



## United Kingdom

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

### **International Religious Freedom Report 2009**

**October 26, 2009**

The law 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 was a slight improvement in respect for religious freedom for non-Christian believers, while Christians continued to complain about the ability to express their faith in the workplace.

There were some reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Violence declined in Northern Ireland. Anti-Semitic acts rose sharply in January and February 2009 during and immediately after the Israeli military action in Gaza. A significant number of "Islamophobic" incidents occurred, and public debate continued over the role of Islam in society. Representatives of other religions reported few negative religiously motivated acts.

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 61.1 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. In December 2007 a survey reported that the number of Catholics attending Sunday services had 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 constituted 15 percent of the population. Muslims composed 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 Christian Research's *Religious Trends* report released on May 8, 2008, four 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 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 Government Respect for 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. The 1998 Human Rights Act guarantees freedom of religion, and the 2006 Equality Act bans discrimination based on religion.

The Racial and Religious Hatred Act of 2006, which came into effect in 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, publish, distribute, or include 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 seven 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 of 2006 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. Religious discrimination in employment and vocational training is illegal under the 2003 Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations. The Equality Act established the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR), which began work in 2007 and 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 receives and is accountable for public funds but is independent of the Government. 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 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 Human Rights Commission. The Equality Act allows the CEHR to cover devolved matters if it has the agreement of the proposed Scottish Commission.

In Northern Ireland religious discrimination in employment has been illegal since 1976 and discrimination in goods and services has been illegal since 1998. This, and all other equality legislation, is supervised by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, which has similar powers to those of the CEHR.

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 that in 2007-08, it prosecuted 13,008 racially and religiously motivated crimes, of which 10,398 led to convictions. Current statistics do not differentiate between religiously and racially motivated crimes. These rates represented an increase from the previous year, when there were 11,713 prosecutions leading to 9,017 convictions.

There are two established (or state) churches--The Church of England (Anglican) and the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian)--but 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.

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.

The Bill of Rights of 1689 and the Act of Settlement of 1701 forbid any Catholic, or person married to a Catholic, from becoming monarch. The monarch is the "Supreme Governor" of the Church of England and must always be a member of and promise to uphold the Church. The monarch's connection with the Church of England was the subject of public debate, and in 2009 a Member of Parliament (MP) tried to introduce legislation to remove the ban on Roman Catholics becoming the monarch. The Government has agreed that the ban on Catholics becoming monarch needs to be considered, although some Christians worry that this would diminish the role of the Church in the country. There is disagreement within the Catholic Church in the United Kingdom as to the importance of the issue. The head of the Catholic Church in Scotland has described the ban as "state-sponsored sectarian discrimination," while the new head of the Catholic Church in England and Wales has stated that it is low on his list of priorities.

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.

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, Parliament abolished the crime of blasphemy against the Church of England. Despite a number of attempts, the law had not been enforced in decades.

Religiously motivated hate language is prosecuted under various sections of the Public Order Act and the Racial and Religious Hatred Act of 2006, which the Crown Prosecution Service applies to demonstrations where insulting and abusive language is used about religion. Christian groups expressed concern over a recent addition to the Public Order Act that criminalizes "homophobic" hate speech. A Northern Ireland MP was investigated by the police under similar legislation in Northern Ireland after she criticized homosexual practice in a radio interview. The Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland decided not to prosecute.

The Government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday, Easter Monday, and Christmas.

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 Section III).

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 disused 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 approximately 7,000 "faith schools" in England (numbers are not available for Scotland and Wales) are associated with Christian denominations, although there are Jewish, Islamic, Sikh, (and one Hindu) schools. The first state-supported Hindu school opened in September 2008. 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. In April 2009 the Government mandated that all schools teach sex education ("Personal, Social, and Health Education"), but allowed faith schools to teach their pupils their faiths' teachings that some aspects of the standard curriculum is wrong. Some Christian faith schools also faced controversy because they were accused of not following the national curriculum in science, teaching creationism instead. During the reporting period, the Government issued a new admissions code as a result of its finding that many religious school's had improperly screened children for admission and were not following an "open" admission policy as required by law, thereby 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 Protestant (state run) or Catholic. Integrated schools served approximately 7 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 three years before government funding begins. Demand for places in integrated schools outweighed the limited number of places available. There were more than 50 integrated schools, and the Government permits existing schools to petition to change from state-run or Catholic to integrated status. More petition for that status than are granted it.

