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2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Lebanon

Executive Summary

The constitution states there shall be “absolute freedom of conscience” and guarantees the free exercise of religious rites for all religious groups provided they do not disturb the public order. The constitution also states there shall be a “just and equitable balance” in the apportionment of cabinet and high-level civil service positions among the major religious groups, a provision amended by the Taif Agreement, which ended the country’s civil war and mandated proportional representation between Christians and Muslims in parliament, the cabinet, and other senior government positions. On October 14, clashes erupted between Shia members of Hizballah and the Amal Movement with Christian supporters of the Lebanese Forces (LF) party in the Tayyouneh area in Beirut. Authorities arrested 68 individuals on October 25, and investigations were ongoing at year’s end. Some members of unregistered religious groups, such as Baha’is and unrecognized Protestant faiths, continued to list themselves as belonging to recognized religious groups to ensure their marriage and other personal status documents remained legally valid.

Hizballah, a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization and Specially Designated Global Terrorist group, continued to exercise influence over some areas, particularly the southern suburbs of Beirut, parts of the Bekaa Valley, and southern areas of the country that are predominantly Shia Muslim. A paper issued by the Middle East Institute stated that as an actor ideologically tied to Iran, Hizballah has multiple allegiances and “objectives describing the organization as ‘committed simultaneously’ to the decrees of Iranian clerics, the Lebanese state, its sectarian Shia community, and fellow Shia abroad.”

On August 1, armed clashes erupted between Shia Hizballah supporters and members of the Sunni Arab tribes of Khaldeh during the funeral procession of Hizballah member Ali Chebli, who was killed the night before in an apparent vendetta shooting during a wedding. On January 27, Christian and Muslim religious leaders launched a joint appeal for the salvation of Lebanon in the face of an escalation of political, economic, and social and health crises. On December 20, religious leaders representing the Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Sunni, Shia, and Druze communities met with United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres during his visit to the country. In a joint statement with Guterres, the leaders confirmed their commitment to openness, tolerance, and coexistence, saying that these values are at the core of faith, especially during the country’s ongoing, compounding crises. Muslim and Christian community leaders said relationships among individual members of different religious groups continued to be amicable. The press reported that in a series of Sunday sermons throughout the year, Maronite Patriarch Rai appeared to criticize Hizballah, stressing the need to both expand the country’s policy of distancing the country from regional conflicts and maintain the current sharing of political power among the country’s religious groups.

The Ambassador and other U.S. embassy officers engaged government officials to encourage tolerance, dialogue, and mutual respect among religious communities and to highlight the importance of combating violent religious extremism. The Ambassador spoke with Christian, Shia, Sunni, and Druze religious leaders throughout the year to discuss the impact of the economic situation on different religious communities. Embassy public outreach and assistance programs continued to emphasize tolerance for all religious groups, including through interfaith programs.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 5.3 million (midyear 2021). The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other organizations estimate the total population includes 4.5 million citizens and an estimated 1.5 million refugees fleeing the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, the vast majority of whom are Syrian, as well as a Palestinian refugee population present in the country for more than 70 years. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East estimates there are more than 180,000 Palestinian refugees in the country.

Lebanon has not conducted an official census of its population since 1932. However, Statistics Lebanon, an independent firm, estimates 64.9 percent of the citizen population is Muslim (32 percent Sunni, 31.3 percent Shia, and 1.6 percent Alawites and Ismailis combined). Statistics Lebanon further estimates 32 percent of the population is Christian. Maronite Catholics are the largest Christian group (with 52.5 percent of the Christian population),

followed by Greek Orthodox (25 percent of the Christian population). Other Christian groups include Greek Catholics (Melkites), Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholics, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholics, Assyrians, Chaldean Catholics, Copts, Protestants (including Presbyterians, Baptists, and Seventh-day Adventists), Roman (Latin) Catholics, and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Church of Jesus Christ). According to Statistics Lebanon, 3.1 percent of the population is Druze, concentrated in the rural, mountainous areas east and south of Beirut. There are also small numbers of Jews, Baha'is, Buddhists, and Hindus. The Jewish Community Council, which represents the country's Jewish community, estimates 70 Jews reside in the country.

