

HUNGARY 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The Fundamental Law (constitution) provides for freedom of religion, including freedom to change religion or belief and freedom to manifest religion or belief through religious acts or ceremonies; it voices respect for all religious traditions existing in the country. The constitution separates church and state and stipulates “religious communities” (umbrella groups encompassing “recognized churches” and “religious organizations”) are independent legal entities, but the state may cooperate with them on community goals. A cooperating religious community shall function as a “recognized church” upon parliament’s decision. However, the previous deregistration of more than 350 religious organizations under the 2011 Law on Religion remained intact despite the efforts of some of the religious groups to contest the loss of their status in domestic courts and a final ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) that the law constituted a violation of freedom of association with respect to religious freedom. The access of minority religious groups to state funding and religious activities at public institutions remained limited. Jewish groups declined to participate in central government activities to mark the 70th anniversary of the Holocaust in Hungary following increased concerns over the government’s policies, including its decision to erect a monument to mark the country’s occupation by German forces (the Victims of the German Occupation Memorial), the limited coordination and consultation with regard to a new museum focusing on child victims of the Holocaust (the “House of Fates”), and its appointment of a director for a new historical research foundation (Veritas Institute) who made controversial statements about the deportation of Jews in 1941. The government organized numerous events for the 70th anniversary, featuring speeches by the president and prime minister criticizing anti-Semitism and acknowledging the role played by the Hungarian state during the Holocaust.

Anti-Semitic incidents and public statements, in particular by the Jobbik Party, continued to raise concerns in the Jewish community. A survey conducted by the non-governmental Action and Protection Foundation (TEV) found that approximately one-third of the adult population had prejudices against Jews. Incidents of anti-Semitism included physical and verbal attacks, cemetery desecration, and Holocaust denial, and revisionism.

The U.S. embassy and visiting U.S. officials emphasized in public and private statements the government’s responsibility to address the Holocaust accurately and

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consult with the Jewish community. They also raised strong concerns about the Religion Law and the deregistration of and restrictions on certain minority religious groups.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 9.9 million (July 2014 estimate). The Hungarian government does not collect official data on religious affiliation; however, the 2011 national census included an optional question on religious affiliation. Responses indicated that 37.1 percent of the population self-identifies as Roman Catholic, 11.6 percent as Hungarian Reformed Church (Calvinist), 2.2 percent as Lutheran, and less than 1 percent as Jewish. In the same census, 16.7 percent indicated no religious affiliation and 1.5 percent indicated they were atheists; 27.2 percent offered no response. Religious groups constituting less than 5 percent of the population included Greek Orthodox, the Faith Congregation (a Pentecostal group), other Orthodox Christian groups, as well as other Christian denominations, Buddhists, and Muslims.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution provides for freedom of conscience and religion – including freedom to change religion or belief and freedom – either alone or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest religion or belief through religious acts or ceremonies, or in any other way, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

The constitution’s preamble recognizes the role of Christianity in preserving the nation and voices value for all religious traditions existing in the country. The constitution separates religious communities and the state and stipulates religious communities are independent legal entities, but the state may cooperate with them on community goals. A cooperating religious community (umbrella groups encompassing churches and religious organizations) shall function as a “recognized church.” The state shall grant special licenses to recognized churches to support their participation in tasks in the public interest, for example, education.

Since the 2013 amendment of the 2011 religion law, the law prescribes a dual system of “religious communities,” including “recognized churches” and “religious

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organizations,” which replaces previously existing legal categories for religious groups. The law authorizes the Budapest Metropolitan Tribunal to register “religious organizations” if they have at least 10 founding individual members whose primary objective is to conduct religious activities that do not violate the constitution, other laws, or the rights and freedom of other communities. If the court rejects a deregistered church’s application to be a religious organization, the decision is subject to appeal at the Budapest Metropolitan Court of Appeals.

According to the law, the registration of a religious group as a “recognized church” requires the approval of parliament. This requirement, enacted in 2011, deregistered more than 350 religious groups and church organizations recognized under the previous law and requires them to reapply if they wish to regain their status.

To obtain recognized church status from parliament, religious organizations must submit applications to the Ministry of Human Capacities (MHC). The MHC has 60 days to assess whether the group fulfills all the administrative criteria, which include a variety of documentation and qualifications. To qualify for recognition as a church, a religious organization must have existed in Hungary for 20 years (in which case it must have a membership of 0.1 percent of the total population, approximately 10,000 people) or have existed at least 100 years internationally (in which case its foreign affiliation needs to be certified by at least two other churches of similar faith that are recognized in foreign countries). Its activities may not conflict with the constitution or other laws or violate the rights and freedom of other communities. A group must also prove that its primary purpose is to conduct religious activity; have a formal statement of faith and rites, bylaws and internal rules, and elected or appointed administrative and representative bodies; and officially declare that its activities are not in violation of the laws or the freedom of others. The MHC is obligated to consult with a lawyer, religious historian, religious scientist, or sociologist prior to issuing its decision, which is subject to judicial review.