The law requires religious education for all children, ages three 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 syllabuses 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.

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 of 2006 permits sixth form students (generally 16-to-19-year-olds) to withdraw themselves from worship without their parents' permission or action. This 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. In 2009 the National Union of Teachers called on the Government to end the requirement for a collective act of worship.

After several controversial court decisions prohibiting full-face veils in school (but not headscarves) 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 five 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 Chaplaincy Council 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. The directorate also works with the Equality and Human Rights Commission, a nondepartmental government body, in pursuing these goals. According to a directorate 2005 policy further elaborated by the Home Secretary in October 2008, the Government can exclude individuals, such as international religious leaders of minority religious groups, from the country on the grounds that they have engaged in unacceptable behavior, including cases where the public expression of religious or other beliefs by that individual is part of the reason for exclusion. The Government defines unacceptable behavior as using any means to express views that foster extremism or hatred.

The Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB), a body launched by four large Muslim nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to combat extremism, continued to work on reaching out to encourage moderate, nonviolent interpretations of Islam. The board held elections for its executive board on May 10, 2009. Thirty-four of the 50 seats were elected, and the rest were appointed by the four founding organizations. Twenty percent of the board members are Shi'a Muslims and 20 percent are women, both of which are minimums set by MINAB's by-laws.

#### Restrictions on Religious Freedom

As in previous years, Christian groups stated that they had been subjected to more stringent application of rules restricting religion in the public sphere than other groups. There was increasing public concern over the ability of Christians to express their faith in the workplace. A British nurse was suspended after offering to pray for a patient and a Christian Registrar of Marriages lost her case when she refused to officiate for same-sex civil partnerships.

The collective worship policy continued to invite controversy. One head teacher in Sheffield resigned after protests that the collective worship at the school did not respect members of all communities. Parents and students in favor of the law said that it helped students understand the religious orientation of the country and the society in which they are living. Some students and parents opposed the policy as imposing religion or a particular form of religion on students. A teachers' union called for the Government to remove the collective worship requirement, especially in secular schools.

During the reporting period conflicting rulings by schools, school boards, employment tribunals, and courts on what is and is not permitted dress in schools and places of employment led to controversy and legal challenges.

Some imams in mosques have advocated terrorism and have subsequently been arrested. The Government rearrested radical preacher Abu Qatada, and the House of Lords ruled that he could be deported to Jordan, where he had been convicted in absentia, despite his assertion that his trial had been unfair and he might face torture.

On April 29, 2009, the British Sikh Police Association began operations to represent the approximately 2,000 Sikhs who work in various capacities in police forces in Britain. It noted that Sikh police officers have not been allowed to participate in certain firearms police units because police helmets do not fit over the turbans Sikhs must wear as part of their religion. Sikhs are also not allowed to work in the field in fire departments because of their turbans and beards. Representatives of Sikh NGOs say they were continuing to work with the authorities to try to come to arrangements that would allow them to work.

On April 8, 2009, police arrested 12 men in northwest England on suspicion of involvement in a major terrorist plot. They were held for varying lengths of time up to two weeks and their apartments were searched. All 12 were eventually released without charge. According to news reports, 11 of the 12 were non-British citizens and could

face deportation. Government sources stated that the arrests were based on information about terrorism. Human rights groups and Muslim groups noted that government figures released in May 2009 show that two-thirds of those arrested for terrorism-related offenses are never charged and only about 7 percent of prosecutions are successful. They pointed to this as evidence of a policy of rounding up Muslims in terrorist-related investigations in a discriminatory way.

Members of the Muslim community complained that police targeted them for suspicion, arrest, and "stop-and-search" disproportionately. Ministry of Justice figures showed that the number of stop and searches were significantly higher for blacks and Asians than whites. Because ethnicity and religion in the UK are often inextricably linked, it is difficult to categorize many incidents specifically as ethnic or religious intolerance. The Muslim community and human rights activists also criticized the 28-day detention powers for terrorism suspects. The Government proposed extending this period to 42 days, but the House of Lords voted against the proposal and the Government withdrew it.

