

2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Brazil

Executive Summary

The constitution states freedom of conscience and belief is inviolable, provides for the free exercise of religious beliefs, and prohibits federal, state, and local governments from either supporting or hindering any religion. The law contains penalties for acts of religious intolerance and discrimination. Religious groups must register with the government to obtain tax-exempt status. Public schools are required by law to offer religious instruction, and all schools must teach Afro-Brazilian religion, history, and culture.

According to government and media reports, the federal and some state governments continued their efforts to combat religious intolerance throughout the country, raise awareness of this issue, promote initiatives supporting victims of religious intolerance, and investigate and act on reported incidents. Government efforts included, for example, the holding of public hearings in Pernambuco State. In March, the police chief in Goiânia, Goiás State, reportedly declined to file a report by a man who said three individuals chased and insulted him while he was on his way to an Umbanda religious center. In June, a Rio de Janeiro court sentenced a Pentecostal pastor to 18 years and six months in prison for racism, incitement, and other crimes for producing and publishing videos attacking Jews and members of other religious groups. Media outlets reported on the prominent role of religion in the country's presidential election, where incumbent Jair Bolsonaro and candidate Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (commonly known as Lula) sought support from evangelical Christians and Roman Catholics.

Media outlets reported cases of religious intolerance in different parts of the country. Acts of religious intolerance ranged from derogatory name calling of an Afro-Brazilian religious ritual to destroying places of worship. Although only approximately 2 percent of the population are followers of Afro-Brazilian religions, including Candomblé and Umbanda, a disproportionate number of cases registered by the human rights hotline continued to involve practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions. Media and other sources reported instances of religious intolerance and discrimination against individuals and communities, especially intolerance and discrimination impacting Afro-Brazilians, and an increase in antisemitism and the presence of neo-Nazi groups. In November, media outlets reported that a 16-year-old wearing military-style clothing and a swastika killed four persons and wounded 12 at two schools in the town of Aracruz in Espírito Santo State and that his motives for the killings were unclear. In October, representatives of Indigenous communities denounced before the UN Human Rights Council the increase in systematic violence motivated by religious intolerance, including the burning of Indigenous places of worship by members of some evangelical Christian groups.

During the year, U.S. embassy officials engaged with government counterparts to emphasize the importance of religious freedom, including for minority religious groups. Embassy and Washington officials discussed the promotion of religious freedom with their counterparts during the virtual U.S.-Brazil Human Rights Dialogue in February. Embassy officials raised concerns with the government about reports of widespread intolerance of Afro-Brazilian religions and the rise in antisemitism. Embassy officials also discussed the importance of interfaith dialogue, peace, and religious tolerance with these government officials. Embassy and consulate officials engaged in activities that promoted religious freedom, including attending Candomblé and Umbanda ceremonies, visiting a synagogue, and meeting with religious leaders representing Jewish and Afro-Brazilian faiths.

Section I.

Religious Demography ✓

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 217.2 million (midyear 2022). According to Datafolha a well-known private polling institute, its 2022 electoral polls show that at the national level, 49 percent of respondents are Catholic, 26 percent evangelical Christians, 14 percent adhere to no religion, and the remaining 11 percent do not specify a religion. Datafolha's 2022 electoral polls also show that at the national level, 49 percent of respondents are Catholic, 26 percent evangelical Christians, 14 percent adhere to no religion, and the remaining 11 percent do not specify a religion. According to a 2019 Datafolha survey, 50 percent of the population identifies as Catholic, the same as the previous survey in 2016 but down from 60 percent in 2014. Atheists and those with no religion represent 11 percent, and the proportion of evangelical Christians is 31 percent, compared with 24 percent in 2016. Approximately 2 percent of the population practices Afro-Brazilian religions (some of which incorporate Indigenous traditions), and 3 percent are Spiritists. According to the 2010 census, the most recently available data from official sources, 65 percent of the population is Catholic, 22 percent Protestant, 8 percent irreligious (including atheists, agnostics, and deists), and 2 percent Spiritists. Adherents of other Christian groups, including members of Jehovah's Witnesses, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Seventh-day Adventists, followers of non-Christian religions such as Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, and Hindus, and Afro-Brazilian and syncretic religious groups, including Candomblé and Umbanda, make up a combined 3 percent of the population. According to the census, there are approximately 600,000 practitioners of Candomblé, Umbanda, and other Afro-Brazilian religions. Some nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) believe, however, that such practitioners are significantly underreported, given the number of *terreiros* (places of worship for Afro-Brazilian religious groups) located across the country. Many members of Indigenous groups follow traditional beliefs. According to recent surveys, many individuals consider themselves followers of more than one religion.

