

2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: France

Executive Summary

The constitution and the law protect the right of individuals to choose, change, and practice religion. The Upholding Republican Values law, enacted in 2021, provides authorities with broad powers to monitor and dissolve religious organizations and groups they determine to be promoting ideas contrary to French values. The constitution includes the concept of secularism, and the law prohibits the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols in public spaces such as schools.

In July, the Constitutional Council ruled that the provision of the Upholding Republican Values law dealing with the obligation of associations to declare their religious affiliation in order to benefit from advantages intended for religious associations was constitutional. While the law does not specifically mention Islam, critics stated the law targeted and stigmatized Muslims and noted that President Emmanuel Macron had initially proposed the law to combat “Islamist separatism.” In a joint statement responding to the court’s decision, the Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox churches said they would remain vigilant regarding the law’s execution. By decree, the government dissolved several Muslim organizations and deported several imams accused of “inciting hatred, violence, and discrimination.” In August, the Ministry of Interior said the government suspected 99 of the 2,623 mosques in the country of being radical and proceeded to close 24 mosques. Jehovah’s Witnesses stated that the government published what the church said was “demonstrably untrue” information about the Witnesses on government websites; the Ministry of Interior later posted a rebuttal statement from the Witnesses on its website. Appeals courts upheld rulings against a local law that would have allowed body-covering burkinis in public pools and in favor of a local bar association rule banning the wearing of religious symbols, including headscarves, by court personnel. The government, however, expressed opposition to a proposed ban on headscarves and religious symbols in sports competitions. A government report decried what it said was a decrease in secularism in public schools, including increased wearing of Islamic attire, which it partially attributed to harmful outside influences, and it reported an increasing number of infringements to secularism legislation. The government also used the Upholding Republican Values law to close certain schools, and under the law, local officials sharply limited homeschooling for religious reasons. President Macron and other government officials continued to condemn antisemitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian acts, take part in public demonstrations of support for religious communities, and deploy security forces to protect religious sites.

There were instances of religiously motivated crimes and other abuses against Christians, Jews, and Muslims, such as physical assaults, threats, hate speech, discrimination, and vandalism, including a knife attack against a Catholic priest and a nun in the Church of Saint-Pierre-d'Arene in Nice during a Mass. Two high-profile cases involving suspected antisemitic motives attracted national attention, including the death of an observant Jew fleeing from a group of attackers and the killing of an elderly individual. In January, a study on antisemitism commissioned by the American Jewish Committee (AJC)-Paris found that most members of the French Jewish community had been subjected to some form of antisemitic behavior during their lives; the committee's director said that Jews experienced 40-50 percent of racist acts in the country, although they constituted only 1 percent of the population. There were continued acts of vandalism against churches and mosques, and Minister of Interior Gérald Darmanin announced a four-million-euro (\$4.2 million) budget appropriation to secure places of worship.

Officials from the U.S. embassy, consulates general, and American Presence Posts (APPs) discussed religious tolerance, antisemitic, and anti-Muslim acts, the role of religious freedom in combating violent extremism, and cooperation on these issues with officials at the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs and the Interministerial Delegation to Fight against Racism, Antisemitism, and Anti-LGBT Hate (DILCRAH). The Ambassador and senior government officials met regularly with religious communities and their leaders throughout the country to discuss religious freedom concerns and encourage interfaith cooperation and tolerance, including engaging Christian, Jewish, and Muslim representatives in Strasbourg, Paris, Marseille, Bordeaux, Lyon, and Toulouse and raising Holocaust awareness in Marseille and Strasbourg. The embassy sponsored events to combat religious discrimination and religiously motivated hate crimes, such as projects bringing together youth of different faiths and a roundtable with religious leaders, and regularly used social media to convey messages highlighting issues pertaining to religious freedom.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 68.3 million (midyear 2022). According to a 2020 report released by the government-appointed Observatory for Secularism (later replaced by the Interministerial Committee on Secularism), based on a poll conducted in cooperation with polling company Viavoice, approximately 47 percent of respondents in mainland France and overseas territories and departments identify as Catholic, 3 percent Muslim, 3 percent Protestant, 2 percent Buddhist, 1 percent Jewish, 1 percent Christian Orthodox, and 1 percent other religious groups; 34 percent said they have no religious affiliation, and 8 percent did not respond. Most observers, including the Observatory for Secularism in a 2019 report, estimate the number of Muslims in the country at three to five million, or between 4 and 7 percent of the population. According to the group's 2019 report, there are 140,000 to 150,000 members of Jehovah's Witnesses and 150,000 to 300,000 Hindus. In a poll on secularism released in 2021 and conducted with Viavoice, 35 percent of respondents say they are believers, 30 percent nonbelievers or atheist, 14 percent agnostic, and 13 percent indifferent. According to Church of Scientology leaders, there are approximately 40,000 followers in the country.

A poll by the research firm French Institute of Public Opinion (IFOP) conducted in 2021 found that 51 percent of respondents said they do not believe in God, and 49 percent said they do. According to the IFOP poll, the highest percentage of believers (58 percent) was found among those 65 and older and the lowest (45 percent) among those aged 35 to 49. Other age groups were close to evenly split, with a slight majority of nonbelievers.

An October 4 report on an Odoxa survey, Religions, Belief and Hope: An Overview, found that half of those surveyed (50 percent) said they were Christian (the survey did not distinguish among specific denominations). In a similar survey in 1981, 71.5 percent of the population identified as Christian. According to the October survey, 30 percent of those under 25 identify as Christian, compared with 74 percent of those 65 and older.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution defines the country as a secular republic and states it “shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law,” regardless of religion, and shall respect all beliefs. The law provides for the separation of religion and state and guarantees the free exercise of religious worship except to maintain public order.

The law, as well as international and European covenants to which the country adheres, protects the freedom of individuals to choose, change, and practice their religion. Interference with freedom of religion is subject to criminal penalties, including a fine of €1,500 (\$1,600) and imprisonment for one month. Individuals who are defendants in a trial may challenge the constitutionality of any law they say impedes their freedom of religion.

Laws increase the penalties for acts of violence or defamation when they are committed because of the victim’s actual or perceived membership or nonmembership in a given religious group. Additional penalties beyond those for the underlying crime for acts of violence that courts determine are religiously motivated are imprisonment for three years to life in prison and fines of €45,000 to €75,000 (\$49,000 to \$80,000), depending on the severity of the victim’s injuries. For religiously motivated acts of public defamation, defined as an allegation of fact that affects the honor of a person or body, the penalties are imprisonment for one year, a fine of €45,000 (\$49,000), or both. The government may expel noncitizens for inciting discrimination, hatred, or violence against a specific person or group of persons based on religion.

The law penalizes hate crimes and hate speech. Provisions in the criminal code cover hate crimes. They criminalize racist, antisemitic, or xenophobic acts, considering them as aggravating circumstances when an offense is committed based on a victim’s membership or nonmembership, true or supposed, in an ethnic group, nation, race, or religion. When made in public, such as on the internet, hate speech is covered by a special law related to the rights of the press that criminalizes the publication or dissemination of racist remarks, including those directed against persons because of their membership in religious groups. The law covers all means of public expression (for example, speeches, exclamations, threats, writings, printed matter, drawings, engravings, paintings, symbols, and images) and any media permitting wide dissemination to the public. When not made in public, hate speech is covered by the criminal code and punishable by a €1,500 (\$1,600) fine.

There is no national-level law prohibiting blasphemy, but the Alsace-Moselle region (currently comprised of the Moselle, Bas-Rhin, and Haut-Rhin Departments and also known as Alsace-Lorraine) continues to retain a law that declares “blasphemy against Catholics” a crime. A Ministry of Justice decree states, however, that the antiblasphemy provision may not be applied anywhere in the country, including in Alsace-Moselle.

Although the law does not require it, religious groups may apply for official recognition and tax-exempt status. Religious groups may register under two categories: associations of worship, which are exempt from taxes; and cultural associations, which normally are not exempt. Associations in either category are subject to fiscal oversight by the state. An association of worship may organize only religious activities. Although not tax-exempt, a cultural association may engage in for-profit as well as nonprofit activity and receive government subsidies for its cultural and educational operations. Religious groups normally register under both categories. For example, Catholics perform religious activities through their associations of worship and operate schools through their cultural associations.