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 May 8, 2009, a British high court ruled against a Hindu who wanted to have an open funeral pyre. The judge stated that according to the Cremation Act of 1902 and subsequent 2008 regulations, it is a criminal offense to burn human remains other than in a crematorium. The petitioner has said he planned to continue appealing the case. The Hindu community supported the petitioner's case but also proposed a compromise solution that would allow the spirit of the ceremony to be preserved but comply with the regulations.

In March 2009 a Pakistani man brought a case to court to object to his children being placed with a non-Muslim foster family. The court ruled that because the children were in physical danger, their safety was more important than religious considerations.

On February 11, 2009, the Employment Appeals Tribunal ruled against an appeal by a man who claimed he had been inappropriately fired from his job as a social worker for religious reasons. The court stated that the employer had made a judgment based on the employee's inappropriate proselytizing rather than his belief. The Appeals Tribunal did not agree that inappropriate proselytizing had occurred; however, it did not find that discrimination had occurred, since proselytizing was a valid grounds for termination of employment. The employee was not reinstated to his job, however, because the employer had also provided reasons for the dismissal not related to religion, and the court found these reasons valid.

On January 21, 2009, a bill was introduced in Parliament that would end the ban on the monarch marrying a Catholic, as well as end the practice of male primogeniture in royal succession. The bill would not remove the requirement that the monarch be part of the Church of England. The bill was due to be taken up again in October 2009. A 2001 Home Office study suggested that the establishment status of the Church of England causes "religious disadvantage" to other religious communities. Twenty-six senior bishops of the Anglican Church are given places in the House of Lords as representatives of the official church. Besides this instance, however, membership in a given religious group does not confer a political or economic advantage on individual adherents, except perhaps in the case of non-residents of the country who wish to marry in the country, a policy which was under review. The Home Office requires nonresidents wishing to marry in the country to apply for a Certificate of Approval (COA) if they are not going to marry in the Church of England. Nonresidents marrying in the Church of England do not have to apply for the COA currently. At least one suit has been brought claiming that the Church of England's exemption from the COA requirement (and the substantial accompanying fee) is discriminatory. COA fees were suspended as of April

2009.

The North London Borough of Islington disciplined and threatened to dismiss Lillian Ladele for refusing to perform marriages for same-sex couples. Ladele stated that she would not perform such duties because of her strongly held religious beliefs. On December 19, 2008, the Employment Appeals Tribunal ruled in favor of the Islington Council and held that no discrimination had taken place.

On November 20, 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 visible cross while on duty. She refused and was put on unpaid leave. BA's policy at the time dictated that jewelry had to be concealed beneath the wearer's clothing unless it was mandatory according to a particular religion and could not be otherwise be concealed, such as a hijab, turban, or skullcap. The tribunal upheld the previous ruling that the policy was evenly applied, so no discrimination occurred. Eweida and her supporters maintained that she was discriminated against because employees of other religions were allowed to wear religious items. According to the court decision, Eweida acknowledged that the cross was a personal expression of her faith rather than a religious obligation. The court ruled that "there was no evidence that a group of Christians were put at a particular religious disadvantage when compared with non-Christians."

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. The Unification Church held a large event in London in November 2008.

In June 2009 an appeals court declared that a Jewish faith school had violated racial discrimination laws, overturning a July 2008 ruling. The earlier ruling had declared that it was the school's right to determine whether or not a prospective student was Jewish by faith. The June 2009 ruling did not strike down this point but determined that this case was one of racial discrimination and was therefore unlawful. On March 8, 2008, the 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 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.

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

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

On May 15, 2009, a school decided to allow a 16-year-old Sikh girl to wear a kirpan (a Sikh ceremonial dagger that all Sikhs must wear) while taking her exams. Several days previously the school had said she would not be able to take the exams while wearing the kirpan. According to news reports the dispute was resolved amicably.

On May 11, 2009, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) announced that Aaqil Ahmed, a Muslim, would become the head of its religious programming division. The BBC made the decision to appoint Ahmed despite a great deal of controversy and criticism from members of the public and some religious groups.

On May 1, 2009, the Scottish Government announced it would provide more than \$132,000 (£80,000) for the delivery of 152 Islamophobia workshops in secondary schools across Scotland over the next two years.