According to the 2010 census, approximately 35,200 Muslims live in the country, while the Federation of Muslim Associations of Brazil estimates the number to be 1.2 to 1.5 million. The largest communities reside in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba, and Foz do Iguaçu, as well as in smaller cities in the states of Paraná and Rio Grande do Sul.

The Israelite (Jewish) Confederation of Brazil (CONIB) estimates there are 120,000 Jews in the country. The two largest concentrations are 70,000 in São Paulo State and 20,000 to 30,000 in Rio de Janeiro State.

According to the President of Federação Espírita do Rio Grande do Sul, an umbrella organization encompassing several Spiritist groups, the number of persons who feel comfortable saying they are Spiritists has increased in recent years, although the number of practitioners has not necessarily increased.

According to a report by BBC Brasil, the postponement of the 2020 census due to the COVID-19 pandemic made changes in the country's statistics on religion in the last decade unclear.

Section II.

Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom ✓

Legal Framework

The constitution states freedom of conscience and belief is inviolable, and it provides for the free exercise of religious beliefs. The constitution prohibits federal, state, and local governments from either supporting or hindering any specific religion. The law provides penalties of up to five years in prison for crimes of religious intolerance, including bullying, employment discrimination, refusal of access to public areas, and displaying, distributing, or broadcasting religiously intolerant

material. Courts may fine or imprison for one to three years anyone who engages in religious hate speech. If the hate speech occurs via publication or social communication, including social media, courts may fine or imprison those found responsible for two to five years. It is illegal to write, edit, publish, or sell literature that promotes religious intolerance.

Religious groups are not required to register to establish places of worship, train clergy, or proselytize, but groups seeking tax-exempt status must register with the Federal Revenue Office and the local municipality. States and municipalities have different requirements and regulations for obtaining tax-exempt status. Most jurisdictions require groups to document the purpose of their congregation, provide an accounting of finances, and have a fire inspection of any house of worship. Local zoning laws and noise ordinances may limit where a religious group may build houses of worship or hold ceremonies.

It is a crime to manufacture, sell, distribute, or broadcast symbols, emblems, ornaments, badges, or advertising that use the swastika for purposes of promoting Nazism, punishable with two to five years' imprisonment.

The law protects the right to use animal sacrifice in religious rituals.

Government regulations require public schools to offer religious instruction, but neither the constitution nor legislation defines the parameters of the curriculum. By law, instruction must be nondenominational and conducted without proselytizing, with alternative instruction available for students who do not want to participate. Schools are required to teach Afro-Brazilian religion, history, and culture. The law allows public and private school students, except those in military training, to postpone taking exams or attending classes on their day of worship if their faith prohibits such activities. The law provides for the right of students to express their religious beliefs and mandates that schools provide alternatives, including taking replacement exams or makeup classes.

Rio de Janeiro State law permits public and private schools to include subjects in their curricula that address respect for freedom of belief and worship; religious and cultural diversity; the important influence of Afro-Brazilian, Indigenous, and Jewish faiths in the formation of national society; the relationship between religious freedom and the secularity of the state; and the legal consequences of intolerance against expressions of religion.

The law prohibits public subsidies to schools operated by religious organizations.

A constitutional provision provides the right of access to religious services and counsel to individuals of all religions in all civil and military establishments. The law states that public and private hospitals as well as civil or military prisons must comply with this provision.

A São Paulo State religious freedom law, revised in January, regulates the constitutional principle of free exercise of faith and imposes fines of up to 95,910 reais (\$18,100) for verifiable cases of disturbances of religious ceremonies and vandalism of sacred symbols, and discrimination in schools, such as prohibiting the use of religious attire. Repeat offenders may be fined up to double that amount.