Religious groups must apply at the local prefecture (the administrative body, headed by a prefect, that represents the central government in each department) for recognition as an association of worship and tax-exempt status. To qualify as an association of worship, the group's sole purpose must be the practice of religion, which may include liturgical services and practices, religious training, and the construction of buildings serving the religious group. The association must also engage in public worship and respect public order. Among excluded activities are those that are purely cultural, social, or humanitarian in nature. To apply for tax-exempt status, the association must provide to the prefecture its estimated budget for the year, annual accounts for the previous three years or since the association's creation, whichever is shorter, a written justification of eligibility for the status, and the number of members of the association. In Paris, the association must have a minimum of 25 members. Once granted, the association may use the tax-exempt status nationwide. The government does not tax associations of worship on donations they receive. If the prefecture determines an association is not in conformity with its tax-exempt status, however, the government may change that status and require the association to pay taxes at a rate of 60 percent on past, as well as future, donations until it regains tax-exempt status. According to ministry data more than a decade old, the most recent available, there are 109 Protestant, 100 Catholic, 50 Jehovah's Witness, 30 Muslim, and 15 Jewish associations with tax-exempt status.

The number of cultural associations, many of which are not associated with religious groups, is in the thousands and changes frequently. Cultural associations may register using an online form through the government's public administration website. Cultural associations, even if associated with religious groups, may operate without applying for government recognition, but receiving government recognition exempts them from taxes. The Church of Scientology has the status of a secular, rather than religious, association.

The law states, "detained persons have the right to freedom of opinion, conscience, and religion. They may practice the religion of their choice ... without other limits than those imposed by the security needs and good order of the institution."

Counterterrorism legislation grants prefects in each department the authority to close a place of worship for a maximum of six months if they find that comments, writings, or activities in the place of worship "provoke violence, hatred, or discrimination or the commission of acts of terrorism or praise such acts of terrorism." The management of the place of worship has 48 hours to appeal the closure decision to an administrative court. A place of worship that has been closed may remain closed beyond the six-month maximum if it does not replace its chief cleric and/or management. Noncompliance with a closure decision carries a six-month prison sentence and a fine of €7,500 (\$8,000). A counterterrorism and intelligence law that parliament enacted in 2021 makes permanent some provisions of a 2017 law on internal security and counterterrorism that had been set to expire

July 31. The 2021 law allows authorities to close facilities belonging to places of worship linked to acts of terrorism, rather than only the places of worship themselves, as was previously the case.

The law prohibits covering one's face, including for religious reasons, in public places, including public transportation, government buildings, and other public spaces, such as restaurants and movie theaters. If police encounter a person in a public space wearing a face covering such as a niqab or burqa, they are legally required to ask the individual to remove it to verify the individual's identity. According to the law, police officials may not remove it themselves. If an individual refuses to remove the garment, police may take the person to the local police station to verify his or her identity. Police may not question or hold an individual for more than four hours. Refusing a police instruction to remove a face-covering garment carries a maximum fine of €150 (\$160) or attendance at a citizenship course. Individuals who coerce other persons to cover their face on account of gender by threat, violence, force, or abuse of power or authority are subject to a fine of up to €30,000 (\$33,000) and may receive a sentence of up to one year in prison. The fine and sentence are doubled if the person coerced is a minor. The law exempts use of face coverings mandated by the authorities, such as masks worn for COVID-19 prevention.

The law prohibits agents of the administration, public services, and companies or associations carrying out public services from demonstrating their religion through visible signs of religious affiliation, such as an Islamic headscarf, Jewish skullcap, Sikh turban, or Christian cross. The prohibition applies during working hours even if the agents are not in their place of employment and at any time at the place of employment.

By law, the government may not directly finance religious groups to build new places of worship, except, as noted below, in Alsace-Moselle and overseas departments and territories. The government may, however, provide loan guarantees or lease property to groups at advantageous rates. The law also exempts places of worship from property taxes. The state owns and is responsible for the upkeep of most places of worship, primarily Catholic, built before 1905. The government may fund cultural associations with a religious connection.

The Upholding Republican Values law enacted in 2021 includes measures expanding requirements of neutrality in expression and attire for public servants and private contractors of public services, methods to combat online hate speech, stricter restrictions on homeschooling, increased control of public associations, transparency of religious associations, and enhanced measures against polygamy, forced marriages, and "virginity certificates." The law requires audits of associations, including those that are religious in nature, that receive foreign funding of more than €153,000 (\$163,000) per year. The law imposes additional reporting requirements on local religious-based organizations. It modifies a law on policing of religions to include punishing the incitement to discrimination, hatred, or violence with up to five years in prison. The law also increases the punishment for holding political meetings in places of worship and prohibits the organization of campaigning operations for political elections in places of worship. In addition, a judge may forbid anyone convicted of provoking terrorism, discrimination, hate, or violence from entering places of worship. The government may temporarily close places of worship if it finds any activities therein that incite hatred or violence. The law expanded the requirements for neutrality, impartiality, and principles of secularism, which previously applied only to government employees, to apply to private contractors for public services. The law also establishes a commemorative "secularism day," to be recognized annually on December 9. In addition, it requires municipalities and departments to inform local prefects three months before concluding a long-term lease with, or providing loans to, places of worship.

The Upholding Republican Values law includes provisions to combat hate speech, including the criminalization of disseminating personal information which could endanger the life of others. Violators may be punished with up to five years in prison and a fine of €75,000 (\$80,000) if the victim is a public official, a journalist, or a minor. An expedited procedure allows authorities to remove content on mirror sites.

The law separating religion and state does not apply in three classes of territories. In Alsace-Moselle, Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Jews may choose to allocate a portion of their income tax to their religious group. Pastors, priests, and rabbis of these four recognized faiths in Alsace-Moselle receive a salary from the interior ministry, and the country's President, with the agreement of the Holy See, appoints the Catholic bishops of Metz and Strasbourg. The Prime Minister appoints the Chief Rabbi and the presidents of the Jewish and Protestant consistories (the administrative governance bodies of these groups) in Alsace-Moselle, and the Minister of Interior appoints ministers of three Christian churches (Catholic, Lutheran, and the Protestant Reformed Church of Alsace and Lorraine) in the region. Local governments in the region may also provide financial support for constructing religious buildings. The Overseas Department of French Guiana may provide subsidies to the Catholic Church. Other overseas departments and overseas territories, which include island territories in the Caribbean and the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans, and several sub-Antarctic islands, may also provide funding for religious groups. This provision also applies to the portion of Antarctica the government claims as an overseas territory.

The law prohibits public school employees from wearing visible signs of religious affiliation and students from wearing "conspicuous religious symbols," including the Islamic headscarf, Jewish skullcap, Sikh turban, and large Christian crosses. Public schools do not provide religious instruction except in Alsace-Moselle and overseas departments and territories. In Alsace-Moselle, religious education regarding one of the four recognized faiths (Catholicism, Lutheranism, Protestant Reformed Church of Alsace and Lorraine, and Judaism) is compulsory in public primary and secondary schools, although students may, with a written request from their parents, opt for a secular equivalent. Religious education classes are taught by laypersons who are trained and nominated by the respective religious groups but are paid by the state. Elsewhere in the country, public schools teach information about religious groups as part of the history curriculum. Parents who wish their children to wear conspicuous religious symbols or to receive religious instruction may homeschool their children or send them to a private school. Homeschooling and private schools must conform to the educational standards established for public schools; however, private schools may permit the wearing of religious symbols on their premises. Under the Upholding Republican Values law, homeschooling is allowed under limited circumstances, including cases involving sickness, disability, intensive sport or artistic training, transient families, moral or physical safety (which could include religion) or those with geographic constraints. Parents who wish to take their children out of school are required to get an annual authorization from the local education authority.

By law, the government subsidizes private schools, including those affiliated with religious organizations. In 98 percent of private schools, in accordance with the law, the government pays the teachers' salaries, provided the school accepts all children regardless of their religious affiliation. The law does not address the issue of religious instruction in government-subsidized private schools. According to the education code, religious instruction is allowed but optional in government-subsidized private schools. Students are not required to attend religion classes, and other activities are available for students who opt out.

Missionaries from countries not exempted from visa requirements must obtain a three-month tourist visa before traveling to the country. All missionaries from nonexempt countries wishing to remain longer than 90 days must obtain long-duration visas before entering the country. Upon arrival, missionaries must provide a letter from their sponsoring religious group to apply to the local prefecture for a temporary residence card.

The country adheres to the nonbinding Terezin Declaration of 2009, which calls for the restitution of property seized from Jews during the Holocaust and advocates accurate Holocaust commemoration and education and open archives. The government has laws and mechanisms in place for property restitution and reparation, including for all three types of immovable property: private, communal, and heirless.

The government's Commission for the Compensation for Victims of Spoliation (CIVS or the "Drai Commission") is a sovereign and independent administrative body under the authority of the Prime Minister. CIVS recommends and examines reparations to individual victims of the Holocaust or their heirs not previously compensated for damages resulting from antisemitic legislation passed either by the Vichy government, the collaborationist regime allied with Nazi Germany from 1940 to 1944, or by the occupying Germans.

The law criminalizes the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction (BDS) movement against Israel, treating it as "a provocation to discrimination or hatred or violence towards a person or a group of persons because of their origin or belonging to an ethnic group, a nation, a race, or a determined religion."