Following an MHC decision on the applicant’s eligibility, parliament’s Judiciary Committee has 60 days to invite the applicant to a public hearing and to submit an assessment to parliament on the group’s compliance with additional criteria. These criteria include an assessment that the group poses no threat to national security (provided by parliament’s National Security Committee); that it does not violate the right to physical and mental health or the protection of life and human dignity; and that the group is suitable for long-term cooperation with the state in promoting

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community goals based on its founding documents, number of members, network of institutions providing public services, and access by larger societal groups to such services.

A two-thirds parliamentary majority must approve the request for church status within the 60 days. If parliament rejects the application, a detailed explanation is required and the applicant can challenge parliament's decision in the Constitutional Court within 15 days.

The annex to the religion law lists 27 "recognized churches," including the Catholic Church, a variety of Protestant denominations, a range of Orthodox Christian groups, other Christian denominations such as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and Seventh-day Adventists, several Jewish groups, the Salvation Army, and the Hungarian Society for Krishna Consciousness, the sole registered Hindu organization. This figure also includes Buddhist and Muslim umbrella organizations, each encompassing a number of individual groups, bringing the total number of recognized churches on the list to 32 individual religious groups. Including dioceses and monastic orders, 193 entities are associated with the 32 recognized churches.

Every religious community may use the word "church" in its official name regardless of whether it is officially recognized by parliament. Officials from both recognized and nonrecognized religious organizations are not obligated to disclose information shared with them in the course of their faith-related service (confession). Non-recognized religious groups are not prohibited from faith-based and other activities.

No state office may determine or supervise a group's faith-based activities. Their doctrines, internal regulations, and statutes are not subject to state review, modification, or enforcement. Their names, symbols and rites are protected by copyright law, while buildings and cemeteries are protected by criminal law.

Recognized churches have certain privileges not available to religious organizations, such as automatic access to full state funding and exemption from control of their financial operations connected to religious activities. Recognized churches and their associated institutions (classified as "internal religious legal entities") that provide public services such as health care, education, or social services are automatically eligible for full state subsidies for all their activities. Religious organizations may take over or establish public service institutions and

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are entitled to receive a per capita state subsidy covering the wages of the staff employed by these institutions. However, social services institutes are automatically ineligible for supplementary state support. Recognized churches enjoy other privileges not automatically available to religious organizations related to pastoral services in the military, prisons, and hospitals. Religious organizations must ask the heads of military institutes, prisons, and hospitals for the right to offer pastoral services.

Recognized churches and religious organizations receive a per capita subsidy from the state for the wages of their staff at the educational institutes, but only recognized churches automatically receive a supplementary subsidy for operational expenses. According to the law, religious organizations may apply to the MHC for the supplementary operational subsidy (which covers approximately 30 percent of their total costs), and the MHC decides on a case-by-case basis.

Taxpayers may donate 1 percent of their personal income taxes to a recognized church, which then receives additional matching funds from the government. Religious organizations compete with other nongovernmental organizations for a similar one percent personal income tax allocation designated for civil society organizations. Both recognized churches and religious organizations are free to use taxpayer donations. Only officials of recognized churches are exempt from personal income tax under certain conditions. Land owned by a religious group that was deregistered in 2011 may be retained by a religious organization that is the legal successor to the deregistered group. Both religious organizations and recognized churches are prohibited from purchasing agricultural land. Recognized churches may acquire new agricultural land as a gift or as inheritance; this possibility is prohibited for religious organizations.

If recognized churches or religious organizations cease to exist (e.g., by dissolving themselves) and have no legal successor, their assets become state property that must be used to finance public services. This may also occur if, upon the initiative of the government, the Constitutional Court issues an opinion that the activity of the recognized church violates the constitution, which requires confirmation by a two-thirds parliamentary majority. The Constitutional Court also issues an opinion upon the request of the Budapest Metropolitan Tribunal on whether a religious organization violates the constitution, but the decision on its dissolution depends on the Tribunal.

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Treaties with the Holy See regulate relations between the state and the Roman Catholic Church, including financing of public services and religious activities and the settlement of claims for property seized by the state during the Communist era. These agreements also serve as a model for regulating state relations with other religious groups.

Since 2013, one-hour-per-week “faith and ethics” or ethics only education is mandatory in the first and the fifth grades of public elementary schools. In September such instruction also became mandatory for the second and sixth grades in public elementary schools and the first and second years of public secondary schools. Students and their parents choose between a “faith and ethics” class provided by an officially recognized church of their choice and a generic ethics course taught by public school teachers. Churches are entitled to prepare their own textbooks and determine curricula for their “faith and ethics” classes. Private schools are not obligated to introduce mandatory “faith and ethics” or ethics classes.