UNHCR reports that the Syrian refugees in the country are mainly Sunni Muslims, but also Shia Muslims, Christians, and Druze. Palestinians live in the country as UN-registered refugees in 12 camps and surrounding areas. They are mostly the descendants of refugees who entered the country in the 1940s and 1950s. Most are Sunni Muslims, but some are Christians.

UNHCR states there are approximately 10,300 UNHCR-registered Iraqi refugees in the country. Refugees and foreign migrants from Iraq include mostly Sunni Kurds, Sunni and Shia Muslims, and Chaldean Catholics. There are also Coptic Christians from Egypt and Sudan. According to the secretary-general of the Syriac League, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that advocates for Syriac Christians in the country, approximately 4,000 Iraqi Christians of all denominations and 3,000 to 4,000 Coptic Christians reside in the country. According to the Syriac League, the majority of Iraqi Christian refugees are not registered with UNHCR and so are not included in its count. The Syriac League said that the population of Iraqi Christians had decreased by 70 percent since 2019, largely because of emigration driven by the country's economic crisis.

Persons from all religious groups continued to emigrate from the country during the year, in large part due to the country's deteriorating economic situation. There is anecdotal evidence that Christians constituted a significant portion of those who left the country, especially following the August 2020 Beirut Port explosion, with some citing fears for their security and potential treatment in an unpredictable political environment as a reason for their departure.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution states there shall be “absolute freedom of conscience” and declares the state will respect all religious groups and denominations, as well as the personal status and religious interests of persons of every religious group. The constitution guarantees free exercise of religious rites, provided they do not disturb the public order, and declares the equality of rights and duties for all citizens without discrimination or preference.

By law, an individual is free to convert to a different religion if a local senior official of the religious group the person wishes to join approves the change. The religious group issues a document confirming the convert's new religion, allowing the convert to register her or his new religion with the Ministry of Interior's (MOI's) Personal Status Directorate. The new religion is included thereafter on government-issued civil registration documents.

Citizens have the right to remove the customary notation of their religion from government-issued civil registration documents or change how it is listed. Changing the documents does not require approval of religious officials and does not change or remove the individual's registration with the Personal Status Directorate.

The penal code stipulates a maximum prison term of one year for anyone convicted of “blaspheming God publicly.” It does not provide a definition of what this entails. A publications law regulates print media. The law includes provisions that impose potential fines or prison terms for sectarian provocation and prohibit the press from publishing blasphemous content regarding the country's officially recognized religions or content that may provoke sectarian feuds.

The law governing audiovisual media bans live broadcasts of certain religious events and prohibits the broadcast of programs that seek to harm public morals, ignite sectarian strife, or insult religious beliefs. Websites are censored through court orders filed with the Internal Security Forces' (ISF's) Cybercrimes Bureau for further investigation, after which the bureau issues a final order to the Ministry of Telecommunications. Elements of the law permit censorship of religious material considered a threat to national security or offensive to the dignity of the head of state or foreign leaders. The law includes guidelines regarding materials deemed unsuitable for publication in a book, newspaper, or magazine. Any violation of the guidelines may result in the author's imprisonment or a fine. Officials from any of the recognized religious groups may request that the Directorate of General Security (DGS) ban a book. The government may prosecute offending journalists and publications in the publications court. Authorities occasionally also refer such cases to criminal courts, a process not established in law.

The penal code criminalizes defamation and contempt for religion and stipulates a maximum prison term of three years for either of these offenses.

By law, religious groups may apply to the government for official recognition. To do so, a religious group must submit a statement of its doctrine and moral principles to the cabinet, which evaluates whether the group's principles are in accordance with the government's perception of popular values and the constitution. Alternatively, a

nonrecognized religious group may apply for recognition by seeking affiliation with another recognized religious group. In doing so, the nonrecognized group does not gain recognition as a separate group but becomes an affiliate of the group through which it applies. This process has the same requirements as applying for recognition directly with the government.

There are 18 officially recognized religious groups: five Muslim groups (Shia, Sunni, Druze, Alawite, and Ismaili), 12 Christian groups (Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Assyrian, Chaldean, Copt, evangelical Protestant, and Roman Catholic), and Jews. Groups the government does not recognize include Baha’is, Buddhists, Hindus, several Protestant groups, and the Church of Jesus Christ.