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

Government Practices

At year's end, Kobili Traoré, the killer of Sarah Halimi, a 65-year-old Jewish woman whom Traoré threw out a window in 2017 after severely beating her, remained under psychiatric care, although according to media reports he was able to leave the psychiatric facility every afternoon. In 2021, a court had ruled Traoré unfit to stand trial because of cannabis consumption prior to the killing, despite the judges' opinion that the killing was antisemitic in character. In the wake of the killing and the judges' decision, President Macron said in 2021 that he wanted Justice Minister Éric Dupond-Moretti to introduce a change in the law "as soon as possible" so that the use of narcotics would not remove criminal responsibility. In December 2021, parliament passed a law nullifying temporary insanity defenses related to the voluntary ingestion of "psychoactive substances." On January 11, the parliamentary commission the National Assembly established in 2021 to examine the case released its report, which found no malpractice in its handling but included 12 recommendations to improve police coordination, investigations, and release protocols for forced hospitalization.

On March 9, the Paris Special Criminal Court sentenced three men to 13 years in prison as accomplices in the 2016 killing of Father Jacques Hamel at his church in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray by two ISIS terrorists and for which ISIS claimed responsibility. The two assailants, Adel Kermiche and Abdel-Malik Petitjean, were killed during the subsequent police operation, and the three defendants – Yassine Sebahia, Farid Khelil, and Jean-Philippe Steven Jean-Louis – were found guilty of having aided and abetted the attack. The court sentenced them to prison terms of eight, 10, and 13 years, respectively. A fourth defendant, Rachid Kassim, a French ISIS operative reportedly killed by a U.S. airstrike in Iraq in 2017, was tried in absentia and sentenced to life in prison for complicity in the killing. In a March 9 statement, Archbishop of Rouen Dominique LeBrun, in whose archdiocese the

killing took place, welcomed the verdict: "Justice was served. The court had to convict these men for the good of society."

On October 5, Junior Minister for Citizenship Sonia Backès reported that, from the beginning of 2018 to August 31, as part of a nationwide program to counter "Islamism and communitarianism," the Ministry of Interior conducted 26,614 assessments and closed 836 establishments of various kinds, representing an additional 2,618 assessments and 164 closures from the year before. On September 28, Minister of Interior Darmanin announced the government had closed 23 mosques over the previous two years. He said the closures came after a request by President Macron to fight "Islamist separatism."

On August 1, the Ministry of Interior reported the government suspected 99 of the 2,623 mosques in the country of supporting separatism and radical ideas and ordered the closing of 24 of the mosques. As of October 14, 16 mosques remained closed.

On January 12, Minister of Interior Darmanin announced that authorities closed a mosque in Cannes due to antisemitic remarks made at the site and the mosque's support of the Collective against Islamophobia in France and Baraka City, two associations the government dissolved in 2020 for spreading Islamist propaganda. On March 15, the local prefecture cancelled the mosque's administrative closure, a period of six months during which the affected entity can take steps to address the issues that caused the closure, saying the mosque's new representatives had provided "sufficient guarantees."

On October 13, the Bas-Rhin prefecture announced the administrative closure of the Obernai Mosque in Alsace, accused of facilitating the "spread of a radical ideology." Minister of Interior Darmanin accused the imam of disseminating Salafist Islam, legitimizing polygamy, and discriminating against Jews, homosexuals, and women. Ministry authorities also accused the mosque of legitimizing violence against cartoonists and supporting conspiratorial views portraying the French state as "Islamophobic." The Ministry of Interior said that, under its influence, several youths attending the mosque became radicalized and that some "left France to study in Quranic schools in Egypt and Yemen."

On May 16, the Administrative Court of Amiens ordered the provisional reopening of a mosque in Beauvais, north of Paris, that Minister of Interior Darmanin had ordered closed in December 2021 for six months. Darmanin closed the mosque following sermons by the mosque's imam that the Minister said justified jihad and used discriminatory language against LGBTQI+ persons and women. In a press release, the court said that the decision to reopen the mosque was the result of "changes that have occurred since the closing of the mosque, in particular the eviction of the previous imam, [and] the deletion of the content of his sermons and the texts linked to them on social networks of the managing association."

On July 22, the Constitutional Council ruled that provisions of the "Upholding Republican Values" law challenged by Christian churches were constitutional. In a joint statement, the Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Churches on February 22 filed two "priority questions of constitutionality" regarding several provisions they deemed overly restrictive concerning freedom of worship and association. The first concern expressed in the statement was that the law "forces associations to declare their religious denomination to access tax and legal benefits," and the second concern was "that religious activities will be carried out under the supervision of a Prefect and subject to regulation." While the council ruled that the contested provisions "do not hinder the legally guaranteed freedom of worship," it issued two interpretive reservations for the government's consideration. The first states that the loss

by an association of its religious status should not oblige it to return the benefits accrued based on its religious status, such as the tax benefits, and the second – related to new administrative and financial controls – asks authorities “to ensure ... respect for the constitutional principles of freedom of association and the free exercise of worship.” Under the law, a religious association needs to provide a report to the local prefect on the origin and destination of any accounts totaling more than €50,000 (\$53,000). In a July 22 joint statement reacting to the ruling, the three churches took note of the council’s decision and warned they would remain vigilant about the law’s effects.

In their annual report published in October, Jehovah’s Witnesses reported that the president of the Interministerial Mission of Vigilance and Combat against Sectarian Abuses (MIVILUDES) appeared on a podcast in May that featured what the Witnesses described as “demonstrably untrue” information about the Witnesses. The Ministry of Interior posted the podcast on its website, and other government offices retweeted the account. In November, the ministry posted a statement from Jehovah’s Witnesses detailing their objections to the content in the podcast. In their annual report, Jehovah’s Witnesses also stated that MIVILUDES did not meet its legal obligation to disclose the information based on which the agency labeled Jehovah’s Witnesses a “sect,” which carries a negative connotation in French. Jehovah’s Witnesses further stated that MIVILUDES’ annual report describing “sectarian aberrations” was based on anonymous complaints which underwent little or no objective investigation.

In an August 5 ruling, the Paris Administrative Court suspended a deportation order against French-born Moroccan imam Hassan Iquioussen, whom the Ministry of Interior accused of inciting hate, discrimination, and violence in public addresses between 2003 and 2019, notably against the Jewish community. Media outlets also reported the imam described Osama bin Laden as “a great fighter against the Americans” and a “great Islam defender.” According to police sources, Iquioussen, reportedly affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, had been on France’s national security watchlist (“Fiche S”) for 18 months. In its ruling, the court said deportation to Morocco would be “a serious and manifestly disproportionate interference with his right to lead a normal private and family life,” as laid out by the European Convention on Human Rights.

The court in its August 5 ruling ordered the Ministry of Interior to reexamine Iquioussen’s case and return his residency permit. In a statement the same day, Minister of Interior Darmanin announced he would appeal the decision to the Council of State, the country’s highest court for administrative issues. In an August 30 ruling, the Council of State validated Iquioussen’s deportation, overturning the lower court ruling suspending the deportation order. According to the court’s decision, Iquioussen’s antisemitic remarks and speeches on women’s submission to men constituted explicit and deliberate provocation to discrimination or hatred, justifying the expulsion. Darmanin stated on Twitter that the ruling was “a great victory for the Republic.” The ruling explicitly stated that the decision to deport the imam and withdraw his residence permit did not seriously undermine freedoms of expression and religion.

The Human Rights League said the Council of State’s decision in the Iquioussen case was politically influenced. Four immigration lawyers and four administrative judges expressed concern that the decision might create a legal precedent that reduces immigrants’ rights. Following the ruling, police sought to arrest Iquioussen at his home but did not find him. On September 30, Belgian police arrested Iquioussen in Tournai, near the French border. On November 15, a Belgian appeals court upheld an October 21 ruling dismissing a European arrest warrant for the imam issued by French authorities. On November 16, the Belgian secretary of state for asylum and migration announced that

Belgian authorities placed the imam in a deportation center with a view to deporting him from Belgian territory.

On May 3, the Loire Prefecture announced that Mmadi Ahamada, the imam of the Attakwa Mosque in Saint-Chamond, had been deported to Comoros on May 2 with his wife and three children. He had been suspended in July 2021 by the Ministry of Interior and the Loire Regional Prefecture for discriminating against women on the personal instruction of Minister of Interior Darmanin, who tweeted that he would relentlessly counter those who violated the values of the republic. The Administrative Court of Lyon, in a March 18 ruling, had rejected the “threat to public order” motive invoked by the prefect in her October 2021 decree ordering Ahamada to depart French territory, but the judges allowed the prefect to refuse the renewal of Ahamada’s temporary residence permit if he did not receive a permanent contract from his religious association.

