



## U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

### United Kingdom

#### International Religious Freedom Report 2006

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religious groups in society contributed to religious freedom. Centuries-old sectarian divisions and instances of violence persisted in Northern Ireland. The July 7, 2005, terrorist attacks carried out on London's transport system by Muslim suicide bombers acting under what they declared to be religious beliefs have caused the British public and Government to reflect on whether tolerance for religious practices was sufficient to guarantee a civic and civil society.

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

#### Section I. Religious Demography

The United Kingdom has an area of 94,525 square miles and a population in mid-2003 of approximately 59.6 million. The 2001 census for the whole of the United Kingdom reported that approximately 42 million persons (almost 72 percent of the population) identified themselves as Christians. Approximately 1.6 million (2.7 percent) identified themselves as Muslims. The next largest religious groups were Hindus (1 percent), Sikhs (0.6 percent), and Jews (0.5 percent). More than 9 million (15.5 percent) respondents stated they had no religion. The census's religion question was voluntary, but only 7.3 percent chose not to respond.

Religious affiliation was not evenly distributed among ethnicities. According to 2001 census data for Great Britain, approximately 70 percent of the white population described themselves as Christians. Almost 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.

Non-Christian populations were concentrated in London and other large urban areas. London was home to 56 percent of Jews, 52 percent of Hindus, 38 percent of Muslims, and 31 percent of Sikhs. Census figures showed that Muslims, as compared to adherents of other religions, had higher rates of unemployment and ill health and lower rates of educational qualifications.

Information on membership in Christian denominations was not recorded in the 2001 census. In 2003, the Office for National Statistics indicated approximately 29 percent of the population identified with Anglicanism, 10 percent with the Roman Catholic Church, and 14 percent with Protestant churches.

In Northern Ireland, the 2001 census showed that 53.1 percent were Protestants and 43.8 percent were Catholics. Overall church attendance in Northern Ireland was estimated at 30 to 35 percent. The divisions between nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland have largely evolved along religious lines. The policy of the Government remained one of promotion of religious tolerance.

Most Catholics and Protestants continued to live in segregated communities in Northern Ireland, including public housing ("housing estates") and other working class areas, although many middle class neighborhoods were mixed communities. Intimidation by paramilitary gangs often resulted in members of the local-minority community leaving housing estates, which increased the level of segregation.

#### Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

##### Legal/Policy Framework

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. The Government at all levels sought to protect this right in full and did not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The law provides for the freedom to change one's religion or belief. The 1998 Human Rights Act guarantees freedom of religion and bans discrimination based on religion. Religious discrimination in employment and vocational training was made illegal by 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" (i.e., where there is evidence of religious hostility in connection with a crime) face higher maximum penalties. According to the Crown Prosecution Service's Racist Incident Monitoring Annual Report covering the period of April 2004 to May 2005, twenty-seven of thirty-four defendants were prosecuted for religiously aggravated

offenses under the Anti-Terrorism, Crime, and Security Act in England and Wales. In twenty-three of the offenses, the actual or perceived religion of the victim was Islam.

On February 16, 2006, the Government enacted the Racial and Religious Hatred Act and the Equality Act applicable throughout Great Britain. The Racial and Religious Hatred Act amended the Public Order Act of 1986 by creating new offenses for stirring up hatred against persons on religious grounds. The Act defined "religious hatred" as hatred against a group of persons defined by reference to religious belief or lack of religious belief. The act does not seek to define what amounts to a religion or a religious belief, leaving it to the courts to make such determinations.

Offenses under the act must be threatening and intended to stir up religious hatred based on: 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's provisions are not intended to restrict freedom of speech and criticism of religions or lack of religion. The act does not apply where words or behavior are used or displayed inside a private dwelling and cannot be seen or heard by others outside. The maximum penalty for stirring up religious hatred is seven years in prison.

This act also amended the Police and Criminal Evidence Act of 1984, giving only constables the power to arrest persons in the context of these offenses, rather than allowing "citizens' arrests."