The law affords recognized churches and religious organizations the right to assume operation of public schools through a formal agreement with the MHC. Religious communities, school teachers, the affected parents or the operator of the school can initiate such transfers, but they can only be executed if the designated religious community is able to collect the signatures of more than 50 percent of the parents and adult students enrolled at the school. The government conducts biennial inspections of religious schools to ensure standards conform to those of government-run schools.

Non-recognized religious organizations are not entitled to provide religious education (“faith and ethics”) as part of the mandatory curricula in public schools, but they may offer extracurricular religious education in public schools if requested by students or parents.

The Ministry of Defense operates and funds a military chaplaincy, which has three branches (Catholic, Protestant and Jewish). Military personnel from all recognized churches and religious organizations have the right to the free exercise of religion in private and public.

Penitentiaries allow inmates to freely practice religion, including access to special food (e.g., kosher). A public prosecutor or judge may restrict the practice of religion, however, during criminal proceedings. Detainees have the right to

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unrestricted contact with representatives of recognized churches. Detainees in special security regimes may only receive individual spiritual care and are excluded from community spiritual programs. The government's Prison Pastoral Service carries out religious activities in penitentiaries and has unrestricted access to prison facilities to provide religious services for inmates. Access for other recognized churches and religious organizations is granted at the discretion of prison authorities. Rejection of access requests may be appealed to the Ministry of Interior.

A new civil code (effective March 15) and the fourth amendment to the constitution introduce "hate speech" provisions designed to "protect the dignity of the Hungarian nation" and that of any religious or other social community. The law provides a punishment of three years in prison for impeding someone else from freely exercising his or her religion through violence or threats. Abusing an individual because of his or her religious affiliation is punishable by three years in prison.

Physical assault motivated by the victim's affiliation (or suspected affiliation) in any religious or other societal group is a felony punishable by one to five years in prison. Violence against a member of the clergy is classified as violence against an "individual providing public service" and is similarly punished with a prison sentence of one to five years. If an assault is committed by a group or is armed, it is punishable by imprisonment of two to eight years; and any person who engages in the preparation for the use of force against any member of a religious or social community is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment not exceeding two years. The law automatically suspends the immunity of a member of parliament (MP) who incites hatred against religious communities or publicly denies crimes of the Communist or National Socialist regimes. No MP has been the subject of such a proceeding.

The law prohibits public denial, expression of doubt, or minimization of the Holocaust, genocide, and other crimes against humanity committed by the National Socialist or the Communist regimes, punishing such offenses with a maximum sentence of three years in prison. The criminal code makes wearing, exhibiting, or promoting the swastika, the logo of the Schutzstaffel (SS), the arrow cross, the five-pointed red star, or the hammer and sickle in public, in a way that harms the human dignity or the memory of victims, punishable by custodial arrest as a misdemeanor.

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Government Practices

Dozens of deregistered religious organizations continued to contest the loss of their status and to seek legal remedies on multiple fronts. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) issued a final ruling in September upholding the organizations' challenge to the mass deregistration of churches in 2011. Non-recognized religious organizations continued to have limited access to public funding and to religious activities in public institutions. Jewish community representatives reacted negatively to the government's erection of a monument to mark the country's occupation by German forces; to its plans for the "House of Fates," a new museum focusing on child victims of the Holocaust; and to its appointment of a historian as director of a new historical research institute (Veritas Institute) whose views on the deportation of Jews in 1941 drew criticism. Jewish groups decided not to attend programs organized by the central government to mark the 70th anniversary of the Holocaust in Hungary. The president and prime minister made speeches at Holocaust commemoration events criticizing anti-Semitism and acknowledging the role played by the Hungarian state during the Holocaust.

On April 8, the ECHR ruled the 2011 religion law had violated the freedom of association with respect to the freedom of religion of 16 deregistered applicant churches, including Mennonite, evangelical, Jewish, and Buddhist groups, as well as a variety of minority religious groups, and ordered the government to pay damages to the plaintiffs in an amount to be determined following mediation. The ECHR rejected an appeal by the government, and the verdict became final September 9. On September 11, the state secretary for church affairs released a statement declaring the ECHR ruling "fits into the series of attacks carried out against Hungary by certain international interest groups" and claiming that the parties concerned were primarily motivated by the gain of "material benefits" and actively participated in activity aimed at damaging "tax-paying Hungarian people." The government started consultations with the applicant groups on the damages in December, but no agreement was reached between the parties by the end of the year.