Under São Paulo's religious freedom law, the State Secretary of Justice and Citizenship enforces administrative penalties allowed in the law. The law defines discrimination against faith within the state of São Paulo and establishes fines for individuals and entities (schools, private companies, associations, churches) involved in acts of religious discrimination. Fines vary from 200 reais (\$38) to 3,000 reais (\$570). A board of the secretary of justice and citizenship analyzes, investigates, and deliberates over denouncements of religious discrimination.

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

Government Practices

In March, a man was reportedly on his way to an Umbanda religious center in Goiânia, Goiás State, when three unidentified individuals chased him, called him a “*macumbeiro*” (a derogatory term opponents of Afro-Brazilian religions use to describe practitioners of Afro-Brazilian beliefs), and said he was wearing “demon” accessories. According to the victim, when he reported the incident to police, the police chief declined to register the report and instead asked the victim to “pray.”

In June, the Federal Court of Rio de Janeiro State sentenced Pastor Tupirani da Hora Flores, leader of the Pentecostal Church Geração Jesus Cristo (Jesus Christ Generation), to 18 years and six months in prison for racism, incitement, and other crimes for producing and publishing in 2020 several videos attacking Jews and members of other religious groups. Police arrested the pastor in February.

In June, the tabloid newspaper *O Povo* reported that Fernanda Carneiro, the Secretary of Tourism and Culture of Uruburetama in Ceará State, stopped the performance of a dance group, stating it was a “macumba ritual” and it was disrespectful to bring “macumba” to a religious festival. Performance participants subsequently filed a formal complaint, stating they were victims of religious intolerance. The Ceará public defender aided the claimants, and the Public Ministry of Ceará opened an investigation of the alleged religious intolerance. Carneiro later resigned her position. Representatives of the dance group said, “The religions of African origins are part of our history and our culture; we need to understand and respect them just like any other practice, enough of all ignorance and intolerance.”

Throughout the year, according to media reports, including in *O Povo*, some states took action to combat religious intolerance, including in February, when Ceará State’s legislative assembly approved the creation of a special police unit to combat religious intolerance. According to *O Povo*, the initiative, sponsored by Deputy Renato Roseno of the Socialism and Liberty Party, aimed to combat crimes against individuals and entities as well as against public or private property, when the motive is prejudice or intolerance of a religious nature.

In May, Pernambuco State lawmakers held public hearings on the topic of religious intolerance. Religious leaders and civil society organizations denounced religious intolerance during the hearings. The meetings addressed cases of discrimination against Candomblé, Umbanda, and other religious groups and practices originating from Africa. According to the State Legislative Assembly of Pernambuco, the Pernambuco Public Ministry’s 20-year-old Racism Working Group investigated complaints of religious intolerance. Maria Ivana Botelho, the public prosecutor who participated in the event, said the role of the Office of the Public Prosecutor was to seek accountability for those committing acts of religious intolerance.

According to government news sources, attacks on terreiros and physical and verbal aggression against followers of African-based religions were the most common forms of religious intolerance recorded in the northeastern part of the country, including in Maranhão, Piauí, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Alagoas, and Sergipe States. During a public hearing held in Pernambuco in May, religious leaders and civil society organizations denounced these forms of religious intolerance. The meeting addressed racism against Candomblé, Umbanda, and other religions originating in Africa. State Deputy João Paulo of the Workers’ Party (PT), who proposed the meeting, reported that the national human rights ombudsman, linked to the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights, registered 571 complaints of violation of freedom of belief in 2021, more than double of the 243 occurrences in 2020.

Also in May, the representative of the Pernambuco State Secretariat of Public Defense, Jeanne de Aguiar Souza, speaking on behalf of the secretariat’s internal affairs department and the internal human rights ombudsman, said, “Any situation of discrimination must be reported and will be investigated by the police. Our team is prepared to handle these cases.” She also said investigations of past acts were ongoing. The Executive Secretary for Human Rights of the State, Laura Gomes, stated, “We are attentive and working to prevent and combat this practice [of discrimination].” Prosecutor Botelho said, “We know that such acts are due to the structural racism of the country.”