In April 2009 the Government mandated sex education for all state schools in England. This provoked concern from students and parents who disagree on religious grounds with various elements of the national sex education curriculum. The Government's new policy allows teachers at faith schools to give their faiths' perspectives on certain elements of the curriculum, such as premarital sex and homosexuality. Parents also have the right to withdraw their children from such classes if they find them to be in discord with their religious views.

On March 24, 2009, the Government launched The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism (also known as CONTEST 2). The strategy included an emphasis on working with Muslim groups to combat extremism and to improve relations between Muslims, the Government, and society in general. This built on a project announced by the Communities Ministry's announcement in July 2008 of a program to counter extremism by establishing an independent board of Muslim theological experts, teaching citizenship in mosques, and creating a new group of community leaders to provide advice on combating extremism.

In March 2009 Babar Ahmad won a civil case against the Metropolitan police and was awarded \$99,000 (£60,000) in damages. He had been arrested in 2003, and the High Court found he had been subjected to violence and religious abuse. He remained in detention because of terrorism concerns.

On March 8, 2009, two British soldiers were killed in Northern Ireland. The "Real IRA" claimed responsibility. As evidence that the reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland is continuing, Catholic leaders Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams strongly condemned the attack and publicly declared their support for the Northern Ireland police in trying to apprehend the perpetrators.

In March 2009 the Schools Secretary called for a survey of the "moral values" of faith schools in the wake of Ofsted and NGO reports that said some independent faith schools were not in compliance with 2003 regulations mandating that schools teach their children to be tolerant and live in harmony within British society.

In February 2009 the Government implemented a new School Admissions Code. The code mandates that schools consult with the local community on the impact of the school and how its admissions policy affects the community in which it is located. It also allows state-financed faith schools to give preference to students of a particular faith only if the school is oversubscribed. The new policy came partly as a response to complaints that religious schools were violating the admissions codes at significantly higher rates than other schools. The code was scheduled to be implemented for the 2010 school year.

In January 2009 a Christian nurse was suspended from duty after offering to pray for a sick patient. Shortly thereafter her employer reinstated her after determining she had not tried to proselytize.

British Catholic Bishop Richard Williamson had his excommunication lifted by Pope Benedict XVI. However, Williamson's views denying the Holocaust subsequently were publicized shortly thereafter. The Catholic Church in England and Wales condemned his views on the Holocaust.

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 has increased this proportion. Northern Ireland's Security Minister informed Parliament in March 2009 that the percentage of Catholics in the police forces had reached 26 percent, the highest since a 2001 effort to balance the forces. He also reported that Catholics continued to join the police forces in Northern Ireland despite fears that they might become targets for the Real IRA ("Irish Republican Army") or the Continuity IRA.

In February 2009, according to press reports, the University of Hertfordshire allowed a student time off to celebrate a Wicca religious festival.

On January 10, 2009, the BBC allowed an atheist to give the first atheist "Thought for the Afternoon" on BBC Radio 4. The radio slot had previously been reserved for religious-themed commentary only. The BBC still has not allowed an atheist to speak during its "Thought for the Morning" slot.

On January 4, 2009, there was an attempted arson at a synagogue in North London. There were also numerous incidents of anti-Semitic graffiti, hate mail, and verbal and physical assaults. In response, a group of prominent British Muslims issued a statement condemning the anti-Semitic acts.

The Government held a two-day conference on anti-Semitism in November 2008. It brought together officials from 40 countries and resulted in the publishing of the London Declaration on Combating Antisemitism, which calls for the EU Council of Ministers to address the issue, to expose and isolate governments and politicians who engage in anti-Semitism, and to create a taskforce to monitor and combat racism and anti-Semitism on the Internet.

The Employment Appeals Tribunal ruled on October 24, 2008, that two Hindu employees of an immigration advice center had been unfairly dismissed on the basis of their religion by members of the Ravidasi faith.

On October 21, 2008, private citizens began an atheist bus advertising campaign in response to evangelical Christian advertisements on buses. The campaign bought ads for hundreds of buses around the country. It drew a great deal of publicity and criticism. At least one bus driver refused to drive in a bus with a pro-atheist advertisement. The Advertising Standards Authority cleared the campaign, stating that it was "unlikely to mislead or offend."

On October 6, 2008, the Metropolitan police began an inquiry into race and faith issues in the police force. The report was due in June 2009.