Of 27 applications submitted by religious communities to the MHC in 2013, the ministry ruled 15 applicants were ineligible based on the administrative criteria listed in the law. Four of the rejected applicants appealed the ministerial decision in court. In two of the cases, the court suspended proceedings and turned to the Constitutional Court seeking a ruling on the constitutionality of the relevant legal

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provision; in one case, the MHC withdrew the rejection (which terminated the court proceeding) and launched a new administrative proceeding on the eligibility, while another case remained pending at the court at the end of the year. The ministry declared 12 of the 27 applicants eligible from an administrative point of view and forwarded these applications to the parliament's judiciary committee. On July 8, the parliament's judiciary committee recommended against the applications of 10 religious organizations (the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship; Evangelical Free Church; Evangelical Friends Church; Hungarian Evangelical Association; Mantra Hungarian Buddhist Community; Pentecostal Church of Hungary; Church of the Nazarene Hungary; Hungarian Bahai Community; Sim Shalom Progressive Jewish Community; and Alliance of Hungarian Reform Jewish Communities Church) for recognized church status. The committee said that while the applicant communities' public service activities were "considerable," those only enjoyed small public support, meaning their overall societal benefits remained "limited." This decision followed a June finding by parliament's national security committee that the 10 groups did not pose a threat to national security. Parliament had not voted on the applications by the end of the year. Two remaining applications referred to the judiciary committee by the MHC remained pending.

The Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship (MET, a Methodist community of approximately 18,000 followers) and several other deregistered small religious organizations continued to try to obtain their lost church status based on the Constitutional Court's 2013 decision that retroactively annulled parts of the 2011 religion law. The Constitutional Court had ruled that those deregistered churches whose requests for rerecognition had been rejected by parliament, as well as those deregistered churches which had submitted constitutional complaints at the Constitutional Court following their deprivation of church status, should all be considered as not losing their church status through the 2011 religion law. On February 19, Minister of Human Capacities Zoltan Balog appealed a decision by a trial court that he reconsider the MET's application for retroactive inclusion in the registry of "recognized churches." This case and six others lodged by four different deregistered religious groups in connection with their deprived status remained pending before the Curia, the highest judicial authority in the country.

On May 7, the Curia rejected a request by MET to retain "supplementary state subsidies" for one of its homes for the elderly, which the group had stopped receiving when it lost its official church status in 2012. The Curia reinforced the ruling of the court of first instance, which said that, notwithstanding the Constitutional Court ruling, MET must first appear on the official registry of

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recognized churches maintained by the MHC. On July 8, the MET appealed the Curia's ruling at the Constitutional Court, which can review the constitutionality of an individual court decision. That case remained pending at the Constitutional Court at the end of the year.

On July 21, the Constitutional Court issued a ruling that its June 2013 decision overturning the deregistration of several former churches also applied to other deregistered churches whose cases reached the Court subsequent to the 2013 decision. In its justification of the ruling, the Court noted that the amended religion law maintained several privileges available exclusively to recognized churches. The Court acknowledged the right of the state to use wide discretion in allocating financial subsidies and privileges to religious communities, but warned that any regulations and their application should not discriminate between religious communities. The ruling further stated that deregistered churches could initiate new proceedings to gain "recognized church" status as prescribed by the current religion law.

On December 16, the Constitutional Court issued a decision in the case of a constitutional complaint submitted by an anonymous religious group that had lost its church status under the 2011 religion law. The applicant community failed to initiate the transformation of its legal status to religious association by the February 29, 2012, deadline set by the 2011 religion law, and in both the first (in November 2012) and second instance (in January 2013) courts ordered the group's mandatory dissolution and the liquidation of its assets. The Constitutional Court ruled that the first and second instance court orders on the dissolution were unconstitutional because those were issued based on the provision of the 2011 religion law that the Constitutional Court had annulled retroactively in March 2013 on the basis of violation of religious freedom and discrimination.

At the end of the year, there was one pending case at the Constitutional Court initiated by the Budapest Metropolitan Tribunal, another one initiated by the Budapest Metropolitan Court of Public Administration and Labor in connection with the recognition or dissolution of seven religious communities, and four pending constitutional complaints initiated by deregistered religious communities.

Since the introduction of the 2011 religion law, courts have terminated 43 deregistered churches and liquidated assets worth a total of approximately 800,000 forints (\$3,084). Eighteen court cases of terminating deregistered churches remained pending at the end of the year.

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On September 26, following a meeting with Minister of Human Capacities Balog, the Alliance of Evangelical Free Churches and the Hungarian Evangelical Alliance, umbrella organizations for 20-30 unrecognized churches, issued a statement that they would not turn to international forums to seek reinstatement of their previous church status. Representatives of the organizations said that religious freedom was guaranteed for them by the constitution and the relevant law. The organizations told the minister about difficulties caused by changes in the religion law, but welcomed governmental financial support for their faith-based, charity and social welfare activities.