Sources stated that the Interministerial Committee on Secularism, established in 2021 following criticism that its predecessor, the Observatory for Secularism, did not crack down hard enough on radical Islam, was not active during the year.

On April 19, Member of Parliament (MP) Bruno Questel submitted a parliamentary report to Minister of Justice Dupond-Moretti on religious issues in prisons. Questel proposed several ways to guarantee freedom of worship, including securing the status of chaplains in line with protocols in the army and hospitals by allowing chaplains to receive government contracts and associated benefits. “The proposals [of MP Questel] are being analyzed by the services of the Chancellery,” the Ministry of Justice specified in response to a parliamentary question following the reports’ publication. According to the Ministry of Justice, as of 2018, the most recent year for which statistics are available, the penitentiary system employed 720 Catholic, 361 Protestant, 231 Muslim, 191 Jehovah’s Witness, 74 Jewish, 60 Orthodox Christian, and 18 Buddhist chaplains. While there were no statistics on detainees’ religious affiliation, sources stated that approximately 25 percent of detainees requested a special menu during Ramadan. In detainee visiting areas, visitors could bring religious objects to an inmate or speak with the prisoner about religious issues but could not pray. Prisoners could pray in their cells individually, with a chaplain in designated prayer rooms, or, in some institutions, in special apartments where they could receive family for up to 48 hours.

As part of its stated efforts to combat separatism and uphold French republican values, the Council of Ministers confirmed on January 5 the dissolution of three organizations, the Zouaves Paris, widely described as far right, the Allones Association for the Just Middle (AAJM), and Al Qalam. Minister of Interior Darmanin announced on Twitter that AAJM and Al Qalam were dissolved for promoting radical Islam. AAJM and Al Qalam were accused, among other things, of promoting armed jihad, the use of sharia, and hatred of and discrimination against other groups.

On January 18, in the context of discussing a draft bill that would “democratize sport” in the country, the Senate approved an amendment to ban headscarves and other “ostensible religious symbols” during sports competitions. “Today, there is legal uncertainty about the wearing of religious symbols, and it is necessary for the state to clearly define the rules,” the amendment said. “If the wearing of the veil is not explicitly forbidden, we could see the emergence of community sports clubs promoting certain religious signs,” it added. President Macron’s government and its allies opposed the amendment.

On February 9, a Paris administrative court overturned a ban by the Paris police prefecture of a protest organized by the so-called “Hijabeuses,” a group of women soccer players fighting for the right

to wear hijabs in sports competitions and opposed to legislation passed by the Senate to ban the wearing of obvious religious symbols in all competitive sports. Speaking to the media on February 10, then Minister for Gender Equality Élisabeth Moreno offered her support to the “Hijabeuses” by stating that the current law protects these women’s right to wear a headscarf and play soccer. On February 24, the National Assembly removed the amendment from a draft sports bill.

In March, the Court of Cassation, the country’s highest court, upheld a ban imposed by the Bar Council of Lille banning the wearing of religious symbols, including headscarves, by court personnel in the courtroom. In its ruling, which sources stated could set a precedent for the rest of the country, the court stated the ban was “necessary and appropriate, on the one hand to preserve the independence of the lawyer and, on the other, to guarantee the right to a fair trial.” A Muslim lawyer, Sarah Asmeta, challenged the ban, calling it discriminatory and targeted against Muslims.

On June 21, the Council of State upheld the decision of the Isere prefect to block a regulation adopted by the city of Grenoble authorizing burkinis at municipal pools. The council ruled that Grenoble’s initial approval of the burkini was made simply “to satisfy a religious demand” and said the decision undermined “the neutrality of public services ... and equal treatment of their users.” The judgment backed a lower court ruling in May. Minister of Interior Darmanin welcomed the ruling, describing it on Twitter as “a victory for the law against separatism, for secularism and beyond that, for the whole Republic.”

On October 20, the Bordeaux Administrative Court ruled that doctors acted illegally in giving a blood transfusion to a member of Jehovah’s Witnesses against her will and her religious beliefs. The court ordered the university hospital that performed the 2016 procedure to pay €4,000 (\$4,300) to the patient for compensatory damages, noting that the two life-saving transfusions conducted while the patient was undergoing surgery were permissible, but a third, conducted under nonconsensual sedation following refusal of the patient for the procedure, was not.

On March 23, the mayor of Saint-Denis signed a permit allowing the Church of Scientology to renovate a building it purchased in the municipality to convert it into its headquarters and a training center. In December 2021, a court ruled that a municipal decree refusing such permission was a “misuse of power.”

According to statistics released by the Ministry of the Armed Forces in March 2021, the government continued to deploy 3,000 military personnel throughout the country to patrol vulnerable sites, including Catholic, Jewish, and Islamic sites and other places of worship in the framework of Operation Sentinel, the domestic deployment of army personnel to bolster security at high-threat sites. Some Jewish leaders requested the government also permanently station armed guards at Jewish places of worship, but the government instead deployed mobile patrols flexibly.

On January 13, during a visit to the Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois Church in Romainville, vandalized on the night of January 9-10, Minister of Interior Darmanin announced the government would budget four million euros (\$4.2 million) to secure places of worship after a series of acts of vandalism. “As the minister in charge of worship, my job is to protect them. In this way, we increase the means that make it possible to equip places of worship, in particular with video protection,” Darmanin explained. This action, made available to the Catholic Church in particular, is to be financed by the General Secretariat of the Interministerial Committee for the Prevention of Delinquency and Radicalization. Darmanin said the aid did not contravene “the law of separation of church and state.”

Similar to 2021, on April 4, Darmanin called for strengthening security at places of worship ahead of major religious holidays such as Palm Sunday, Easter, Passover, and Ramadan because of the “terrorist threat [is] still high.” Darmanin again reportedly instructed prefects to pay particular attention to large religious gatherings, including targets with strong symbolic value, and again increased counterterrorism patrols under Operation Sentinel around vulnerable and symbolic religious sites. Darmanin also drew the prefects’ attention “to threats to the Orthodox communities residing in France or to populations displaced due to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.”

On May 10, Minister of Interior Darmanin announced that he had ordered an increase in security for the country’s Jewish community. The minister noted an April 17 ISIS call on the Telegram social media platform to avenge its leader who was killed in February, calling on supporters to follow the example of recent attacks in Israel and take advantage of the focus on Ukraine to carry out attacks against “nonbelievers” in Europe and the United States. In an internal note to law enforcement leaders, Darmanin asked them to increase their vigilance and provide reinforced protection of Jewish places of interest, including places of worship, cultural institutions, and schools.

As in 2021, on September 13, Minister of Interior Darmanin issued a memo to prefects regarding the Jewish month of Tishrei (September 25 to October 18), which includes Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and other Jewish holidays, asking them to strengthen security for Jewish places of worship and to ensure maximum police presence due to the “very high level of the terrorist threat.” Counterterrorism patrols under Operation Sentinel using military forces could again also be deployed around particularly vulnerable sites, according to the memo. The Ministry of Interior took similar measures at “symbolic and sensitive” Catholic churches in the country on August 15, the Day of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.

On October 13, an appeals court reached decisions on two defendants who appealed sentences handed down by the Special Criminal Court in 2020 for supporting terrorists who conducted attacks against the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and a kosher supermarket in 2015. Ali Riza Polat, who was sentenced to 30 years’ imprisonment, and Amar Ramdani, who was sentenced to 20 years’ imprisonment, denied they conspired with the terrorists and asked the court to examine documents they claimed were neglected during the investigation. The appeals court handed down a life sentence to Polat, with a minimum of 20 years in prison before he will be eligible for parole. Ramdani’s sentence was reduced to 13 years.

On September 26, the municipal council of Strasbourg approved a decision to finance places of worship, putting a ceiling of one million euros (\$1.1 million) on such expenditures, which are permitted by local law in Alsace-Moselle.

On November 10, the Strasbourg Administrative Court overturned the city’s March 2021 decision to grant €2.56 million (\$2.7 million) for the construction of Eyyup Sultan Mosque, sponsored by the Milli Gorus Islamic Confederation. Minister of Interior Darmanin opposed the city’s decision, criticizing the confederation for what he said was its affiliation with Turkey and for engaging in political Islam. In its November 10 decision, the court ruled the city of Strasbourg did not respect the criteria for subsidizing places of worship set in 1999 and 2000. The court also determined the grant was not in the local public interest. Minister of Interior Darmanin hailed the ruling in a November 10 statement.

Although *Le Figaro* reported in December 2021 that the trial of 67-year-old Hassan Diab, the main suspect in the 1980 deadly bombing of the Rue Copernic Synagogue in Paris, would open in Paris in April 2023, as of year’s end, authorities had not issued an arrest warrant, and Diab remained in

Canada. Diab, a dual Lebanese-Canadian citizen, was suspected of having prepared and placed the bomb, which killed three French citizens and an Israeli journalist and injured 46 persons.