Official recognition of a religious group allows baptisms and marriages performed by the group to receive government recognition, which also conveys other benefits, such as tax-exempt status and the right to apply the religious group’s codes to personal status matters. By law, the government permits recognized religious to administer their own rules on family and personal status issues, including marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance. Shia, Sunni, recognized Christian, and Druze groups have state-appointed, government-subsidized clerical courts to administer family and personal status law according to the respective religious group’s beliefs. While the religious courts and religious laws are legally bound to comply with the provisions of the constitution, the Court of Cassation, the highest civil court in the judicial system, has very limited oversight of religious court proceedings and decisions.

There are no formalized procedures for civil marriage or divorce. The government recognizes heterosexual civil marriage ceremonies performed outside the country irrespective of the religious affiliation of each partner in the marriage. While some Christian and Muslim religious authorities will perform interreligious marriages, clerics, priests, or religious courts often require the nonbelonging partner to pledge to raise his or her children in the religion of the partner and/or to relinquish certain rights, such as inheritance or custody claims, in the case of divorce.

Nonrecognized religious groups may own property, assemble for worship, and perform religious rites freely. They may not perform legally recognized marriage or divorce proceedings, and they have no standing to determine inheritance issues. Due to agreements in the country’s confessional system that designate percentages of senior government positions, and in some cases specific positions for the recognized religious confessions, members of nonrecognized groups have no opportunity to occupy certain government positions, including cabinet, parliamentary, secretary-general, and director general positions.

The government requires Protestant churches to register with the Evangelical Synod, a self-governing advisory group overseeing religious matters for Protestant congregations and representing those churches to the government.

According to the constitution, recognized religious communities may operate their own schools, provided they follow the general rules issued for public schools, which stipulate schools must not incite sectarian discord or threaten national security. The government permits but does not require religious education in public schools. Both Christian and Muslim local religious representatives sometimes host educational sessions in public schools.

The constitution states “sectarian groups” shall be represented in a “just and equitable balance” in the cabinet and high-level civil service positions, which includes the ministry ranks of secretary-general and director general. It also states these posts shall be distributed proportionately among the major religious groups. This distribution of positions among religious groups is based on the unwritten 1943 National Pact, which used religious affiliation data from the 1932 census (the last conducted in the country). According to the pact, the President shall be a Maronite Christian, the speaker of parliament shall be a Shia Muslim, and the Prime Minister shall be a Sunni Muslim. This proportional distribution also applies to high-level positions in the civil service; the judiciary, military and security institutions; and public agencies at both the national and local levels of government. Parliament is elected on equal representation between Christians and Muslims, and cabinet positions must be allocated on the same basis. Druze and Alawites are included in this allocation within Muslim communities.

The constitution also states there is no legitimacy for any authorities that contradict the “pact of communal existence,” thereby giving force of law to the unwritten 1943 National Pact, although that arrangement is neither officially spelled out in the constitution nor is it a formally binding legal agreement.

The Taif Agreement, which ended the country’s 15-year civil war in 1989, also mandates elections based on the principle of proportional representation between Muslims and Christians in parliament but reaffirms the Christian and Muslim allocation at 50 percent each. The agreement reduced the constitutional powers of the Maronite Christian presidency and increased those of the Sunni Muslim Prime Minister while also subjecting the designation of the Prime Minister to binding consultations with parliament and the designations of all ministers to a parliamentary vote of confidence.

In addition, the Taif Agreement endorses the constitutional provision of appointing most senior government officials according to religious affiliation, including senior positions within the military and other security forces. Customarily, a Christian heads the army, while the directors general of the ISF and the DGS are Sunni and Shia, respectively. Several other top positions in the security services are customarily designated for particular confessions as well. While specific positions are designated by custom rather than law, deviating from custom is rare and any change or accommodation generally must be mutually agreed by the confessions concerned.