The Equality Act made 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) for Great Britain, 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. The CEHR's remit is slightly different for Scotland, where it covers only human rights matters reserved to Westminster. Human rights for matters "devolved" to the Scottish Parliament are covered by the Scottish Commission for Human Rights. The Equality Act does allow the CEHR to cover devolved matters if it has the agreement of the proposed Scottish Commission.

There are two established (or state) churches: the Church of England (Anglican) and the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian). The monarch is the "Supreme Governor" of the Church of England and always must be a member of the Church and promise to uphold it. The monarch's connection with the Church of England is the subject of ongoing public debate. In 2003, a nongovernmental Commission on the Future of the Monarchy called for the Queen to be stripped of the title of Supreme Governor.

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. There are no established churches in Wales or Northern Ireland. A February 2001 Home Office study suggested that the establishment status of the Church of England causes "religious disadvantage" to other religious communities. Those who believe that their freedom of religion has been infringed upon have the right to appeal to the courts for relief.

The Government indicated it had no plans to move towards disestablishment of the Church of England unless both the Church and the public favored such a move; furthermore, the Government took the view that establishment was deeply embedded in the nation's history and in no way indicated a lack of respect for other faiths. Official events took an inclusive approach; for example, the national Remembrance Day Service, conducted under the auspices of the Church of England, also included representatives of a broad range of faiths. The Government made efforts to address specific needs of different faith communities, such as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's provision of a special Hajj delegation to provide consular and medical assistance to British Muslims on pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia.

After the July 7, 2005, terrorist attacks against London's transport system, the Government launched an effort to create "task forces" together with members of the Muslim communities to set an agenda which would help those communities counter extremism and radicalization leading to violence.

Holy days that are considered national holidays include 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 state. Religious bodies are expected to finance their own activities through endowment, investments, and fund-raising. The Government funds the repair of historic religious buildings, such as cathedrals and churches, but such funding is not restricted to Church of England buildings. A government grants program, financed largely through lottery money, helps to fund repair and maintenance of listed places of worship of all religious groups nationwide. The Government also contributes to the budget of the Church Conservation Trust, which preserves "redundant" Church of England buildings of architectural or historic significance. Several similar groups in England, Scotland, and Wales repair non-Anglican houses of worship.

Most religious institutions are classified as charities and, as such, enjoy a wide range of tax benefits. (The advancement of religion is considered to be a charitable purpose.) In England and Wales, the Charity Commission reviews the application of each body applying for registration as a charity. Commissioners base their decisions on a substantial body of case law. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, the Inland Revenue performs this task. 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. They also are exempt from the value-added tax.

The Government provides funding for a large number of so-called "faith schools." As of May 2006, there were 6,874 state-funded schools

with a religious character in England. There were 4,659 Anglican, 2,053 Roman Catholic, 1 Greek Orthodox, and 1 Seventh-day Adventist school. Other Christian denominations accounted for 115 of the schools. There were 36 Jewish, 7 Muslim, and 2 Sikh schools. In January 2005, Chief Inspector of Schools for England David Bell called on faith schools to be "intolerant of intolerance." In February 2005, then-Schools Minister for England Stephen Twigg published a list of best practices of how faith schools can implement inclusiveness and collaboration.

In Scotland, most faith-based government-funded schools were Roman Catholic, although there was also a Jewish school. The Scottish Executive undertook significant steps to address religious intolerance and bigotry. During 2006, the Executive was providing approximately \$187,000 (100,000 pounds sterling) to support anti-sectarian projects in schools; \$18,700 (10,000 pounds sterling) to support an anti-sectarian campaign run by the National Union of Students; and \$25,245 (13,500 pounds sterling) to support anti-sectarian resources in youth work. It also added an anti-sectarian award for the Scottish Education Awards. The Executive was also undertaking measures in Scotland's sporting associations to tackle sectarianism.

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 three years before government funding begins. Demand for places in integrated schools outweighed the limited number of places available.