Walid Abdulrahman Abou Zayed, a suspect in a 1982 terrorist attack against an Israeli restaurant in Paris that left six dead and wounded 22 others, remained in pretrial detention at year's end. In coordination with the Representative Council of France's Jewish Institutions (CRIF), the Ministry of Justice for the first time held a national tribute on August 9 to mark the 40th anniversary of the attack. Minister of Justice Dupond-Moretti stated at a public event that "the victims' thirst for justice has not been quenched" and that the country's "judicial institutions, in connection with [French] diplomats, [are] extremely mobilized so that all the light is shed on this cowardly attack." He said the "sad constant" of antisemitism is a "filthy beast [that] is not dead."

On March 10, the Ministries of Interior and Education announced that authorities had closed 20 schools since September 2021 for not being in compliance with the Upholding Republican Values law and that more closures would take place. According to an article in *Ouest-France*, the closures were aimed at countering Islamic radicalism and separatism, although the article stated that the National Committee for Secular Action also noted that schools run by the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius X did not mention the role of Vichy France in the systematic killing of Jews.

In a June 8 report, the intelligence service (Service central du renseignement territorial) said there was an increase in the wearing of "Islamic attire" in schools, according to press accounts. The 12-page report assessed there was an upward trend of cases of pupils refusing to remove their headscarves despite the legal ban on such attire or wishing to wear "traditional" Islamic attire since December 2021, with most incidents taking place in Bordeaux and Gironde and Val d'Oise Departments. The report suggested the spring presidential and parliamentary campaigns, with the presence of candidates that previously expressed anti-Muslim sentiments, may have influenced those behaviors and noted the period of the survey coinciding with Ramadan may also have been a factor.

In the intelligence service report, police responsible for monitoring violations of the rules of secularism cited two other contributing factors: a decline in students' knowledge of the historical origin of secularism and the "major influence" of the "values and propaganda put forward by American culture" on youth. The report cited the influence of multiculturalism presented as a means of emancipation, particularly in certain American Netflix series, which encouraged Muslim teenagers to express their religious affiliation through their attire but also deterred other teenagers from opposing such behavior in the name of what it said were "Anglo-Saxon values" of tolerance and freedom. The report warned of a "new offensive by Islamist activists exploiting the evolution of thinking among youth." Asked to react to the report on June 15, Minister of Education Pap Ndiaye called for calm and said his ministry was "very well equipped" to respond to the phenomenon of violations of rules on secularism, although the phenomenon needed to be assessed nationwide.

On June 26, the Ministry of Education reported what it termed 627 "offenses against secularism" in schools between December 2021 and March. The report indicated that incidents took place evenly between middle schools and high schools, with nine fewer cases overall than in the previous three months. The ministry report also included other instances that it termed "offenses," including refusal to participate in school activities (8 percent) and challenges over teachings (10 percent). The ministry also stated that such the reports would be done on a monthly basis going forward.

According to media reports, on September 16, a female student was asked by her teacher to remove her headscarf during a school trip. The student refused and called her adult brother, who asked to

speak to the teacher and reportedly threatened to kill the teacher. The man was arrested on September 16 and on September 18, was released on bail pending trial. The case remained under investigation at year's end.

On October 12, local authorities formally charged and placed under judicial review a man for threatening his niece's teacher after a lesson on freedom of expression and a mention of the depiction of Prophet Muhammad in cartoons. According to a judicial source, the incident occurred at an Alsace high school on October 4. The source stated that the niece, who had complained to her uncle about the lesson, would face disciplinary action in school for justifying terrorism.

On October 17, Minister of Interior Darmanin sent a memo to prefects asking them to support school officials when confronted with what he termed were infringements of secularism. "Reports of attacks on secularism at school have multiplied since the start of the school year," he wrote. He added, "They are clearly the fruit of an Islamist offensive," and that the prefects must "provide all useful assistance to the educational teams." The prefects were also instructed to ask police and gendarmerie forces to "provide any useful report in this area without delay."

On November 9, the Ministry of Education reported 720 infringements of the secularism law in schools in October, 130 percent higher than in September, when 313 infringements were reported; 40 percent of the incidents were related to the wearing of religious signs and clothing, compared with 54 percent in September. The ministry also released a four-point plan to support secularism in schools, including a graded scale of punishments for students deemed to be undermining secularism, beginning with a verbal warning; reinforcing protection and support for employees; supporting teachers in the event of an infraction of secularism; and strengthening the training of teachers and staff on how to approach secularism in schools.

On October 14 and 17, schools commemorated the second anniversary of the killing of Samuel Paty, who was beheaded in 2020 in a suburb of Paris by Abdoullakh Abouyezidovich Anzorov, with a series of ceremonies and screenings of documentaries on freedom of speech. During an October 15 special ceremony at the Sorbonne in Paris, Minister of Education Ndiaye stated, "In killing Samuel Paty, the fundamentalists were trying to suppress culture, intelligence, even the very possibility of teaching. They failed. And they never will [succeed]."

On November 3, the Council of State turned down the appeal of a decision by the Lyon Appeals Court denying the Milli Gorus Islamic Confederation permission to construct an Islamic school in Albertville. Construction of the school had been opposed by the Mayor of Albertville, Frédéric Burnier-Framboret, who earlier appealed a decision by the Grenoble Administrative Tribunal obliging him to grant a building permit. According to media reports, Burnier-Framboret's appeal was based on an amendment to the Upholding Republican Values law that allows prefects to oppose the opening of private schools not funded by the government (known as "out of contract" schools) and supported by a foreign state hostile to the republic.

According to a survey carried out by the Coordination for Freedom of Education (Coopli) and released on August 8, local education authorities rejected 68 percent of requests for authorization for home schooling, with a 100 percent rejection rate for requests in Toulouse, Besançon, Dijon, and Orléans. Restrictions on home schooling under the Upholding Republican Values law became effective in September of the 2022-23 academic year. Parents wishing to homeschool their children are required to receive an annual authorization from local education authorities. Sources stated that the government introduced the restrictions on homeschooling to prevent radicalization of youth, while

proponents of homeschooling cited reports stating that the number of homeschooling cases involving radicalization was very small.

On February 1, authorities reported social services had taken 42 pupils from an ultra-orthodox Jewish religious school in Bussières, near Paris, into foster care, following allegations of abuse. According to the local prosecutor, the children, aged 12 and above, were locked up, had their identity documents confiscated, lived in poor conditions, lacked access to education and health care, and had no possibility of returning to their families. Authorities in the Seine-et-Marne Department said in a statement that the children were placed in temporary foster care after being removed from the school. Police raided the school and arrested 16 teachers on January 31, and questioned them as part of a preliminary inquiry into allegations of “organized kidnapping, aggravated violence, deprivation of care and food, and aggravated abuse of vulnerable people,” according to the local prosecutor.

On October 12, the Administrative Court of Lille ordered the Hauts-de-France Region to pay €500,000 (\$534,000) in subsidies within eight days to the Islamic Averroès high school in Lille. The region had blocked the subsidies allocated to the school in early October due to suspicions that a Qatari foundation was financing the school. On October 12, regional authorities announced they would appeal the ruling before the Council of State.

In an October 14 statement, Minister of Interior Darmanin said the country had deported nearly 800 radicalized foreign Islamists since 2018. In September 2021, Darmanin said he had called on regional prefects to refuse residence permits for imams sent by a foreign government. In 2021, according to the Ministry of Interior, approximately 300 imams, or 70 percent of all imams in the country, had been trained in foreign countries, such as Turkey, Morocco, and Algeria. In 2020, President Macron announced he would gradually end the foreign imam program by 2024, creating instead a program for imams to be trained in France.

On February 15, parliament unanimously approved a draft bill to return 15 Nazi-looted artworks to the families of their previous Jewish owners. Then Minister of Culture Roselyne Bachelot welcomed the “historic” act, stating that the theft of the paintings was the “denial of [the Jewish families’] humanity, memory, and recollections.” The 15 artworks included pieces by Gustav Klimt and Marc Chagall that were held at the Louvre Museum, the Orsay Museum, and the Pompidou Center, among other national collections.

On January 5, President Macron hosted a meeting with leaders of the Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Protestant, Orthodox Christian, and Buddhist communities. Macron thanked the religious communities for their assistance in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic; highlighted the “courage” of the Catholic bishops in their handling of the Catholic Church’s Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Church report; and discussed the new Upholding Republican Values law, stating that the law was “not directed against religions, but against radical Islamism and separatism,” press reported. Macron also confirmed the establishment of a new “Forum of Islam of France” (FORIF) to be composed of local representatives instead of foreign-affiliated mosque federations and intended to replace the French Council of Muslim Worship, which was declared “dead” by Minister of Interior Darmanin in December 2021.