At an October 30 meeting with the MHC, the Council of Recognized Oriental Churches, an umbrella organization for recognized Muslim, Buddhist, and Krishna groups, reportedly reached agreement on regular cooperation with the government. After the meeting, the Hungarian Society for Krishna Consciousness issued a statement declaring that the expression and practice of faith were fully guaranteed for its communities.

From January civil society groups organized a series of demonstrations against the erection of a monument, approved by the cabinet at the end of 2013, to honor the victims of the country's occupation by German forces in 1944. The protesters said the government was attempting to "falsify history" and urged a broad public dialogue on the country's role during World War II (WWII). Government officials rejected the idea that the government was shifting responsibility to Germany for the treatment of Jewish Hungarians during WWII. Despite daily protests at the construction site, the centerpiece statue for the monument was erected in the middle of the night on July 19, without any public announcement, official ceremony, or dedication. On July 21, the prime minister issued a statement specifying the purpose of the monument was to "express the pain and ordeal the Hungarian nation experienced and suffered as a result of losing its freedom." Authorities launched proceedings on three different legal grounds (disobeying lawful police action, vandalism, and illegal graffiti) against approximately 30 protestors. Fifteen demonstrators challenged the police actions in court. Some demonstrators were acquitted by the court, while the cases of others remained pending at the end of the year.

In January the police banned a Day of Honor rally planned for February 11, by the neo-Nazi Hungarian Dawn party on the grounds it could serve to promote Nazi and extremist views.

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On July 2, the Pest Central District Court sentenced a man to one year in prison (suspended for two years) for repeated public denial of the crimes of the Nazi regime. The convicted man displayed on his car a sticker reading “*holokamu*,” which is a combination of the words for Holocaust and scam.

On July 16, the parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee endorsed as ambassador-designate to Italy a controversial writer and journalist who previously had publicly expressed anti-Semitic views, such as describing Jewish people as the “agents of Satan.” Domestic and international Jewish organizations objected to the appointment, and the ambassador-designate withdrew his name from consideration for the post July 25.

On October 15, the state television station appointed a new editor of religious programs who had previously posted racist jokes on her social media webpage and invited UK citizen David Irving, a well-known Holocaust denier, to her show on public media in 2012. On October 21, the heads of the Catholic, Reformed, and Lutheran Churches and of the Jewish community organization MAZSIHISZ sent a joint letter of protest against the appointment, declaring the new editor “unacceptable due to her openly ostracizing and anti-Semitic comments” that made her “unfit and discredited” for managing religious television programs. On October 27, the chief executive of the state television station responded, informing them that religious programs had been removed from the contested editor’s portfolio.

The government continued to process petitions under 2006 legislation allowing compensation claims from individuals whose immediate relatives had been killed in the Holocaust or had performed forced labor due to religious discrimination during WWII. By the end of the year, the government had paid approximately 3.4 billion forints (\$13.1 million) in claims to 2,200 applicants since 2007.

The Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany (“Claims Conference”) completed the distribution of the final portion of a total of 2.75 billion forints (\$10.6 million) allocated for Hungarian Holocaust survivors living outside of the country. The funds derived from a 2007 agreement negotiated by the World Jewish Restitution Organization with the government to pay \$21 million over a five-year period to compensate Holocaust survivors living both inside and outside the country. On August 15, the responsible international auditing firm sent to the Prime Minister’s Office the audited accounting of the Claims Conference’s

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spending, which the government accepted. The Hungarian Jewish Heritage Public Endowment (MAZSOK) had previously completed the distribution of funds designated for survivors living inside the country.

On January 1, for the second consecutive year, the government raised the pension supplement for the approximately 7,090 Holocaust survivors by an average of 50 percent.

The Constantinople Patriarchy Hungarian Exarchy, head of the Hungarian branch of the Greek Orthodox Church, reported it would continue to contest the restitution of a church in Budapest despite its award to the Russian Orthodox Church.

In January the government appointed a historian as director of a new historical research foundation, the Veritas Institute for Historical Research, established by the government in late 2013. He drew domestic and international criticism for a January 17 interview with the National News Agency, where he called the 1941 deportation of 18,000 Jews from Hungary to German-occupied Ukraine a “police action against aliens,” because they did not have Hungarian citizenship. Some 24,000 Jews were massacred by German Nazis in Kamianets-Podilskyi, including 10,000-15,000 deported from Hungary. A member of the Democratic Coalition party filed a complaint against the director for Holocaust denial; however, on June 20, the Budapest Police Headquarters rejected it, based on the lack of evidence of a crime, and the director remained in his position.