The law requires religious education in publicly maintained schools throughout the United Kingdom for ages three to nineteen. According to the Education Reform Act of 1988, it forms part of the core curriculum for students in England and Wales. In Scotland, religious education of some sort is mandated by the Education Act of 1980. Throughout the United Kingdom, the shape and content of religious instruction 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. Syllabi must be nondenominational and refrain from attempting to convert pupils. Schools with a religious designation follow a syllabus as drawn up by the school governors according to the trust deed of the school.

In addition, schools in England and Wales must provide a daily act of collective worship. In practice, this action mainly is Christian in character, reflecting Christianity's importance in the religious life of the country. This requirement may be waived if a school's administration deems it inappropriate for some or all of the students. All parents have the right to withdraw a child from religious education, but the schools must approve this request. Under some circumstances, non-Christian worship may instead be allowed. Teachers' organizations have criticized school prayer and called for a government review of the practice.

Where student bodies are characterized by a substantial percentage of religious minorities, schools may observe the religious festivals of other faiths. Schools also endeavor to accommodate religious requirements, such as providing halal meat for Muslim children.

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 faiths. 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 2003, Parliament approved the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations, which adopted a European Commission Directive against religious discrimination. The regulations prohibit employment discrimination based on religious belief, except where there is a "genuine occupational requirement" of a religious nature. The Government attempts to raise awareness of protections under the new regulations through help lines and good-practice advice. The regulations do not apply in Northern Ireland.

The Government makes an active effort to ensure that public servants are not discriminated against on the basis of religion, and strives 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 issues relating to religious provision. The military generally provides soldiers who are adherents of minority religions with chaplains of their faith.

Following a May 5, 2006, Cabinet reshuffle, the Race, Cohesion and Faiths Directorate was formed in the newly-created Department for Communities and Local Government. The Directorate is responsible for tackling racism, extremism, and hate, and for promoting interfaith activity in England and Wales. It engages with faith communities to ensure government policies and services are delivered equally and appropriately. In March 2004, the Home Office published a report, "Working Together: Cooperation between Government and Faith Communities," in partnership with senior faith community representatives. The report recommended measures to ensure that government consultations include relevant input from faith communities when forming policy, to assess the extent to which faith communities benefit from government funding programs, to address funding deficiencies, and to involve the different faith communities in national services and celebrations in a way that reflects the diversity of the country.

As a result of the July 7, 2005, bombings, the Home Office also launched a "Preventing Extremism Together" project and joint "task forces" with the Muslim Community. Reports on the usefulness of these efforts were mixed. One part of that effort was the "theological roadshow," a series of seminars given by prominent Muslims advocating moderate, nonviolent interpretations of Islam.

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

In March 2006, the Law Lords, the court of last resort, ruled in favor of a high school in Luton that expelled a Muslim teenager for contravening its dress code. In 2002, the school expelled Shabina Begum for wearing a jilbab, a traditional dress that leaves only the face and hands exposed, which violated the school's dress code. The school, which was 79 percent Muslim and had a Muslim headmaster, created the policy after consultation with local Muslim organizations. The school's policy allowed girls to wear a skirt, pants, or a shalwar kameez, which comprises a loose tunic and pants, and to cover their heads with headscarves. After her expulsion, Begum filed suit in the High Court, which ruled in the school's favor. In 2005, the Court of Appeal overturned this decision. Lord Bingham, announcing the Law Lords' decision, stated the school "...had taken immense pains to devise a uniform policy which respected Muslim beliefs but did so in an inclusive, unthreatening and uncompetitive way." He also noted that the rules were acceptable to mainstream Muslim opinion. Begum was unsure at the end of the period covered by this report if she would appeal the decision in the European Court of Human Rights.

A secondary school in Horsham banned a group of teenage Christians from wearing "purity rings." The rings were inscribed with a biblical verse and worn as a symbol of their belief in chastity until marriage. Several students were punished with detentions and taught in isolation from other students for wearing the rings. The school maintained that wearing the rings violated the school's uniform policy, which prohibits all jewelry except for a small pair of ear studs. According to the father of Lydia Playfoot, one of the students, and press reporting, the school claimed that the no-jewelry policy was in effect because of health and safety concerns. The school told Mr. Playfoot that the rings could be injurious to a third party. The school refused to accept student and parent arguments that the rings were a form of religious expression and instead determined the rings to be merely decorative. Muslim and Sikh students, however, were allowed to wear headscarves or kara bracelets as a means of religious expression. Parents of the Christian students complained the policy was discriminatory and the punishment of teaching in isolation had a detrimental effect on students' education. At the end of the period covered by this report, some of the parents and students were considering legal action.