Beginning in June, individuals could report incidents of religious intolerance in the state of Rio de Janeiro to the state military police's 190 hotline. The Commission to Combat Religious Intolerance (CCIR), an independent organization in the state that is composed of representatives of religious groups, civil society, police, and public prosecutors, continued to document cases of religious intolerance and aided victims. CCIR coordinator Ivanir dos Santos highlighted the importance of the new hotline, saying that even though victims were already able to report incidents to state civil police, the military police hotline was more easily accessible and familiar. During the first six months in use, the 190 hotline received 13 reports of potential cases of religious intolerance and forwarded these cases to the police precinct responsible for issues involving racial and religious intolerance. Beginning in March, residents of the municipality of Rio de Janeiro could also report incidents of religious intolerance to the city's 1746 hotline.

In October, CNN Brazil reported on how religion gained prominence in the presidential campaigns of Lula and Bolsonaro. Lula, a Catholic, sought support from evangelical Christians, while Bolsonaro, a conservative Catholic with close ties to evangelical Christians, sought to build up his support from Catholics. The two leading candidates frequently discussed religion in their debates and interviews and held religion-focused campaign events. In October, Lula issued a letter of commitment to evangelical groups and Bolsonaro visited the National Sanctuary of Aparecida on October 12 to participate in one of their masses. According to a survey conducted by polling firm IPEC, Bolsonaro had the support of 63 percent of evangelical Christian voters while Lula had 31 percent.

In July, the Public Ministry of Santa Catarina State (MPSC) reopened the case of history professor Wanderley Pugliesi, who in 2020 had a large, tiled swastika symbol in his personal pool, a symbol he removed in 2021. The MPSC's Second Review Panel of the Superior Council unanimously ruled in July that even though Pugliesi stated his use of a Nazi symbol did not mean he was a Nazi, he should still be held responsible. In June 2021, Pugliesi's lawyers requested that the public prosecutor's office drop the case after Pugliesi provided photographs showing that the symbol in the swimming pool had been removed. As of year's end, the council had not determined the appropriate penalties to impose on Pugliesi.

In June, after a six-year process, a federal court in São Paulo State indicted a man for spreading pro-Nazi and pro-Hitler propaganda on a Russian social media network. The defendant was already serving community service sentences for two similar crimes he was convicted of previously.

During the year, the Police Office for Combatting Intolerance for the City of Porto Alegre registered approximately 100 reported cases of religious intolerance, which represented 9 percent of the total 1,100 discrimination complaints. Some civil society leaders praised the office for consolidating efforts regarding discrimination in one office, which simplified victims' ability to seek support. According to civil society leaders, however, concentrating different types of discrimination in one office could undermine its investigative ability. According to civil society leaders in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre, race was a contributing factor in many cases of, and studies on, religious intolerance.

The NGO Center for Articulation of Marginalized Populations reported Afro-Brazilian victims of religious intolerance in the state of Rio de Janeiro viewed police and the judiciary as being indifferent to attacks on Afro-Brazilian places of worship. The organization cited a lack of investigations and arrests in cases of religious intolerance and said law enforcement and the judiciary rarely held offenders accountable.

In March, the São Paulo Legislative Assembly held a ceremony to celebrate the first anniversary of a law prohibiting religious discrimination in the state and establishing administrative and financial sanctions. The author of the law, state Deputy Damares Moura, said it was an important tool to protect freedom of religion and inspired the states of Santa Catarina and Espírito Santo to approve similar legislation establishing administrative sanctions for religious discrimination. In April, Espírito Santo authorities approved a statute on religious freedom that provided for freedom of religion, conscience, and thought in the public and private spheres and emphasized the separation between church and state. In January, Santa Catarina enacted a law on religious freedom to combat

religious intolerance, including through fines and other administrative sanctions, and to encourage religious diversity. Edebrande Cavalieri, an adviser to the Espirito Santo Archdiocese, said the new statute showed that the state had finally acknowledged the growing problem of religious intolerance in Espirito Santo. According to Cavalieri, the new law was an important tool to promote the rights of all citizens.

In January, the state of São Paulo increased potential fines for cases of religious discrimination, based on its state law on freedom of religion. The maximum administrative fine increased from 87,270 reais (\$16,500) to 95,910 reais (\$18,100), and individuals committing recurring incidents of discrimination could be fined up to double that amount.