The Anglican Church undertook a contentious debate around the possibility of ordaining female bishops. In July 2008 and February 2009, the General Synod took actions that started the process of ordaining women. However, before the law is passed it must still go through a series of amendments, a process that may take several years. Opponents of ordination for women complained that their concerns had not been taken into account.

A court began investigating a claim of misconduct against a teacher affiliated with the British National Party who may have used his laptop to spread religious intolerance on the Internet between February and March 2007.

In October and November 2008 Muslim and Jewish MPs undertook a university tour on behalf of the Coexistence

Trust, an organization that aims at promoting good relations between Muslims and Jews.

In October 2008 the Home Secretary issued a revised set of rules allowing the country to bar entry to foreign preachers who espouse hatred. Muslim groups said the policy was disproportionately aimed at Muslims. On May 5, 2009, the Home Secretary issued a list of people banned under the policy. It included a number of Muslims as well as a number of non-Muslims, including non-Muslim religious activists deemed to have extreme views.

On September 15, 2008, the first state-supported Hindu school opened in London.

In September 2008 Tarique Ghaffur, the third-ranking official at the Metropolitan Police Department, brought a suit against the Metropolitan Police Chief. He alleged racial, religious, and age discrimination. The case was settled out of court in October 2008.

On August 28, 2008, a court convicted a Shi'a Muslim of child cruelty for forcing two youths to flog themselves at a religious ceremony.

On July 29, 2008, a high court judge ruled that a state school in Wales had broken the law when it denied a Sikh girl 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, had previously ruled that Sikh children could wear turbans and ceremonial trousers to school. A specific ruling on Kara bracelets and kirpans had not been made by the end of the reporting period, although a Sikh NGO reported that it was working with the Government on developing such a policy.

Lord Chief Justice Phillips, Britain's highest judge, publicly addressed the subject of Shari'a in the country in a speech on July 3, 2008. The Archbishop of Canterbury had caused controversy in February 2008 by stating that the incorporation of some elements of Shari'a into British Common Law was inevitable. Lord Phillips stated that Shari'a could be used in areas such as dispute mediation, marriage, and finance, with the understanding that it could only be used insofar as it did not contradict the laws of England and Wales. A British think tank, Civitas, reported that as of June 2009, 85 unauthorized Shari'a courts were operating in the country. Civitas argued that these courts often contradict British law.

The Cambridge Muslim College opened during the reporting period. Its stated aim is to educate the country's Muslims and imams in a way that will better improve their understanding of Islam and how to work constructively within society. As noted previously, there has been criticism that many Muslim religious leaders active in UK mosques and schools are predominantly immigrants and lack the background to help the country's Muslims integrate successfully in society.

### Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

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

There was an outbreak of anti-Semitic incidents in January and February following the conflict between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Community Security Trust (CST) a group that has tracked anti-Semitic incidents since 1984, reported that there were 609 anti-Semitic incidents in the first six months of 2009, whereas the preceding 12 months had seen 544 incidents. There were 286 incidents in January and 111 in February, both of which were higher than the previous record of 105 from October of 2000. Anti-Semitic incidents continued to be higher than the previous year in March, but by April or May the rate of incidents had roughly returned to previous levels. The incidents included property damage, threats, abusive behavior, mass-produced or mass-mailed anti-Semitic literature.

CST reported two incidents of extreme violence in May 2009. In one case a man was injured in a knife attack

characterized by the police as anti-Semitic. In another case an elderly Jewish man riding an electronic mobility scooter was rammed by a driver who shouted anti-Semitic insults. The victim was thrown from his seat and onto the ground.

In February 2009 London's Royal Court Theatre performed a play entitled *Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza*, which caused significant controversy due to its content. Many critics labeled the play as anti-Semitic. The playwright defended the play as being critical of Israeli policy rather than an attack on Jews.

On January 4, 2009, a synagogue was attacked in northwest London in an act of attempted arson.

In January 2009 unknown assailants physically attacked Michael Bookatz, hospitalizing him. Bookatz, who dressed in a way that identified him as Jewish, was apparently chosen randomly. Bookatz stated that the attackers shouted they were attacking him because of Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip.

In June 2008 in a previously unreported event, a Jewish man was killed in Manchester. The attacker had delusions of being persecuted by Jewish people and was confined to a psychiatric hospital.