Under the 1990 Broadcasting Act and the 2003 Communications Act, religious bodies can hold local and national digital radio and digital terrestrial television licenses. Because of the limited broadcast spectrum, religious groups continued to be prohibited 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 religion. The Church of Scientology has not exercised its right of appeal to the court against the commission's decision. Scientology ministers are not considered ministers of religion for the purpose of the country's immigration regulations. Scientologist chapels do not qualify as places of worship under the law. The Prison Service does not recognize Scientology as a religion for the purpose of facilitating prison visits by ministers, although prisoners who are adherents of Scientology are free to register their adherence and to manifest their beliefs consistent with good order and discipline in prisons. To meet the needs of individual prisoners, the Prison Service allows any prisoner registered as a Scientologist to have access to a representative of the Church of Scientology if he wishes to receive its ministry.

The Reverend Sun Myung Moon, leader of the Unification Church, was excluded from the country from 2003 through 2005 following a decision by the Home Secretary. In January 2006, the Home Office removed the exclusion and allowed Reverend Moon to apply for a visa to enter the country during the period covered by this report. Allowed to use another type of visa, Reverend Moon entered the country in November 2005 and spent two days in London addressing followers.

In August 2004, new immigration regulations came into force, requiring visa applicants who wish to enter the country as ministers of religion to obtain level four competence in spoken English (on a scale of one to nine) 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 years as a minister. Ministers of religion applying for visas must also have one year of full-time experience or two years of part-time training following their ordination for faiths where ordination is the sole means of entering the ministry. A missionary seeking an entry visa must have been trained as a missionary or have worked as a missionary previously.

Other than some Anglican bishops' inclusion in the House of Lords, membership in a given religious group does not confer a political or economic advantage on individual adherents. The Anglican Archbishops of Canterbury and York; the Bishops of Durham, London, and Winchester; and twenty-one other bishops, in order of seniority, receive automatic membership in the House of Lords, whereas prominent clergy from other denominations or religions are not afforded this privilege.

While not usually enforced and essentially a legal anachronism, blasphemy against Anglican doctrine remains technically illegal in England and Wales. In early 2005, several religious organizations, in association with the Commission for Racial Equality, attempted to abolish the law or broaden its protection to include all faiths. According to the Government, there was no intention to revise or eliminate the law.

In relation to their percentage of the Northern Ireland population (44 percent), Catholics were underrepresented in the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). Ongoing government-mandated measures to increase Catholic representation in the PSNI have raised the proportion of Catholics in the police to 20 percent, compared to 8 percent in 1999.

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.

## Anti-Semitism

During the calendar year of 2005, the Community Security Trust (CST) recorded 455 anti-Semitic incidents in the United Kingdom. CST recorded 82 assaults, 25 threats, 273 instances of abusive behavior, 27 cases of the distribution of anti-Semitic literature, and 48 instances of desecration and damage to property. The number of anti-Semitic incidents slightly decreased from 2004, but CST reported that the annual totals of anti-Semitic incidents have tended to rise since 1997. According to the Global Forum against Anti-Semitism's report for 2005, the United Kingdom continued to have the highest number of anti-Semitic incidents in Europe. The report stated that activities by "radical left wing organizations for a boycott of Israel including the academia and the church" created an atmosphere which laid the groundwork for anti-Semitic acts.

## Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

The generally amicable relationship among religious groups in British society contributed to religious freedom. In Northern Ireland, where centuries-old sectarian divisions persisted between the Protestant and Catholic communities, political and cultural differences contributed to problems between nationalists and unionists.