In a January 25 speech at the Protestant Federation’s New Year ceremony, Interior Minister Darmanin thanked the federation and other religious organizations for their “spirit of responsibility” regarding the pandemic. He said that it was “in more difficult times when death is on the prowl and death is approaching that we need religion the most, and the most need to speak, to be at the meeting of

worship that one has chosen and that one has espoused.” Darmanin also stated that “secularism is not the denial of religion.” He expressed the wish that French citizens would “respect each other’s differences,” believing that religions and “first and foremost Protestantism” can contribute to this.

On January 25, President Macron attended a memorial ceremony in the village of Oradour-sur-Glane to honor the memory of 643 residents massacred by a Nazi SS unit in June 1944, where he said that “hate is increasing in France. Racism and antisemitism are now being legitimized by a certain political discourse,” which *Le Figaro* stated was a veiled reference to the far right. On January 27, International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 77th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, then Prime Minister Jean Castex visited Auschwitz to mark the liberation of the camp, accompanied by Minister of Interior Darmanin, then Minister of Culture Bachelot, representatives of the Jewish community, Holocaust survivors, and high school students. To mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Ministry of Education also invited teachers and students to participate in special activities to reflect on the Holocaust.

On January 9, Minister of Justice Dupond-Moretti and four other cabinet members attended a CRIF-organized memorial ceremony outside the Paris kosher supermarket where seven years earlier a gunman killed four Jews and held 15 other persons hostage.

President Macron and government ministers condemned antisemitism and declared support for Holocaust education on several occasions, including a March 14 visit to the Shoah Memorial by then Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian; the March 20 commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the killings of three Jewish elementary school children and their Jewish teacher in Toulouse and the killing of three French paratroopers in Montauban by Islamist terrorist Mohammed Merah; and the April 30 Holocaust Remembrance Day commemoration. At the March 20 ceremony, President Macron and his two predecessors, former Presidents Sarkozy and Hollande, joined Israeli President Isaac Herzog in commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Toulouse and Montauban attacks. The event was organized by the Toulouse branch of the CRIF and attended by senior representatives of the government, interfaith community, and civil society. On April 21, then Secretary of State for the Armed Forces Geneviève Darrieussecq laid a wreath at the Shoah Memorial and the Memorial of the Martyrs of the Deportation in central Paris. On April 24, the country held ceremonies commemorating the thousands of persons deported to Nazi death camps during World War II.

For the 80th anniversary of the “Vélodrome d’Hiver” roundup, President Macron inaugurated on July 17 a new Holocaust memorial at a former train station from which Jews were deported to Nazi concentration camps in Pithiviers in 1942. In his remarks, Macron criticized the rise of antisemitism, including on social media and through terrorist attacks targeting Jews. He implicitly criticized 2022 far-right presidential candidate Éric Zemmour for claiming that Marshal Philippe Pétain, the head of the Vichy regime during World War II, protected the Jews. Macron also criticized the “complacency of certain political forces” towards antisemitism. Prime Minister Élisabeth Borne, whose father was deported to Auschwitz, honored the victims of the roundup, pledging to fight antisemitism “wherever it is found.”

On February 5, the FORIF held its first official meeting in Paris to discuss recommendations for responding to anti-Muslim acts, the training of imams, implementation of the Upholding Republican Values law, appointment of Muslim chaplains, transparent financing of the Muslim faith, and the security of Islamic places of worship. Minister of Interior Darmanin attended the meeting, composed of approximately 100 local representatives from throughout the country, and said it was the government’s “conviction that the Islam of France should concern only France and French Muslims....

Islamism and Salafism is our common enemy.” Indirectly criticizing presidential candidate Zemmour, Darmanin also decried those who called Islam a “foreign religion” and those who promoted the “great replacement” theory, stating that “Islamists and populists have the same objective: to no longer live in a secular republic.” On April 14, Darmanin attended an iftar hosted by the Great Mosque of Paris in honor of the ambassadors of Muslim-majority countries.

Local Uyghur sources stated they were increasingly experiencing efforts from the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to silence them, according to media reports. They said they had received messages from PRC intelligence officers on WeChat and other platforms, threatening their family members still in China, classmates, and other associates. On January 20, the National Assembly passed by near-unanimous vote a resolution that called on the government to “take a clear position” on the problem and to protect Uyghurs on French soil from any intimidation or harassment by the PRC.

On July 26, local authorities participated in a tribute for Father Jacques Hamel, who was killed by ISIS terrorists on that date in 2016. Minister of Interior Darmanin paid tribute to Hamel on social media. “I have a moving thought for [Father Hamel’s] relatives and the Catholics of our country. We will continue to relentlessly fight Islamist terrorism so that freedom of conscience remains a pillar of our Republic,” he tweeted.

On September 27, President Macron met with Catholic Bishops Conference of France President Éric de Moulins-Beaufort to discuss draft legislation to legalize assisted suicide. According to a conference spokesperson, de Moulins-Beaufort reiterated concern about the government’s plans to legalize assisted suicide, while Macron told the conference he hoped “not to divide society” over the issue.

On October 19, President Macron participated in the centennial celebration of the Grand Mosque of Paris. “Our nation affirmed in the eyes of the world that we could be French and Muslim,” he said. Macron praised the Great Mosque’s role, stating, “The Great Mosque represents the possibility of an Islam in France faithful to the values of the Republic.” He also defended the Upholding Republican Values law and reiterated his commitment to the FORIF, which had been launched in February.

The country is a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

On March 17, two MPs, Isabelle Florennes and Ludovic Mendes, submitted a report on religious violence in the country that was commissioned in December 2021 by then Prime Minister Castex. The MPs conducted more than 30 interviews with multiple judicial authorities and religious representatives. According to the report, antireligious acts had become increasingly violent, with a 38 percent increase in antireligious violence compared with 2019. Some MPs said that numbers cited were far below the actual number of incidents. According to the report, since 2015, violent antireligious acts ranged between 1,500 and 2,000 per year. The report included 11 recommendations to remedy the violence. Among them were increasing the budget for the prevention of delinquency and radicalization within the following five years and increasing security at places of worship. The report also recommended a crackdown on hateful rhetoric in social media and education on religion in schools. “There is a real need for education about religion,” said Mendes, who also remarked that one cannot “reject the debate on religion under the pretext of school secularism.”

The Ministry of Interior reported 436 antisemitic acts during the year compared with 589 in 2021, a 26 percent decrease. Incidents targeting persons – as opposed to buildings and institutions – accounted

for 53 percent of all incidents and 10 percent of those were violent physical assaults. According to the MOI, 61 percent of antireligious acts targeting individuals were directed against Jews, although Jews represented less than 1 percent of the population. A separate Jewish Community Protection Service study on the judicial response to physical antisemitic attacks found that 63 percent of cases between 2015 to 2019 were closed without further action; attackers were convicted in only 24 percent of cases.

On October 28, the regional prosecutor in the Loire Region announced that Emmanuel Abayisenga, a Rwandan asylum seeker accused of killing Olivier Maire, a Catholic priest in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sevre, was discharged from a psychiatric hospital and formally charged and placed in pretrial detention on October 26. In August 2021, media outlets reported the killing had prompted a strong public outcry; President Macron and then Prime Minister Castex both tweeted their condolences, and Minister of Interior Darmanin offered his support to the country's Catholics.

On June 22, a man appeared before a Paris court charged with aggravated violence and violation of religious freedom in connection with a May 2021 attack on Catholics taking part in a procession in Paris commemorating Catholics killed during the 1871 Paris Commune revolt.

On January 28, the Paris Criminal Court sentenced Aurélien Chapeau to nine years in prison for planning a terrorist attack against the Jewish community in Limoges in 2020. Investigators reportedly found incendiary devices in his home and evidence that he had researched when Jewish religious sites would reopen in his town. He had posted both antisemitic and anti-Islamic comments on social media, glorifying terrorist attacks such as the 2019 Christchurch mosque bombing in New Zealand.

On April 4, the family of a young Jewish man killed by a tram in the Paris suburb of Bobigny on February 16 released a video indicating the incident could have been the result of an antisemitic assault. The video showed Jeremy Cohen, an observant Jew, assaulted by a group of 15 persons and then fleeing from the attack before being killed by an oncoming tram. While it was not certain the victim was wearing his white kippah when assaulted, the antisemitism watchdog National Bureau of Vigilance against Antisemitism (BNVCA) reported his kippah was found at the scene. Authorities did not establish an antisemitic motivation for the attack and the family was not claiming this to be the cause, but according to press reporting, they "did not exclude it." Authorities opened an investigation into "willful violence resulting in unintentional death." On April 13, police placed two individuals in custody, who were formally charged and imprisoned April 15. The investigation remained ongoing at year's end.