On May 24, 2009, a Catholic man was beaten to death by a group of Protestants. Police were treating the killing as sectarian and investigations were ongoing. Data released by the police in Northern Ireland in May 2009 show that there were 1,595 sectarian incidents reported to the police in 2008-09, with 1,584 reports for the previous year.

On May 10, 2009, prisoners in a jail in Nottinghamshire constructed a bomb and placed it in a Muslim worship area. Prison officials removed the bomb before it exploded.

On May 5, 2009, an Islamic Centre in Bedfordshire was gutted by fire; police suspected arson. There were unconfirmed media reports that the attack may have been an attempt at retribution against Muslim protesters who demonstrated against British soldiers returning from deployment in Muslim-majority countries. However, investigations were ongoing. On May 25, 2009, a crowd in Luton demonstrated against the Muslims who had protested the British soldiers. Nine persons were arrested.

In March 2009 a Scottish man was brought to court after threatening to blow up a mosque and behead Muslims. He pled guilty and was awaiting sentencing.

In March 2009 the leader of a small political party was convicted of shouting verbal abuse at Muslims and given a suspended sentence. He had previously been convicted of distributing racist literature.

Several documentaries and undercover investigations by the media asserted that extremist preaching was taking place at mosques in the country. A Quilliam Foundation survey concluded that most mosques in the country were out of touch with society because 97 percent of imams were not from the country or citizens, 44 percent conducted Friday sermons in a language other than English, and almost half did not have facilities for women.

On December 17, 2008, according to local newspaper reports, vandals defaced a mosque (recently converted from a church) in Southend and attacked the imam's home.

On December 3, 2008, a Muslim woman won \$123,000 (£75,000) from a senior staff member at the firm where she worked. The senior staff member had discriminated against her and made offensive, religiously based comments.

On November 29, 2008, soccer fans from Newcastle shouted anti-Muslim slogans at an opposition player. The player stated that this was the second year in a row he had been subjected to anti-Muslim chants and that the Football Association had not taken appropriate action in the previous year.

In November 2008 the Beatbullying Charity published a study that said one in four children had been bullied because of his or her faith.

On October 24, 2008, in Crawley, a man was given a one-year sentence suspended for two years plus fines and given community service for a religiously motivated verbal attack on a taxi driver, whom he called "Bin Laden."

On September 29, 2008, approximately 40 Muslim graves were vandalized at a cemetery in the London suburb of Southall.

Police arrested three men in September for firebombing the Gibson House publishing company, which was going to publish a novel of historical fiction about the Prophet Muhammad's wife Aisha. Several publishers had declined to publish the book already for fear of offending Muslims. The book had not been published in the UK by the end of the reporting period.

Newspapers reported that in August 2008 a Muslim student from Qatar was killed in an attack that police were treating as racially and religiously motivated. Three men were arrested in the attack, and one of them was set to stand trial for manslaughter in 2009.

On August 30, 2008, arsonists burned a Lincoln church that was undergoing conversion into a mosque.

In a previously unreported ruling, a London employment tribunal ordered a salon owner to pay \$6,600 (£4,000) in compensation to Bushra Noah. Noah claimed religious discrimination and said the salon owner had not hired her because of her Islamic headscarf.

Plans for Tablighi Jamaat, an Islamic missionary group, to build a very large mosque in East London near the site of the 2012 Olympic site led to public criticism, and the project was on hold as of the end of the reporting period.

A study by the Center for Social Cohesion released in 2008 stated that 32 percent of Muslims on British university campuses support killing in the name of religion. Critics of the study noted that the phrasing of the questions skewed the results. Cambridge University did a contrasting study that suggested that only a small percentage of Muslim students hold extremist views.

According to the CST, there were 541 anti-Semitic incidents in 2008, 4 percent fewer than the previous year, but the third-highest since CST began recording incidents in 1984. January 2009 saw the highest monthly total CST has ever recorded, with more than 200 incidents, and there were more than 100 incidents in February 2009. CST stated it was likely this sharp surge in incidents was related to the then on-going conflict in the Gaza Strip. Incident levels dropped to their historical rates by the end of March.

#### 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. Representatives from various ecumenical groups, such as the Three Faiths Forum, and other groups promoting religious tolerance, are routinely included in embassy events. 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 and the role of religious diversity in American life.

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.