The Taif Agreement’s stipulations on equality of representation among members of different confessions do not apply to citizens who do not list a religious affiliation on their national registration, and thus they cannot hold a seat designated for a specific confession. Authorities allocate every government-recognized religion, except Ismaili Islam and Judaism, at least one seat in parliament, regardless of the number of its adherents.

By law, the synod of each Christian group elects its patriarchs; the Sunni and Shia electoral bodies elect their respective senior clerics; and the Druze community elects its *sheikh al-aql*, its most senior religious leader. The cabinet must endorse the nomination of Sunni and Shia muftis, as well as the sheikh al-aql, and pay their salaries. The government also appoints and pays the salaries of Muslim and Druze clerical judges. By law, the government does not endorse Christian patriarchs and does not pay the salaries of Christian clergy and officials of Christian groups.

The government issues foreign religious workers a one-month visa; to stay longer a worker must complete a residency application during the month. Religious workers also must sign a “commitment of responsibility” form before receiving a visa, which subjects the worker to legal prosecution and immediate deportation for any activity involving religious or other criticism directed against the state or any other country, except Israel. If the government finds an individual engaging in religious activity while on a tourist visa, the government may determine a violation of the visa category has occurred and deport the individual.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Government Practices

Shia members of Hizballah and the Amal Movement clashed with Christian supporters of the Lebanese Forces (LF) party in Beirut’s Tayyouneh neighborhood on October 14. Seven individuals died in the confrontation and more than 30 were wounded. Violence and shooting erupted following a protest organized by Hizballah and Amal supporters to demand the dismissal of Beirut port explosion investigating Judge Tarek Bitar, whom both parties stated was biased in his investigation. The fighting took place in a neighborhood that includes both Shia and Christian residents. On October 25, Judge Fadi Akiki, the Government Commissioner to the Military Court, charged 68 individuals with various crimes in connection with the violence, including murder, attempted murder, inciting sectarian strife, sabotage, and carrying unlicensed weapons; 18 were detained and the remainder continued to evade authorities. The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) intelligence directorate summoned LF leader Samir Geagea to give testimony, but he refused to do so unless Hizballah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah was also summoned. Nasrallah described the LF as the biggest threat to Christianity during a televised speech on October 16. Investigations were ongoing at year’s end.

In June 2020, the Mount Lebanon Public Prosecutor of the Appeals Court pressed charges against anti-Hizballah Shia cleric Sayyed Ali al-Amine following a lawsuit filed by lawyer Ghassan al-Mawla. The lawsuit accused al-Amine of “attacking the resistance and its martyrs,” “inciting strife among sects,” “violating the legal rules of the Shia sect,” and meeting with Israeli officials in a conference in Bahrain. The court scheduled al-Amine’s hearing to begin January 15, but no further update was available at year’s end.

The government continued to enforce laws against defamation and contempt for religion.

The DGS reviewed all films and plays released in the country during the year, although it did not ban any. NGOs again said this had more to do with the lack of film releases in the country due to prevailing economic and social circumstances rather than to any loosening of censorship. Civil society activists continued to state that the DGS’s decision-making process lacked transparency and that the opinions of religious institutions and political groups influenced it.

According to local NGOs, some members of unregistered religious groups, such as Baha’is and members of nonrecognized Protestant faiths, continued to list themselves as belonging to recognized religious groups in government records to ensure their marriage and other personal status documents remained legally valid. Many Baha’is said they chose to list themselves as Shia Muslims in order to effectively manage civil matters officially administered by Shia institutions, while members of the Church of Jesus Christ said they registered as evangelical Protestant.

The Jewish community faced difficulty importing material for religious rites; customs agents were reportedly wary of allowing imports of any origin containing Hebrew script due to a national ban on trade of Israeli goods. During the year, the Jewish Community Council faced difficulty in renewing the mandate of its members, a legal requirement for groups that wish to continue to be recognized by the government, due to government officials’ unwillingness to put their signatures on any document with the group’s name on it, owing to concern this might be misinterpreted as support for Israel.