In May, police were considering adding a hate crime charge to the neighbor of 89-year-old René Hadjadj, whom he was accused of killing outside Hadjadj's residence in Lyon in May. A prosecutor in the case told media outlets that the state was considering the hate crime charges after finding that the suspect had posted several antisemitic messages on social media. According to the European Jewish Congress newsletter, then CRIF President Francis Kalifat tweeted that he instructed CRIF lawyers to become a civil party to the case, and the BNVCA said it would seek to become plaintiff in the case, citing its similarity to the 2017 killing of Sarah Halami.

In August in Seine-et-Marne, authorities charged Baha Dridi, the Muslim roommate of Eliahou Haddad, a Jewish man, in Haddad's killing. Several days after the killing, Dridi turned himself in to the police and confessed to the killing, saying he had killed Haddad because he was Jewish. Dridi was charged and placed in pretrial detention while gendarmes continued their investigation. On August 23, the local prosecutor told media outlets that at this stage of the investigation, there was no evidence of antisemitic motivation, but if new elements were reported, they would be considered. A source close

to the investigation said the motivation behind the crime appeared to be related to money and not antisemitism. CRIF President Yonathan Arfi and other French-Jewish organizations called for a swift investigation.

On April 24, a man used a knife to attack a Catholic priest and a nun in the church of Saint-Pierre-d'Arene in Nice during Mass. According to media reports, the attacker shouted, "We have to kill Macron," as he stabbed the priest. Police arrested the suspect. Described as mentally unstable by local officials, he had been the subject of psychiatric monitoring before the attack, with several stays in the Sainte-Marie psychiatric hospital in Nice.

The investigation of the 2020 killing of three Catholic worshippers in the Basilica of Notre Dame in Nice continued at year's end. A press report in October stated the investigation could be completed in several months. The suspect in the killings, identified as Brahim Aouissaoui, an asylum seeker from Tunisia who entered the country shortly before the attack, remained in prison.

On September 4, an individual knocked a man dressed in traditional Orthodox Jewish attire off his bike in Strasbourg, causing serious injuries. The victim filed a complaint. On September 5, the Strasbourg prosecutor announced the opening of an investigation. There was no further information on the case at year's end.

On October 13, CRIF President Arfi published a picture on Twitter of an anonymous letter threatening a Jewish teacher with death. The letter received by Georges Brassens High School in the Paris suburb of Evry-Courcouronnes reportedly said, "The dirty Jew needs to stop being clever. We're going to give a Samuel Paty to him and his father, the old Zionist rabbi. We don't want Jews in high schools, stay in your synagogues. We're going to take care of [the teacher] when we finish high school." At year's end, an investigation was ongoing, and the school and the teacher remained under police protection.

On February 27, a man spat in the face of a Catholic priest outside the Basilica of Saint-Michel in Bordeaux after the Mass. While the priest reportedly did not wish to file a complaint, the Bordeaux prosecutor's office opened an investigation into intentional violence charges because of the victim's religious identity. In March, the man was mandated to take citizenship training and banned from appearing within the perimeter of the Place Saint-Michel for six months.

On September 4, three individuals attacked two Christian teenagers in front of the Sainte-Bernadette de la Louvière Church in Rambouillet. According to a police source, the attackers called the two teenagers "dirty Christians" and said they wanted to kill them. They then sprayed the two teens with tear gas and hit one of the victims in the face multiple times. Two of the three alleged attackers were arrested by police for "intentional violence in meetings and religious discrimination" and placed in custody. Since they were aged 15 and 17, their case was being handled in a juvenile court at year's end.

On October 25, the Lille Criminal Court sentenced a man to eight months in prison followed by three years' probation for threatening worshippers at a mosque in a video posted on social networks in June. Following the threats, Minister of Interior Darmanin tweeted that the police would secure the mosque "for as long as necessary."

Jehovah's Witnesses officials reported seven incidents of physical assaults against their members during the year. The church members filed formal lawsuits in each case but reported no judicial

responses by year's end. They also reported four arrests of their members by local authorities while they were proselytizing during the year.

According to figures released in December 2021 by the Israeli government's Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, 3,500 French Jews emigrated to Israel in 2021, a 40 percent increase from 2,500 who emigrated in 2020. According to statistics released in December by Ofek Israeli – the National Aliyah Promotion Company, 2,049 French citizens had emigrated to Israel since January.

A study on antisemitism commissioned by the AJC-Paris and released on January 27 found that the vast majority of the French Jewish community had been subjected to some form of antisemitic behavior during their lives, including verbal or physical assault. According to the study, 68 percent of French Jews had experienced antisemitic verbal abuse at least once; 20 percent had been targets of physical violence on at least one occasion; and 85 percent of Jews, and 64 percent of the public, considered antisemitism to be widespread in French society. The Jewish community represented 1 percent of the population but faced between 40 and 50 percent of all racist acts committed in the country, the AJC director for Europe noted.

On July 18, the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights, an advisory body to the Prime Minister, released its annual report, which included the results of an Ipsos survey conducted between March 24 and April 9 involving face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of 1,352 residents over the age of 18. The results were similar to a poll Ipsos conducted in 2019, the last year the survey had been conducted face-to-face. According to the survey, 37 percent (compared with 34.1 percent in 2019) of respondents believed Jews “have a particular relationship with money” and 17.8 percent (18.6 percent in 2019) thought Jews had too much power in the country. The poll found 28 percent (35.5 percent in 2019) of respondents had a negative image of Islam and 38 percent (44.7 percent in 2019) considered Islam a threat to national identity. The report cited what it said was persistent societal rejection of Islamic religious practices, finding, for example, that 50.3 percent of respondents (45.5 percent in 2019) considered that women wearing a veil “can pose a problem for living in society.”

On June 23, the European Jewish Association (EJA) presented a survey by the EJA and the London-based British Institute of Jewish Policy Research that showed that Jews living in France had a low perception of security, but that France scored high in terms of the actions taken by the government to support Jews. According to the survey, the government had taken necessary steps to maintain the quality of life of the Jewish community.

On September 18, the newspaper *Le Journal du Dimanche* published an IFOP poll on perceptions of the Holocaust. According to the survey, 86 percent of young people (between the ages of 15 and 24) had “heard of” the Holocaust; 92 percent knew about the gas chambers; 88 percent about the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp; 72 percent knew of the Vélodrome d’Hiver roundup of July 16 and 17, 1942 (compared with 70 percent two years previously); 61 percent about the Holocaust by Bullets (three percentage points more); and 53 percent about the Righteous among the Nations, those non-Jews who helped shelter Jews. According to the survey, 83 percent of respondents gained their knowledge in school, but 14 percent of respondents rejected instruction about the Holocaust at school. The survey found that 80 percent of young people considered the Holocaust “a monstrous crime,” 10 percent considered it as “just another tragedy of this war that claimed many victims,” 3 percent as “an exaggeration,” and 1 percent as “an invention, it never existed.” The survey also found that 56 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that “the Shoah is used by the State of Israel to justify its policy towards the Palestinians.”

On November 15, the owner of a restaurant in Hendaye appeared before the Bayonne Criminal Court for turning away a veiled woman from her restaurant on May 29. The local prosecutor requested a €600 (\$640) fine against the owner on charges of discrimination based on religion. On November 29, the court levied a €600 (\$640) fine on the owner, who was ordered to take a citizenship course within six months.

On January 11, the Compiègne Criminal Court in Oise handed down a three-month suspended prison sentence to a man carrying an antisemitic sign during an August 2021 protest against COVID-19-related health requirements. The sign displayed the word "Who?" ("Qui?") with horns on the first letter, a reference to an antisemitic conspiracy theory promulgated by retired French General Daniel Delawarde. The defendant told the court that his goal was to support former National Rally political candidate Cassandre Fristot, who received a six-month suspended prison sentence in 2021 for carrying a placard with antisemitic slogans at an antivaccine protest.

On May 5, the Lyon Court of Appeals upheld the May 2021 acquittal of French-Palestinian activist Olivia Zemor, who had been sued by an Israeli pharmaceutical company after she posted an article on a pro-Palestinian website accusing the company of being complicit in "apartheid and occupation." The appeals court noted the absence of defamatory remarks, the absence of incitement to hatred or violence, and the absence of antisemitic remarks.

On November 9, an appeals court began hearing the case of Jean-Marie Le Pen, the 94-year-old founder of the National Front party, now known as National Rally, who in October 2021 was found not guilty of charges of inciting racial hatred for Holocaust-related comments targeting Jewish pop singer and actor Patrick Bruel. Antisemitism organizations, the International League against Racism and Antisemitism (LICRA), SOS-Racisme, and BNVCA appealed the ruling.