The government dedicated the year to commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Holocaust in Hungary. It set up a working committee to determine an agenda for the commemoration, including representatives from the Jewish community and foreign embassies. The president, prime minister, cabinet members, and opposition politicians routinely criticized anti-Semitic incidents, spoke of the culpability of the Hungarian state and its officials for the Holocaust, and attended events commemorating the Holocaust. On January 23, Prime Minister Orban wrote in a letter, published by the press, marking Holocaust Remembrance Day that “the Hungarian Holocaust cannot be regarded as anything other than the tragedy of the whole Hungarian nation.... We cannot and do not tolerate the branding, humiliation, or mistreatment of anybody because of their religion.”

The government-established working committee ceased to function after February 9, when MAZSIHISZ adopted a resolution withdrawing from all participation in central government-sponsored events related to the Holocaust Memorial Year.

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MAZSIHISZ also returned government grants worth 210 million forints (\$809,000) for Memorial Year projects. Thirty-four other Jewish organizations, along with a number of non-Jewish groups, joined MAZSIHISZ in these actions. The MAZSIHISZ resolution set three conditions to resume cooperation with the government: 1) a halt to the German Occupation Monument project; 2) the dismissal of the director of the Veritas Institute; and 3) an increase in consultation and input into the “House of Fates” project.

In March several members of the advisory board for the House of Fates resigned after criticizing the museum’s project director for “inadequate consultations.” Those leaving the board included representatives of MAZSIHISZ and the Yad Vashem Museum. On July 18, the government issued a decree entrusting management of the House of Fates to a foundation led by the project director. On September 9, Minister of the Prime Minister’s Office Janos Lazar promised the exhibit would be opened only if Jewish community representatives approved the content.

Despite the MAZSIHISZ withdrawal from central government-sponsored Holocaust memorial events, the central government organized several events, mostly conferences, during the year. Local governments also organized numerous memorial programs, generally in close cooperation with Jewish groups, including construction of new Holocaust memorials. On April 16, President Ader stated at a Holocaust memorial ceremony that “the murderers were Hungarians, the victims were Hungarians.” On April 28, President Ader joined the annual March of the Living event with thousands commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Hungarian Holocaust at the Nazi death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland.

Visits of school children to the Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Center (HDKE) increased during the year as a result of a 2013 government decree on partial reimbursement of travel expenses for school groups arriving by train to Budapest. As of November 30, the latest date for which information was available, 15,590 school children had visited the museum in Budapest, while a total of 13,849 visited in all of 2013. As of the end of November, 21,417 school children had visited the traveling exhibits of HDKE around the country.

On January 16, the “Jewish Community Roundtable Educational Expert Group” (an ad hoc alliance of 17 Jewish organizations negotiating the portrayal of the Jewish community in educational materials) signed an agreement with the minister of human capacities and the director of the Hungarian Institute for Educational

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Research and Development to change the curriculum to more prominently feature the role of Jews in the country's history and cultural life, as well as information about the State of Israel. The Jewish Expert Group said the revised curriculum published April 29 was a positive step, but criticized the continued inclusion of writers from the WWII era widely considered to be anti-Semitic (including Jozsef Nyiro, Albert Wass, and Dezso Szabo) and passages in history books that they found offensive (such as a passage blaming the Jews for the death of Jesus Christ).

In the spring semester, a new course was introduced at the National University of Public Service entitled the "Background and Social Consequences of Hate-Crimes." It was offered to students enrolled at any of the three faculties (Law Enforcement, Public Administration, and Military Sciences) and held in six three-hour sessions. Twelve students participated in the lecture series and the seminar program, which were based on material developed by TEV. Students also met with Jewish victims of hate speech and a Holocaust survivor.

As of October, 12.4 percent of the country's elementary and secondary schools were operated by recognized churches and 0.1 percent by religious organizations. Eight percent of kindergartens (for ages 3-7) were operated by recognized churches, and 0.2 percent by religious organizations. Approximately 200,000 students studied at kindergartens and elementary and secondary schools operated by religious communities (both recognized churches and religious organizations).

In the 2013-14 school year, 52 percent of first graders chose "faith and ethics" education and 48 percent ethics classes, while 58 percent of fifth graders picked ethics education and 42 percent the faith and ethics curricula. In the 2014-15 school year, 53 percent of first graders, 47 percent of second graders, 40 percent of fifth graders, and 38 percent of sixth graders picked "faith and ethics" education.

On December 17, Minister of the Prime Minister's Office Janos Lazar invited Jewish community leaders to discuss the hate crime situation in Hungary with representatives of the Prosecutor's Services, the National Judiciary Office, the National Police Headquarters, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice. Minister Lazar stated at a press conference after the meeting that the current legislation aimed at preventing and combating anti-Semitic crimes was adequate, but the enforcement of the relevant laws by the police and prosecutors could be improved, and the government would institute measures to improve enforcement.

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The government provided funding to TEV to monitor anti-Semitic incidents in the country and for research projects and other programs aimed at fostering societal commemoration.