In June, the city government of Salvador declared the Casa de Ogum Terreiro a historical and cultural heritage site. Participants chanted and prayed, and 103-year-old adherent Mother Didi said she felt honored to lead a space that was valuable to many. Nigerian priestess Josefa de Santana founded the temple in the 19th century.

On May 25, the São Paulo Interreligious Forum for a Culture of Peace and Freedom of Faith, a civil society entity of the State Secretary of Justice and Citizenship, held its first interreligious meeting in celebration of the local Day of Freedom of Religion in the state government headquarters. Governor Rodrigo Garcia said the event symbolized the state's commitment to cultural and religious tolerance.

In January, Rio de Janeiro launched a new municipal plan to combat religious intolerance. Headed by the city's new Religious Diversity Coordinator, Márcio Dodds Righetti Mendes, the plan involved other institutions, such as the Municipal Guard and the Departments of Health and Education. Mendes, a professor of Yoruba philosophy and culture and a lawyer specializing in human rights, said the plan would train public servants to contribute to protecting the religious freedom of all citizens.

On March 6, the Ilha do Governador District mayor of Rio de Janeiro invited followers of Candomblé and Umbanda to hold a ceremony in honor of Iemanjá, a Candomblé *orixá* (spirit), at the Praia da Bica in Ilha do Governador. The district's deputy mayor invited the group to rehold their religious ceremony after a local resident interrupted the original event on February 6, when he fired a handgun from his balcony. Local officials stated that while the incident did not cause any injuries, it was an act of religious intolerance. According to Tião Raiz, a religious leader who was with the group on the day of the incident, Rio de Janeiro Civil Police continued to investigate the incident but as of year's end, no charges were filed.

According to multiple media reports, governments promoted and celebrated religious inclusion. Senators at the federal level commemorated the National Day to Combat Religious Intolerance and the World Day of Religion on January 21, aimed at alerting the population to the danger of discrimination and religious prejudice and celebrating respect for all religions. Rio de Janeiro's city government organized a Week of Religious Diversity from January 17–21, which included an interfaith dialogue and cultural activities at historical sites. On January 20, Bahia's state government organized a virtual interfaith dialogue entitled "Voices for Religious Diversity."

Media reported that President Bolsonaro made several social media posts on February 9 that rejected Nazi ideology and its presence in the country. "Nazi ideology must be repudiated in an unrestricted and permanent way, without reservations that allow its flourishing, as well as any and all totalitarian ideology that jeopardizes the fundamental rights of peoples and individuals, such as the right to life and liberty," he wrote. According to media, his messages were intended to rebut a speech on YouTube by Bruno Aiub, known as Monark, who defended the existence of a Nazi party in the country.

During the year, according to the Porto Alegre Interfaith Group, there was an increase in the number of evangelical Christians serving on the *conselhos tutelares* (guardianship councils providing social services focused on protecting children and adolescents' rights). Persons elected to the councils are not politicians, and their responsibility is to provide social assistance to families,

children, and adolescents facing issues such as violence, hunger, and homelessness. In recent years, the *conselheiro tutelar* position became increasingly sought after by individuals affiliated with evangelical churches and who aspired to political office on the local level. These churches reportedly used members who served as *conselheiros tutelares* to advocate their views, including on human rights and religious freedom.

In October, the UN special rapporteur for freedom of religion or belief released a report on the freedom of religion or belief of Indigenous peoples and cited Brazil as an example of where the cultural and spiritual survival of its Indigenous peoples was under threat. According to the report, the country's Indigenous communities faced forced conversion to non-Indigenous religions and threats, hostility, and discrimination from the state and religious institutions. The report also stated that the government's lack of regulation of agricultural fertilizers had caused water pollution in Indigenous territory, threatening spiritually significant waters.

Section III.

Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom ✓

Although only approximately 2 percent of the population were followers of Afro-Brazilian religions, a disproportionate number of cases registered by the human rights hotline continued to involve practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions. Media continued to report multiple incidents in which individuals and groups destroyed *terreiros* and sacred objects belonging to communities of followers of Afro-Brazilian religions.