The government again failed to approve a request from the Jewish community to change its official name to the Jewish Community Council from the Israelite Communal Council (the group’s officially recognized name). Jewish community representatives reported that the MOI delayed the verification of the results of the Jewish Community Council’s election of members, which occurs every six years, with the last election taking place in February 2020. Regulations governing such councils require ministry verification of council election results. The council, which represents the interests of the country’s Jewish citizens, has repeatedly submitted requests to change its government-

appointed name to reduce social stigma, without success. The council blamed its official name in part for the difficulties experienced with renewals every six years. On November 10, the Minister of Interior said that he was conducting investigations into allegations that several council members were forging signatures of nonresident Lebanese Jews to illegally acquire property. As of year’s end, the case had not been referred to the judiciary.

On September 10, Prime Minister Najib Mikati announced a new government. The cabinet consisted of 24 ministers: six Maronite, five Shia, five Sunni, three Greek Orthodox, two Druze, two Greek Catholic, and one Armenian Orthodox.

Members of all confessions may serve in the military, intelligence, and security services. While most confessions had members serving in these capacities, some groups did not do so, usually because of their small number of adherents in the country. Members of the largest recognized confessions dominated the ranks of senior positions.

There were no developments during the year on the issue of civil marriage. According to NGO representatives, civil society figures cautiously engaged both Christian and Muslim leaders to assuage fears that civil marriage would pose a threat to religious leaders’ ability to administer their own confessional affairs. The MOI took no action on the 30 or more cases of civil marriage that have awaited registration with the ministry since 2013.

Actions by Foreign Forces and Nonstate Actors

Hizballah, a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization and Specially Designated Global Terrorist group, continued to exercise influence over some areas, particularly the southern suburbs of Beirut, Bekaa Valley, and southern areas of the country, all predominantly Shia Muslim. In those areas, Hizballah provided several basic services, such as gas, diesel, health care, education, food aid, infrastructure repair, and internal security. There continued to be reports of Hizballah controlling access to the neighborhoods and localities under its influence, including in Beirut’s southern suburbs and areas of the Bekaa Valley and South Lebanon.

A July paper issued by the Middle East Institute stated that as a nonstate actor ideologically tied to Iran, Hizballah has multiple allegiances and objectives, describing the organization as “committed simultaneously to the decrees of Iranian clerics, the Lebanese state, its sectarian Shia community, and fellow Shia abroad.” The report states that the group’s “regional adventurism” is most pronounced in its expeditionary forces deployed in Syria and elsewhere in the region, but no less important are its advanced training regimen for other Shia militias aligned with Iran, its expansive illicit financing activities across the region, and its procurement, intelligence, cyber, and disinformation activities.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

On August 1, Shia Hizballah supporters and members of the Sunni Arab tribes of Khaldeh clashed on August 1 during the funeral procession of Hizballah member Ali Chebli, who was killed the night before in an apparent vendetta shooting during a wedding. Media reported that five individuals, including three Hizballah members, were killed. The LAF subsequently intervened and warned that it would open fire on any gunman in the area. The LAF had restored order in Khaldeh by August 2.

On January 27, Christian and Muslim religious leaders launched a joint appeal for the salvation of Lebanon in the face of an escalation of political, economic, social, and health crises. They called on political leaders to “stop toying with the destiny of the nation,” in addition to “an immediate formation of a government of national resolve without any personal or sectarian calculations.”

On July 1, Christian religious leaders gathered with Pope Francis in the Vatican for a Day of Prayer and Reflection for Lebanon.

On December 20, religious leaders representing the Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Sunni, Shia, and Druze communities met with United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres during his visit to the country. In a joint statement with Guterres, the leaders confirmed their commitment to openness, tolerance, and coexistence, saying that these values are at the core of faith, especially during the country’s ongoing economic crisis.

The Jewish Community Council’s 2011 lawsuit against individuals who constructed buildings in the Jewish cemetery in Tripoli continued, pending additional court-ordered analysis of the site; it was unresolved by year’s end. The council restored and cleaned the Sidon cemetery at the end of 2019 after a municipality permit was issued to the council following several years of administrative inaction after acts of vandalism damaged the cemetery in 2018 and in previous years. During 2020, the council hired a custodian to maintain the cemetery.