In March the MHC and the Hungarian National Committee of UNESCO cohosted a conference on the coexistence of Jewish and Christian communities, “Our Common Future – Our Common Responsibility” in Tihany.

The government provided 52.3 billion forints (\$201.6 million) to recognized churches for a range of activities, including maintenance of church buildings; support for religious instruction, education, and culture; support for church community programs and investments; and wages of church employees. The government continued to provide 91 percent of its total financial support to the Roman Catholic Church, the Hungarian Reformed Church, the Lutheran Church, and the Jewish community, which it considered to be the country’s four “historical” religious groups, an unofficial designation by which the media also referred to these four groups.

In 2013 the MHC granted supplementary operational funding to three religious organizations (MET, the Dzsaj Bhim Buddhist community, and the Christian Family Church Religious Association), effective until the end of August 2017. No other religious association requested a supplementary subsidy from the MHC in 2014.

Supplemental government funding was augmented in fiscal year 2013 by taxpayers contributing 3.8 billion forints (\$14.6 million) to 31 recognized churches that requested listing on tax declaration forms. On 2013 personal income tax return forms, 62 formerly recognized churches that became religious organizations received the allowed 1 percent tax contribution for their work as civil organizations, with total contributions reaching 16.5 million forints (\$63,600). The transfer of the 1 percent donations in fiscal years 2011 and 2012 (worth a total of 85 million forints (\$327,600) to 60 formerly recognized churches that failed to complete the administrative process of eligibility remained pending.

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

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

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Anti-Semitic incidents and public statements, in particular by the Jobbik Party, continued to raise concerns in the Jewish community. A survey conducted by TEV found that approximately one-third of the adult population was prejudiced against Jews.

The police counted four cases of incitement and 48 cases of violence against members of religious, ethnic, racial, or other societal groups; these figures cannot be broken down further. Courts issued 16 convictions for such crimes.

During the first six months of the year, MAZSIHISZ registered 33 incidents of anti-Semitism, including three physical assaults: in April a young Jewish man wearing a Jewish skullcap was beaten in Budapest; in June a group of five people shouted anti-Semitic slurs at a group participating in an organized tour at the Jewish quarter in Budapest, but the police prevented a physical clash between the two groups; also in June, a group of drunken people verbally insulted a young Jewish man on a bus in Budapest and poured beer on him. MAZSIHISZ also reported verbal attacks, property and cemetery desecration, Holocaust denial and revisionism, and biased articles in the media in its list of incidents.

The Brussels Institute, founded by TEV, registered 25 acts of anti-Semitism through October. Besides publishing its monthly findings, TEV provided legal counseling and representation for victims of anti-Semitic incidents. Through October TEV had filed four complaints for incitement against a community (hate speech), 15 for Holocaust denial, and three for using symbols of autocratic regimes. Out of the total of 22 cases filed by TEV, investigative authorities closed seven cases, temporarily suspended 13, and pressed charges at court in two cases of Holocaust denial that remained pending.

On March 8, at a soccer game in Budapest, fans of Ferencvaros Football Club chanted anti-Semitic and other racist slogans. On March 11, the Disciplinary Committee of the Hungarian Football Association ordered the football club to pay a fine of 500,000 forints (\$1,927).

On March 19, TEV released a report, *The Prevalence of Anti-Semitic Prejudice in Contemporary Hungarian Society*, based on a November 2013 survey by the Median Opinion and Market Research Institute, concluding that approximately one-third of the adult population had prejudices against Jews and approximately half of this group (12-20 percent of the total population) could be considered extreme anti-Semites. The survey was conducted via a questionnaire given to a

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sample of 1,200 individuals that was representative of the population over 18 years of age in terms of age, sex, and education level. Comparison with earlier surveys showed the proportion of anti-Semites within the total population peaked in 2010. The anti-Semitic group was composed of more men than their proportional representation in society; members typically belonged to the generation now in its thirties, lived in villages, and were upper middle class. The proportion of extreme anti-Semites among supporters of the Jobbik Party was significantly higher than among supporters of other parties.

In July a Hungarian Calvinist Church court began new proceedings against former Jobbik Member of Parliament and Calvinist pastor Lorant Hegedus, Jr., who had unveiled a bust of WWII leader Miklos Horthy in the vestibule of his church in November 2013.

Expressions of anti-Semitism by political and societal figures prompted strong reactions from the Jewish community as well as from senior members of the government, civil society, and other religious groups. Some Jewish leaders stated the Jobbik Party's continued use of anti-Semitic rhetoric in parliament and in public statements contributed to a public culture condoning anti-Semitism.

Through June the police had registered five cases of disturbing the peace and 50 cases of vandalism of Jewish and Christian religious buildings and cemeteries.