In April, the online news agency *UOL* (Universe Online) published an article reporting a significant increase in the number of cases of religious intolerance in the state of São Paulo. The article, based on statistics from the São Paulo secretary of public security, cited 15,300 cases of religious intolerance in 2021, compared with 7,200 in 2020 and 5,200 in 2016. In most police reports, victims were identified as practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions. The São Paulo Office of the Ombudsman, located in the Secretariat of Justice and Citizenship, received 110 reports of religious intolerance in the first six months of the year.

According to SaferNet, an NGO that monitors reports of violence and intolerance connected with religion, complaints of religious intolerance skyrocketed during the year, especially during the presidential campaign season. SaferNet reported it received 3,818 such complaints during the year, compared with 1,084 during the 2018 presidential campaign season.

According to media reports, in November, a 16-year-old wearing military-style clothing and a swastika killed four persons and wounded 12 at two schools in the town of Aracruz in Espírito Santo State in the country's southeastern region. Police said the investigations were preliminary and the motives for the shootings were unknown. According to the attacker's family, the shooter was under psychiatric treatment.

According to news reports in September, an unidentified man attacked Bruna Domingues Vaz with a machete while she was listening to an Afro-Brazilian spiritual song in Itaboraí, Rio de Janeiro State. Domingues Vaz lost an eye because of the attack. CCIR coordinator dos Santos said the suspect had not been identified or arrested as of year's end.

In February, the daily newspaper *Correio Braziliense* reported that a group of evangelical Christians attacked the *mãe-de-santo* (priestess), broke sacred objects, and vandalized the Logun Ede Candomblé Temple in Eunápolis, Bahia State. According to media reports, the priestess pressed charges at a local police station. Police continued to investigate the case but made no arrests by year's end. Candomblé priest Maria Luziene da Silva said the evangelical Christians involved in the attack had not been indicted or tried as of the end of year.

Media continued to report on instances of religious discrimination and intolerance. According to *UOL*, *Globo*, and *Correio Braziliense*, in May, government authorities removed a 13-year-old girl from her mother and kept her for 40 days in a shelter in the city hall of Ribeirão das Neves in Minas Gerais State. Guardianship counselors reported the mother to the Prosecutor's Office of Minas Gerais, stating she had kidnapped and imprisoned her daughter after the mother brought her daughter to a three-day ceremony of spiritual initiation in Candomblé. The girl returned to her mother's family's home after the city's social assistance office released a report stating that the guardianship counselors had shown prejudice against the mother because of her religion. According to media sources, social workers in Ribeirão das Neves intended to continue to monitor the adolescent's health and psychological state.

In November, *Globo's* online publication, *G1*, reported that almost half of the country's terreiros had registered attacks in the last two years. According to *G1*, during the November month of Black Consciousness, the National Network of Afro-Brazilian Religions presented a map of racist incidents in the country connected to Afro-descendent religions at a UN meeting of the Committee to Eliminate Racial Discrimination held in Geneva. A survey shared at the meeting and coordinated by the National Network of Afro-Brazilian Religions included input from representatives from 255 terreiros across the country. According to the survey, almost half of the respondents had reported up to five attacks on terreiros in the previous two years. Respondents said incidents of religious intolerance also occurred in other contexts, such as on the street and at school. In the survey, 78 percent of respondents reported that individuals in their communities suffered some type of violence motivated by prejudice connected to their Afro-descent religion. Dial 100, a federal government-run emergency call-in service that receives human rights complaints, stated it recorded an average of three such calls per day.

In August, media sources reported that a man began receiving death threats after declaring himself an atheist. The threats came from the father of his boss, the owner of a large company in Sidrolândia in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. It was unclear whether local police had opened an investigation by the end of year.

According to the media outlet *Brasil De Fato*, the Pernambuco State Public Ministry was investigating an act of arson that occurred on January 1, a traditional day for religious celebrations, in the Ilê Axé Ayabá Omi, also known as Terreiro das Salinas. The arsonists also burned down a home; inhabitants said the home was the target of several previous acts of vandalism rooted in religious discrimination of Afro-descent religions. The Oxé Project, an NGO providing assistance in response to acts of racism, said it would assist the victims of the arson and advocate justice in the case. During the year, Terreiro das Salinas developed social programs for approximately 40 children from the Abreu do Una community. According to Terreiro das Salinas representatives, these children lost access to the terreiro's member-led tutoring and literacy program *Lere* because of the January 1 attack and state authorities' lack of support to prioritize the investigation. To return to activities and build community solidarity, Terreiro das Salinas said it launched the campaign *Reconstruindo Salinas* (rebuilding Salinas) to address religious intolerance and racism directed against followers of Afro-descendent religions through education and communication.