The press reported that in a series of Sunday sermons, Maronite Patriarch Rai appeared to criticize Hizballah. He stressed the need to maintain the country’s neutrality beyond the current policy of distancing the country from regional conflicts and the current sharing of political power among its religious groups. Observers said they interpreted Rai’s comments as an implicit criticism of Hizballah’s support for Iran. The Patriarch also called for the disarming of militias and state control of ports and weaponry. Without mentioning them specifically, Rai singled out Shia parties’ insistence on retaining the finance ministry in any new government as being responsible for blocking

government formation and for causing the country’s continuing political paralysis. On April 1, in a leaked video circulated by local media, Rai criticized Hizballah, accusing the organization of harming the country by dragging it into regional conflicts. In the video, Rai said, “I want to tell them...You want us to stay in a state of war that you decide? Are you asking us before you go to war?” The Shia Supreme Islamic Council, without naming Rai, said that comments by a “major religious leader” amounted to “sectarian incitement that stirs up bigotry and distorts the facts.”

At year’s end, approximately 70 percent of students, not including students from the refugee population, attended private schools, the majority of which were tied to religiously based organizations. These included schools that the government subsidized. The schools generally continued to accommodate students from other religious and minority groups.

According to NGOs, some refugee children and the children of foreign domestic workers faced obstacles to equal treatment under the law. They reported discrimination that included bullying linked to race, skin color, religion, and nationality. However, some of these children were able to attend public schools.

In an interview that aired on January 27 on OTV, Faris Bouez, a former foreign minister, said that the new Biden administration would not change U.S. policy, saying, “Ten of [Biden’s] aides, secretaries, and heads of intelligence agencies are Jews. So nobody should delude himself that we won anything by the rise of Biden. Israel holds American political life with an iron fist. An iron fist!” Bouez stated, “Back in his day, Benjamin Franklin delivered a speech in the U.S. Congress and warned America that the Jews ‘will make our children starve, they will eat our children, and we should prevent them from being [here],’” and he said that money, universities, and the media in the United States were under the complete control of Israel.

Lebanese researcher Rafic Nasrallah recounted an antisemitic story to explain the “truth” behind the August 2020 Port of Beirut explosion on a television program that aired on September 24. The host of the show said that “nobody rules out the theory” that Israel bombed the port, but that the Lebanese people deserve to know the truth behind the events. In response, Nasrallah recounted the story of a 19th century Christian priest who was supposedly kidnapped by Jews, saying his blood was used “for something.” He said, “Whenever there are scandals related to these things, the truth is gone.”

In a January 29 interview on Mayadeen TV, Asad al-Sahmarani, a theology professor at Imam al-Ouzai University in Beirut, said that the “Abrahamic Family House,” an interfaith prayer complex for Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the UAE and sponsored by the government of Abu Dhabi, contradicted both Islam and Christianity. He said that this project would end in the garbage bin of history and added that the New Testament describes Israelites as a “brood of vipers” and the Quran says that God turned Jews into apes and pigs.

The UAE research and consulting firm PSB took a June poll of youth between the ages of 17 and 24 in 17 Arab states and reported that 17 percent of Lebanese respondents said that their religion was the most important factor in their personal identity, which was lower than the regionwide result of 34 percent. Other choices offered by the poll as possible responses included family/tribe, nationality, Arabic heritage, political beliefs, language, and gender.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The Ambassador and other embassy officers continued to engage government officials on the need to encourage tolerance, dialogue, and mutual respect among religious groups.

The Ambassador and other embassy officers frequently met with individual politicians representing different religious groups to discuss their views, including on relations with other religious groups, and to promote religious tolerance.

The Ambassador met on multiple occasions throughout the year with the leadership of the Sunni, Shia, Druze, and Christian communities to promote interfaith dialogue and urge them to take steps to counter violent extremism related to religious belief. Embassy officers often met with civil society representatives to convey similar messages.

During the year, the embassy continued to raise with the MOI the delays that the Jewish Community Council faced on the confirmation of its registration. The embassy amplified messages of religious tolerance through its social media accounts.

For the past seven years, the embassy assisted 12 faith-based organizations affiliated with Sunni, Druze, Alawite, Chaldean, Maronite, Catholic, and Protestant religious groups to build their organizational capacity and improve their financial management capabilities, internal administrative systems, and governance structures to better support their communities.

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