On November 9, at the 140th anniversary celebration of the Bordeaux Synagogue, both the mayor and prefect affirmed what they said was their unconditional commitment to the security of the Jewish community and their condemnation of all antisemitic acts, "which have no place in 2022."

On November 7, Archbishop de Moulins-Beaufort, the Catholic Bishops Conference president, stated that eight former French bishops had been accused of sexual violence and three had been accused of failing to report abuse cases, including a cardinal who confessed to assaulting a girl decades ago. The accused would face either prosecution or church disciplinary procedures, de Moulins-Beaufort said. In addition, six former bishops were accused of sexual abuse "by the judiciary of our country, or by the judiciary of the church." On November 8, prosecutors announced that they had opened an inquiry into child abuse by Cardinal Jean-Pierre Ricard after he confessed publicly to reprehensible acts with a 14-year-old girl in the 1980s. "A preliminary inquiry has been started to verify the facts of this revelation," prosecutor Dominique Laurens told the Agence France-Presse news agency. In October 2021, the Catholic Church's Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Church on child abuse committed by Catholic priests, concluded that, not counting deceased victims, priests had abused 216,000 minors in the country between 1950 and 2020. Adding claims against lay members of the church, such as teachers at Catholic schools, the report estimated the number of victims might total 330,000. Moulins-Beaufort stated his determination to make the protection of children a priority, working with authorities.

As of September 29, 1,004 requests for compensation had been sent to the Independent National Authority for Recognition and Reparation (INIRR), set up to adjudicate sex abuse claims, since its establishment in January. Sources reported that 150 individuals had contacted an INIRR case worker.

Approximately 60 cases resulted in a decision, 42 of which included financial compensation of up to €60,000 (\$64,000), according to a first report published by the INIRR president. The establishment of the INIRR followed the 2021 release of the report on sexual abuse by the Catholic Church's independent commission.

On May 6, a mosque in Metz affiliated with Turkey's Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs was damaged in a fire that broke out after unknown persons threw three Molotov cocktails at the walls of the mosque. Metz Mayor François Grosdidier condemned the attack and issued a message of solidarity, stating that the attack "harmed the spirit of the city where tolerance prevails." Authorities opened an investigation, which was ongoing at year's end.

On June 12, a fire partially destroyed a mosque in the city of Rennes. According to the local prosecutor, the investigation of the fire, which was entrusted to the Territorial Directorate of the Judicial Police of Rennes due to its sensitivity, was unable to determine the fire's cause; the investigation of the fire remained open.

On March 31, the Union of Jewish Students in France shared images on social media of antisemitic graffiti discovered in the bathroom of the University of Paris Nanterre, including an inscription that said "Hitler, you are the best." The president of the university said in a Twitter statement that the university "strongly condemns these acts." The statement stated that the vandalism was being cleaned up and that an investigation was opened.

In October, graffiti discovered on the walls of a mosque in Pessac, near Bordeaux, included "justice for Lola," referencing the killing in Paris of a 12-year-old girl by an Algerian suspect, and "Lax state, nationalist revenge," along with a message indicating it was a direct-action protest by the far-right "identitarian" movement. A police investigation was ongoing at year's end.

On January 31, a court in Boulogne-sur-Mer sentenced a man charged with committing arson in the burning of four churches in the Pas-de-Calais area in 2021 to three-and-a-half years in prison, with an additional three years of probation with compulsory psychiatric treatment.

On July 23, several individuals ransacked the Church of Saint-François-d'Assise in Perpignan, desecrated consecrated communion hosts, and attempted to set fire to a statue of the Virgin Mary. They also broke open the church's safe and looted funds collected from offerings and donations. A police investigation remained in progress at year's end.

According to press reports, there were at least five incidents of church vandalism in December, including desecration of statues in the Church of Sainte-Anne d'Arvor in Lorient, graffiti on the walls of the 17th-century Saint-Roch Church in Paris, broken stained glass windows in the Church of the Trinity in Bordeaux, destruction of one of the steeples of the Saint-Maclou Church in Rouen, built in the 15th and 16th centuries, and the setting of two fires at the Church of Saint-Jean d'Ambert in Puy-de-Dôme Department.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

The Ambassador, senior embassy officials and other staff from the embassy, consulates general, and APPs engaged relevant government officials, including at the religious affairs offices of the Ministries of the Interior and Foreign Affairs and DILCRAH, on ways to combat antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred and strengthen religious freedom. Topics discussed included religious tolerance, antisemitic

and anti-Muslim acts, the role of religious freedom in lessening violent extremism, the BDS movement, Holocaust-related compensation, and bilateral cooperation on these issues. Embassy officials closely monitored official government positions on antisemitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian incidents.

Staff from the embassy, consulates general, and APPs met regularly in person and virtually with religious community leaders, activists, and private citizens throughout the country to discuss issues of discrimination and to advocate tolerance for diversity. Embassy officials discussed religious freedom, antisemitism, anti-Muslim sentiment, and interfaith dialogue and tolerance with senior Christian, Muslim, and Jewish representatives, NGOs such as Coexister, an organization that promotes interfaith dialogue, and the AJC Europe. They also hosted meetings with representatives from CRIF, the Israelite Central Consistory of France, the Paris Great Mosque, and Catholic and Protestant representatives working on interfaith dialogue.

On April 16, in support of religious tolerance and dialogue, the embassy hosted an interfaith iftar that included an array of French Muslim leaders and foreign ambassadors. In May, the Ambassador participated in a lunch at the Grand Mosque of Paris with Rector Chems-Eddine Hafiz and other Muslim leaders to discuss religious freedom, anti-Muslim sentiment, societal tolerance, and interfaith dialogue. In October, the embassy coordinated an interfaith roundtable for young leaders with support by the World Jewish Council.

Senior officials from the embassy regularly attended religious celebrations and commemorations in the country, showcasing U.S. support for religious freedom. For example, the Ambassador participated in the Grand Mosque of Paris's Centennial Celebration in October and a senior official attended the Great Synagogue's Remembrance Commemoration in September.

In June, a representative from the Consulate General in Strasbourg met a local Anglican priest to work on several projects including interfaith dialogue. Representatives from the consulate general hosted an interfaith lunch in September to discuss religious freedom and ways to combat intolerance and religious hatred and promote inclusion and cohesion.

In April, the Consul General in Strasbourg visited the Strasbourg Grand Mosque under the auspices of Mosque President Said Allaa and participated in an iftar to discuss religious tolerance and anti-Muslim hatred.

In October, the U.S. Special Envoy to Combat and Monitor Antisemitism met Strasbourg Great Rabbi Harold Weil and other religious and political leaders and urged local officials to adopt IHRA's definition of antisemitism. The Special Envoy also visited the Struthof concentration camp. A representative from the consulate general participated in the 50th anniversary of LICRA in November and engaged with senior officials.

In March and April, representatives of the Consulate General in Marseille met with President Ali Dahmani of the Annasr Mosque in Marseille. Representatives also participated in an iftar at the mosque to discuss religious freedom and ways to combat anti-Muslim sentiment and promote interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance with local religious leaders in March. The Ambassador and representatives of the consulate general attended one event to honor victims on the 10th anniversary of the Toulouse and Montauban attacks.

In March, officials from the embassy and the consulate general met with the regional president of CRIF to discuss interfaith dialogue and tolerance with youth leaders. In September, representatives of the

consulate general participated in a ceremony at Camp des Milles marking the 80th anniversary of the deportation of Jews from the camp to Auschwitz.

In May, the APP in Lyon organized a day-long program for a visiting Department of State international religious freedom delegation with religious leaders in the Lyon area, including representatives of the Grand Synagogue of Lyon, reform Judaism, evangelical Christianity, the Catholic Archdiocese of Lyon, and the Grand Mosque of Lyon. The interfaith meetings resulted in constructive conversations on interfaith relations and religious freedom in the country.

In August, the APP in Lyon participated in a commemoration of the liberation of the Montluc Prison, where members of the Jewish community were held before being sent to Nazi concentration camps.

In September, APP Lyon representatives met with the director of the Maison d'Izieu, which had received a grant from the APP in Lyon to document the role of the United States in the Nuremberg trials. The Maison d'Izieu was a school where 46 Jewish school children were taken by the Nazis and sent to concentration camps, and now serves as a memorial.

On October 25, the U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism visited the Shoah Memorial in Paris to pay homage to the victims of the Holocaust.

The embassy regularly amplified messages from the Secretary of State and Department of State on religious freedom on embassy social media platforms in French and English. For example, in May and July, it posted remarks by the Secretary of State on religious freedom as a human right. The Ambassador also published messages related to religious holidays on her Twitter accounts to highlight religious diversity and high-level engagement on religious freedom issues, including posts on Yom Kippur, Easter, Ramadan, Naw Ruz, and Holi, among others.

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