In July, media reported that unidentified men broke into and vandalized an Afro-Brazilian sanctuary known as Castelo Alto de Xango in Brumado, Bahia State. Bahia State civil police continued to investigate the case. Authorities made no arrests by year's end.

Media outlets reported that on December 4, unidentified individuals in Salvador, Bahia State, set fire to the statue of Mother Stella of Oxossi, a revered figure in the Candomblé faith tradition. Candomblé adherents and artists protested the vandalism, stating it was an act of religious intolerance.

The Associated Press reported that members of a temple of an African-based religion in Salvador, Bahia State, experienced harassment from evangelical Christians traveling in groups to worship at the Abaete dunes, which temple followers consider sacred. In February and September, members of Indigenous communities and Afro-Brazilian religions joined together to protest the construction of a plaza and welcome center along the base of the dunes, designed to accommodate the influx of

evangelical Christians traveling to worship there and approved by the Salvador mayor. Protestors also rejected the city council's proposal to change the name of the dunes to "Monte Santo Deus Proverá" (Holy Mount God Will Provide) due to its Christian connotations. According to representatives of the Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian communities, the project was an example of an abuse of power to gain influence among evangelical Christians ahead of the presidential election and an imposition of Christianity in public spaces. Media outlets reported that following the protests, city councilman Isnard Araujo withdrew the draft legislation he had authored.

Media reported incidents of evangelical Christian missionaries traveling to isolated and recently contacted and uncontacted Indigenous communities to proselytize and spread their religion. In October, representatives of Indigenous communities in the country denounced before the UN Human Rights Council the increase in systematic violence motivated by religious intolerance, including the burning of Indigenous places of worship by "fundamentalist" members of some evangelical Christian groups. In their discourse, Indigenous representatives called on the UN Special Rapporteur for freedom of religion or belief to press the government to condemn all acts committed against traditional Indigenous spirituality.

According to the Jewish Observatory, the number of incidents involving neo-Nazis increased from 49 in 2021 to 89 registered cases during the year. The observatory reported 25 incidents related to antisemitism during the year, compared with 18 incidents in 2021. The report was based on a range of sources, including traditional media, social media, and reports from branch offices of the organization. The survey reported a variety of activities, including sightings of swastikas and other antisemitic graffiti, antisemitic hand gestures, verbal and physical aggressions, and propaganda.

So Paulo Israelite Federation's annual *Antisemitism Report* recorded 208 incidents and allegations of antisemitism in the country from January to July, compared with 57 incidents and allegations during the same period in 2020 and 149 during the same period in 2020. The report was based on a range of sources, including traditional media, social media, and reports from branch offices of the organization. The survey reported a variety of activities, including sightings of swastikas and other antisemitic graffiti, antisemitic hand gestures, and the sale of Nazi artifacts.

On February 8, Jorge Adrilles, a political commentator for private national radio network Jovem Pan News, used a Nazi gesture on national television. At the end of his televised speech, Adrilles made a variation of the "sieg heil" greeting used by the Nazis. Adrilles said his gesture was not intended to be a Nazi salute. Jovem Pan management subsequently dismissed him, stating the network rejected any manifestation in defense of Nazi ideas.

On February 7, a podcast host known as "Monark" with 3.6 million followers on YouTube and one million on the online streaming service Twitch stated during an interview that a Nazi party should be recognized by law. He said, "The radical left has a lot more space than the radical right; they both had to have space," and added, "If the guy wants to be an anti-Jew, I think he had a right to be." Members of the public, the Jewish community, and institutions, including CONIB, the Israelite Federation, the Brazil Israel Institute, and Jews for Democracy, repudiated the statement, and an investigation was opened to determine whether Monark was a Nazi sympathizer. The digital content producer, Estúdio Flow, removed the online video and fired Monark.

