been particularly critical of government policies on funding "faith schools." In 2007 the ATL issued a position statement in which it argued that the role of religion in society has declined, the population has become more secular, and that "faith schools" tend to marginalize their students from society and have a polarizing effect instead of acting as tools to promote integration and social cohesion.

On May 28, 2008, Rt. Rev. Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop of Rochester, the only Asian bishop in the Church of England resident in the country, decried the "decline of Christian values," which "opened the door to radical Islam in the UK." Nazir-Ali blamed the country's "doctrine of endless self-indulgence," which "contributed to the decline of Christian values" and "opened the door for radical Islam to move in to fill the void." He also decried the rise in Islam's role in the country as a "decline in Britishness" and chastised the Church for "not doing its duty by failing to convert UK Muslims." Previously, the bishop claimed that certain areas in the country were now "no-go" areas for non-Muslims (see above).

On June 30, 2008, the General Synod of the Church of England voted to allow women priests. This was met with threats to convert en masse to Catholicism by conservative bishops, clergy, and laity. Discussions in Rome were confirmed. This led to discussions of the role of religion in society. One observer noted that if the percentage of the population of church-going Britons were a voting bloc in Parliament, "they'd barely outnumber Sinn Fein and Plaid Cymru" (Irish and Welsh Nationalists and famously politically weak in numbers).

The Council of Christians and Jews worked to advance better relations between the two groups and to combat anti-Semitism. The Interfaith Network linked a wide range of religious and educational organizations with an interest in interfaith relations, including the national representative bodies of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and Zoroastrian communities. The Network had a consultative relationship with the Home Office, from which it received financial support. The Inner Cities Religious Council encouraged interfaith activity through regional conferences and support for local initiatives. The NGO Respect continued to encourage voluntary time-sharing and mutual understanding among adherents of different religious groups.

On May 5, 2008, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, and Pope Benedict XVI met at Vatican City to discuss Christian-Islamic relations and interfaith dialogue, among other subjects.

On March 3, 2008, Maajid Nawaz and Ed Husain, former Islamic fundamentalists, announced they were forming a foundation whose aim would be "...improving Islam's relations with the West by challenging extremist ideologies, and at reviving Islamic practice in the West by removing certain obstacles, such as scriptural literalism, extremism, Islamism, and foreign ideological influences and interferences with western Muslim communities."

On February 28, 2008, Protestant Orange Order leaders and Cardinal Sean Brady, the head of the Catholic Church in Ireland, met in Armagh to discuss the contentious long-held dispute over the Drumcree marching route.

On February 26, 2008, Muslim leaders and scholars, drawing on a similar letter sent earlier in the year to Christian leaders, sent a letter to Jews promoting "harmony," conveying "a genuine desire for mutual respect, for dialogue, and deeper understanding."

On December 10, 2007, Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim leaders together with the chairman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, urged Christians to enjoy their Christmas symbols in public places, nativity plays, and holiday decorations, saying there is no need to play down Christmas to avoid hurting the feelings of other religious groups.

The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland served as the main forum for ecumenical Christian cooperation. For example, Anglican parishes shared their churches with Catholic congregations.

#### 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. Embassy encouraged interfaith dialogue to promote religious tolerance. Embassy representatives attended regular meetings of the Three Faiths Forum, an interfaith dialogue organization. Embassy and consulate officers regularly contacted religious leaders of various groups to discuss religious freedom. Embassy officials actively engaged in "outreach" presentations to the public, with a particular focus on Muslim communities. Embassy officers discussed the need for religious tolerance, especially towards immigrants from the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America.

In Northern Ireland, long-standing matters related to national identity have been part of political and economic friction between Protestant and Catholic communities. As an active supporter of the peace process, the U.S. Government encouraged efforts to diminish sectarian tension and promote dialogue between the two communities.

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