On May 8, a Jewish community leader reported vandalism in the closed Jewish cemetery in Szikszó. The mayor offered a reward of 100,000 forints (\$385) for assistance in identifying the perpetrators. On October 13, the police announced the apprehension of a 21-year-old woman and a 22-year-old man from Arló suspected of the destruction of approximately 50 graves. Reportedly, the two admitted their action without explanation, and the police launched proceedings on the basis of vandalism. The police combined their case with other crimes reportedly committed by the suspects. The case remained pending at the end of the year.

The Christian-Jewish Council, consisting of official representatives of Hungarian Christian churches and Jewish groups, continued to confer every six months. On February 20, the council issued a statement, urging the parties involved in the dispute over the 70th commemoration of the Holocaust to engage in continued dialogue to seek mutually acceptable solutions that could assist in "healing the memories" of the whole society. The council also said the Holocaust Memorial

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Year should be organized in “effective consultation with the representatives of the community most affected by the Holocaust.”

On July 17, the Szeged-Csanad Diocese unveiled a Holocaust monument in Szeged, the first one erected by the Catholic Church in the country.

Christian churches and the Jewish community continued to organize events under the auspices of the Christian-Jewish Society, bringing together religious scholars for discussions. The society organized 81 lectures and cultural events on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, promoting religious tolerance and mutual understanding.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

U.S. embassy officers in numerous meetings with government officials urged that they reconsider the 2011 religion law. In meetings with government officials in October, a visiting official from the Department of State also urged the government to amend those provisions of the religion law that resulted in discrimination against minority religions.

On April 22, the embassy issued a statement urging the government to consult with all segments of society, and especially those most sensitive to Holocaust issues, regarding the government’s plans to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Hungarian Holocaust, citing in particular concern over the government’s failure to meaningfully involve the Jewish community in planning for the House of Fates and the German Occupation Memorial.

The Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues visited Hungary twice. During his first visit in April, he met with government officials to discuss issues in dispute, including the German Occupation Monument, the HDKE, revisions to the National Curriculum and textbooks, and the planned House of Fates Holocaust Museum. He also discussed these issues with representatives of the Jewish community. In July the Special Envoy conferred with government officials regarding Hungary’s 2015 Chairmanship of IHRA.

In April the Special Envoy met with representatives of the Hungarian Jewish communities to solicit their views on the government’s progress toward improving its dialogue with them. He addressed the approximately 20,000 participants in the March of the Living. In support of his visit, the embassy hosted a presentation

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entitled “Holocaust – Crime, Responsibility and Memory” by a Hungarian Fulbright scholar.

In July the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism met with Jewish civil society leaders to discuss their concerns about anti-Semitism and Holocaust commemoration activities. He then met with a government official to discuss the government’s position those issues. He encouraged the government to fulfill its obligation to support the HDKE.

Embassy officers met with leaders of religious organizations to discuss the adverse effects upon them of the 2011 law on religion. Embassy staff maintained close contact with Hungary’s diverse Jewish community to discuss issues surrounding the government’s Holocaust Memorial Year commemorations.

On January 30, the embassy organized a screening and discussion of the documentary “There Was Once,” a film showing a school teacher and her students rediscovering Jewish life that had existed in Kalocsa for centuries and had been destroyed during the Holocaust.

The embassy supported a June visit to Budapest by a director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The director met with Jewish civil society leaders and urged government officials to support the HDKE and include the Jewish community and international Holocaust experts in planning for the House of Fates.

On June 21, as part of the “Yellow Star Houses” project designed to identify and memorialize the houses where Budapest’s Jews were required to live under the mandatory relocations during WWII, the Charge d’Affaires spoke to an audience at the embassy about its role hosting the office of Swiss Consul Carl Lutz, who saved the lives of many of the endangered Budapest Jewish community during the Holocaust.

On July 29, the Charge d’Affaires met with a representative of the American Jewish Committee who also served on the Advisory Board of the House of Fates Holocaust Museum to discuss the efforts to include international Holocaust experts in the advisory board of the House of Fates project.

Embassy officials met with Jewish community leaders in Miskolc in August, Szolnok and Debrecen in September, and Pecs in October to discuss the status of relations between the local Jewish community and the local and national

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governments and review the community's participation in official Holocaust Memorial Year ceremonies.

In September a visiting official from the Department of State met with Jewish civil society leaders to discuss relations between the Jewish communities and the government and to support maintaining a vigorous civil society. In October a visiting official from the Department of State met with leaders of deregistered religious organizations as well as representatives of the officially registered religious community to discuss recognition issues. Another official met with a minority religious community that had lost its official church status to express the U.S. government's support for its efforts to achieve equal treatment with other, recognized religious organizations.

On October 14, the Charge d'Affaires addressed an interfaith conference on the treatment of religious minorities during the Holocaust years, including Jehovah's Witnesses, Nazarenes, and Reform Adventists, in addition to the fate of Hungarian Jews.