The police in Northern Ireland reported 222 attacks against both Catholic and Protestant churches, schools, and meeting halls in 2005. Such sectarian violence often coincided with tensions during the spring and summer marching season. The 2005 marching season saw violent rioting related to two parades in July and August, respectively. Negotiations involving parade organizers, leaders in nationalist and loyalist areas, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and government and police officials helped ensure public order relating to other parades.

At the end of the period covered by this report, the Government was preparing a report on the abuse of African children branded as witches. Since the discovery of an unidentified Nigerian boy's torso in the Thames River in 2001, there has been widespread public speculation that children, mostly from Africa, have been abused in exorcism rituals by some African-based churches. In June 2005, an eight-year-old child, brought to the country from Angola, was beaten, cut, and had chili rubbed in her eyes because her aunt and two others believed she was a witch. The aunt and the two others were arrested on child abuse charges. There were similar reports of child abuse resulting from healing rituals, and the Government actively pursued and prosecuted child abuse in such cases.

On February 7, 2006, Abu Hamza al-Masri was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment on eleven charges, including soliciting or encouraging the killing of Jews, inciting racial hatred, and possessing a document that contained information "of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism."

The Muslim community complained of intermittent incidents of discrimination, although no formal statistics were available. In January 2005, an employment equality tribunal ruled in favor of a Muslim man who requested time off from his employer to make a pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca. The man received no response, but was told by the manager that in the absence of a reply his leave was granted. The man was fired upon his return. The tribunal ruled that by not trying to accommodate the employee's religious requirement to go on Hajj or justifying a refusal to authorize his leave, the company was placing Muslim employees at a particular disadvantage and discriminating on the grounds of religion.

The Islamic community continued to criticize the police's use of "stop and search" powers under anti-terrorism laws. On May 18, 2006, the Islamic Human Rights Commission published a survey of Muslims in the country. Respondents generally perceived British anti-terrorism laws as being unfair towards Muslims, and society as lacking respect for Muslims. The report also indicated, however, that the majority of respondents supported British law.

On February 3, 2006, the leader of the British National Party (BNP) and a party activist were acquitted of several charges of incitement to racial hatred. However, the Crown Prosecution Services announced they would proceed with retrials of other charges of incitement to racial hatred against both men resulting from hung juries. Their arrests followed a 2005 broadcast of a BBC documentary entitled "Secret Agent." During the broadcast, the BNP leader was covertly recorded calling Islam a "vicious, wicked faith." At the end of the period covered by this report, their trials were pending.

There was a noticeable increase in the number of anti-Muslim incidents following the July 7, 2005, bombings of London's transport system. The bombings, carried out by Muslims, created a backlash against Muslims in the form of verbal and physical assaults, vandalism, arson, anti-Muslim literature, and Internet postings. Hindus and Sikhs, misidentified as Muslims, were also targets of such incidents. Government and religious leaders of all faiths cautioned the public not to engage in such hate crimes and reiterated that the majority of British Muslims were peaceful and law-abiding citizens.

The country had both active interfaith and ecumenical movements. The Council of Christians and Jews worked to advance better relations between the two religions 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 religions.

The main ecumenical body was the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland, which served as the main forum for interchurch cooperation and collaboration. Interchurch cooperation was not limited to dealings among denominations at the national level. For example, Anglican parishes shared their churches with Roman Catholic congregations.

#### Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom issues 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 officers were in regular contact with the Board of Jewish Deputies, the Chief Rabbi's Office, the Community Security Trust, the Muslim College, Islamic Relief, and the Muslim Council of Britain. Embassy officials were highly engaged in "outreach" presentations to the British public, with a particular focus on Muslim communities. In the course of presentations, embassy officers discussed with the public the important role that religious diversity plays in the United States; the need for religious tolerance, especially towards immigrants from the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America; the fact that the United States is not involved in a war against Muslims; and the freedom of Muslims to practice their faith in the United States.

The consulate general in Edinburgh met regularly with Islamic studies graduate students and maintained close ties with lay and religious leaders from the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Roman Catholic Church, the Jewish Communities of Scotland, and various mosques.

In Northern Ireland, long-standing issues 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 these two communities.

Released on September 15, 2006

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