A map released in January by São Paulo State University of Campinas anthropologist Adriana Dias, who has researched neo-Nazism in the country since 2002, identified 530 different neo-Nazi extremist groups with a total of approximately 10,000 members. The membership of the groups increased by 271 percent from January 2019 to May 2021. According to the map, Rio Grande do Sul had 80 neo-Nazi groups, the third-highest number among Brazilian states, behind São Paulo (137) and Santa Catarina (153).

The national publication *Estadão* reported in October that police had arrested five suspects linked to neo-Nazism in Santa Catarina. The group had weapons, ammunition, vests, and Nazi symbols and operated in Joinville, São José, Maravilha, and São Miguel do Oeste. Police investigations began in April when a suspect was arrested in São Miguel do Oeste, in western Santa Catarina, and investigators learned his activities were connected to a larger group. Among those arrested were a

27-year-old office assistant and at least three university students from the Federal University of Santa Catarina. Ammunition and neo-Nazi symbols were found in the house of one of the students.

Catholic-associated publication *Crux* reported that armed men threatened Auxiliary Bishop Vicente de Paula Ferreira of the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte, an outspoken critic of Bolsonaro, on November 12. In Sidrolândia, Mato Grosso do Sul, members of a mostly pro-Bolsonaro community told a priest to leave the parish in which he had worked for six years because the priest had announced he would vote for Lula.

In December, Jewish groups demanded that Paulo Nogueira Batista, a well-known economist, retract his statement questioning the loyalty of Brazilian-Israeli economist Ilan Goldfajn during an interview streamed by a widely viewed Brazilian news organization. In the interview, Batista said that Goldfajn, who was elected president of the Inter-American Development Bank in December, was hostile to the government of President-elect Lula. Batista referred to Goldfajn's Jewish background as one of the reasons for the hostility. "He is essentially a financier, connected to the U.S. Treasury, to the Jewish community. And the Jewish community has a strong presence in the U.S. Treasury, in the Monetary Fund, in international organizations, not only in private banks," said Batista, adding, "As a Brazilian, all he has is his passport."

According to data collected by the privately owned *Globo* news and television channel, from 2013 to 2022, an average of 21 new evangelical Christian churches opened every day in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, and one in three evangelical Christian churches in the country opened within the past 10 years.

Section IV.

U.S. Government Policy and Engagement ✓

During the year, embassy officials engaged with government counterparts to emphasize the importance of religious freedom, including for minority religious groups. Embassy and State Department officials discussed the promotion of religious freedom with their counterparts during the virtual U.S.-Brazil Human Rights Dialogue on February 8. On December 2, an embassy official met with a Ministry of Foreign Affairs representative in the Human Rights Division to discuss concerns regarding intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions, such as Candomblé, and the increase of neo-Nazi groups and antisemitism in the country.

In August and September, an embassy official met with Afro-Brazilian and Jewish religious leaders in Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre, respectively, to learn of their efforts in promoting peace and interfaith dialogue and to discuss topics such as collaborations among Jewish and Afro-Brazilians religious leaders to demonstrate that different faiths can coexist in harmony. They also discussed potential areas of collaboration to promote religious freedom, including holding an interfaith walk with different religious leaders in Porto Alegre in 2023.

On May 7, an official representing the U.S. Consulate General in São Paulo attended the flag raising ceremony at the evangelical Universal Church of the Kingdom of God's Temple of Solomon. Foreign Minister Carlos Alberto França also attended the ceremony along with diplomatic representatives from more than 30 countries. The consulate official participated in a tour of the temple's main sanctuary and spoke about the origins and significance of the ceremony with members of the church, who thanked the U.S. government for attending the ceremony.

On March 6, the Rio de Janeiro Consul General and consulate staff attended a Candomblé and Umbanda ceremony in honor of Iemanjá, a Candomblé orixá, at the Praia da Bica in Rio's Ilha do Governador.

The Consul General in Porto Alegre visited the Sociedade Israelita Brasileira de Cultura e Beneficência Synagogue in January and spoke with Rabbi Guershon Kwasniewski about how the

consulate and the Jewish community could work together to combat religious intolerance and promote social inclusion. The Consul General also visited the Jewish-German Immigration Memorial in Rio Grande do Sul and highlighted the importance of documenting and informing visitors about cooperation, especially during the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust.