

ROMANIA 2014 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws guarantee freedom of religion and include provisions for the protection of minority religious groups. Government restrictions and inaction affected minority religious groups across a broad spectrum of activities, preventing some groups from gaining official recognition and other groups from obtaining the restitution of previously confiscated properties. The Greek Catholic Church, in particular, could not obtain possession of many of its churches after authorities failed to enforce court rulings restituting them. Local officials, often under the influence of Orthodox clergy, continued to hinder the access of non-Orthodox religious groups to cemeteries. Minority religious groups and NGOs were concerned about the government's implementation of the religion curriculum in schools, although they reacted positively to the government's decision forbidding discriminatory statements in religion textbooks. Courts and local authorities responded positively to some requests to remove plaques and memorials to pro-Nazi World War II political figures, but negatively to others. The government continued to implement recommendations of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania and expanded Holocaust education in school curricula.

There were reports of a range of anti-Semitic incidents, including desecrations of synagogues, anti-Semitic sermons by Orthodox priests, Holocaust denials, and events commemorating former pro-Nazi leaders of the Legionnaire Movement. In one well-publicized case, an individual advertised on the internet to sell a lampshade he said had been made from the skin of a Jewish victim of the Holocaust. There were several reports stating Orthodox clergy harassed Greek Catholic clergy and church members. Members of some minority religious groups, including the Greek Catholic Church and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, reported cases of Orthodox priests who forbade the burial of non-Orthodox deceased in denominational cemeteries and public cemeteries. Minority religious groups said the media favored the Orthodox Church and disseminated negative reports about minority religious denominations.

U.S. embassy officials raised concerns with the government about the slow pace of religious property restitution and the importance of full recognition of the Holocaust and improvement in Holocaust education. Embassy representatives and visiting Department of State officials met with leaders of the Greek Catholic Church to discuss Orthodox-Greek Catholic relations and local discrimination

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incidents. Together with Jewish community leaders and organizations, the embassy supported efforts to curb anti-Semitism. Embassy representatives attended events promoting religious tolerance sponsored by Muslim communities.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the population at 21.7 million (July 2014 estimate). According to a 2011 government census, Orthodox adherents (including the Orthodox Serb Bishopric of Timisoara) constitute 86 percent of the population, Roman Catholics 4 to 6 percent, and Greek Catholics less than 1 percent. Other religious groups include Old Rite Russian Christians, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, Bahais, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Zen Buddhists, members of the Family (God's Children), the Unification Church, and the Society for Krishna Consciousness. Atheists and nonbelievers represent less than 1 percent. The Greek Catholic Church challenged the results of the census in 2013, stating they did not reflect the real size of the Greek Catholic community.

Some religious groups are concentrated in particular regions. Old Rite Russian Christians are mainly located in Moldavia and Dobrogea. Most Muslims live in the southeast around Constanta. Most Greek Catholics reside in Transylvania. Protestants and Roman Catholics reside primarily in Transylvania. Orthodox and Greek Catholic ethnic Ukrainians live mostly in the north. Orthodox ethnic Serbs are primarily in Banat. Members of the Armenian Church are concentrated in Moldavia and the south. Virtually all members of the Protestant Reformed, Roman Catholic, Unitarian, and Lutheran Churches from Transylvania are ethnic Hungarians. Approximately half of the Jewish population is in Bucharest.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution guarantees the freedom of religious beliefs. It states all religions are independent from the state and have the freedom to organize "in accordance with their own statutes." The constitution also guarantees religious denominations receive state support, including facilitated access for religious assistance in the army, hospitals, penitentiaries, retirement homes, and orphanages. The law forbids public authorities or private legal entities from asking people to specify their religion.

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The law imposes restrictions on minority religious groups in terms of registration requirements and granting official religion status. The law establishes a three-tier system of recognition: *grupari religioase* (“religious groups”), religious associations, and religions. *Grupari religioase*, as defined by the law, are groups of persons who share the same beliefs. *Grupari religioase* are not legal entities and do not receive tax exemptions or support from the state.

Religious associations are defined as groups of individuals who share and practice the same faith, but are also legal entities and must be registered as such in a religious association registry. To register, religious associations must have 300 citizen members and must submit members’ personal data. The membership requirement for registration of all other types of associations is three members.

Religious associations do not receive government funding but receive limited tax exemptions. The law confers these exemptions “according to the fiscal code;” however, the fiscal code does not address the issue of tax exemptions for religious associations.

Religious associations are eligible to receive “religion” status only after 12 years of continuous activity and a minimum membership of 0.1 percent of the population (approximately 19,000 persons). Since the adoption of these criteria in 2006, the number of religions recognized by the law has remained at 18: the Romanian Orthodox Church, Orthodox Serb Bishopric of Timisoara, Roman Catholic Church, Greek Catholic Church, Old Rite Russian Christian (Orthodox) Church, Reformed (Protestant) Church, Christian Evangelical Church, Romanian Evangelical Church, Evangelical Augustinian Church, Lutheran Evangelical Church, Unitarian Church, Baptist Church, Pentecostal Church, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Armenian Church, Judaism, Islam, and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Groups recognized as religions under the law are eligible for state support based on their proportional representation in the census. They have the right to establish schools, teach religion classes in public schools, receive government funds to build places of worship, partially pay clergy salaries with state funds, broadcast religious programming on radio and television, apply for broadcasting licenses for denominational frequencies, own cemeteries, and receive tax-exempt status.

Under the law, state-provided funding is determined by the number of adherents of each recognized religious community reported in the most recent census and “the

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religion's actual needs," a provision that is left undefined. The Romanian Orthodox Church receives the majority of these funds.

The law entitles the 18 recognized religions to bury, without restriction, their deceased members in cemeteries belonging to other religious groups in localities where they do not have cemeteries of their own and there is no public cemetery.

The government allows only the 18 recognized religions to engage in profit-making activities.

The law provides for the restitution of religious properties confiscated between 1940 and 1989. The Jewish community additionally benefits from a statute restituting ethnic communal property. A 2013 statute extends from five to 10 years the period of time that current occupants are entitled to stay in properties used as hospitals and schools that have been restored to previous owners. The law, however, does not address the return of Greek Catholic churches confiscated by the former Communist government and transferred to the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1948. A separate statute permits the Greek Catholic Church to pursue court action when attempts to obtain restitution of its churches through dialogue with the Orthodox Church are unsuccessful.

The law allows clergy from recognized religious groups to minister to military personnel.

Legislation combating anti-Semitism bans fascist, racist, and xenophobic organizations and punishes the denial of the occurrence of the Holocaust. Public denial of the Holocaust, other genocide, crimes against humanity, and their effects are punishable by fines or prison sentences of six months to five years. The law forbids the promotion of images of people who committed "crimes against peace and mankind," as well as the promotion of fascist, racist, or xenophobic ideologies. The law also forbids the public installation of statues and commemorative plaques for people who committed crimes against peace and mankind, as well as the naming of streets, squares, parks, other public places, and organizations after such individuals.

Public schools conduct religious instruction. The 18 recognized religions are entitled to hold religion classes in public schools. The law entitles students to attend religion classes in their faith irrespective of their number. For students under 18 years of age, parents must request particular religious instruction, and

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starting at the age of 18, students are able to request the religious instruction of their choice. If parents or students do not make specific requests for particular religious instruction, all students are automatically enrolled in Orthodox religious classes. To opt out of religion classes, students must submit requests in writing. There is no defined alternative for students who opt out of religion classes. The constitution and the law also allow the establishment of state-subsidized educational institutions administered by recognized religions.

The law provides for visas allowing persons conducting religious activities to remain in the country under an extended-stay visa, known as *viza de lunga sedere*. Visa requirements include approval by the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs and submission of evidence showing applicants represent religious organizations legally established in the country. Such visas can be extended up to five years.

Government Practices

Government restrictions and inaction affected minority religious groups across a broad spectrum of activities, including preventing them from obtaining the restitution of previously confiscated properties. The Greek Catholic Church, in particular, was unable to obtain restitution of many of its churches and other properties. Jewish groups were concerned about memorials erected with the support or consent of local officials honoring the country's pro-Nazi World War II figures. A number of minority religious groups were concerned over government implementation of laws regarding religion instruction in schools.

Since the implementation of the religion law in 2006, the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs has approved the applications of 21 religious groups to register as religious associations, including one during the year: the Religious Association of the International Union of Pentecostal Churches of Roma. No application for registration as a religious association has been denied.

Many religious groups viewed the membership requirement for a religious association as discriminatory because it is higher than for other types of associations. Religious groups without religion status, such as the Bahais, also continued to criticize as discriminatory the minimum membership requirement for acquiring religion status. Bahai representatives said the number of adherents of some recognized religions was much lower than the 0.1 percent of the population required by the law and advocated amending this provision of the religion law so

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the required number of members would be equal to that of the recognized religion with the lowest number of members.

Bahai leaders stated that, because the Bahai Faith did not have formal religion status, the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs did not notify its leadership about the secretariat's consultations with recognized religions regarding proposed amendments to legislation affecting religious affairs. The Bahais called the situation highly discriminatory. Bahai leaders emphasized the need to amend the religion law to include provisions for the burial of people who are not Orthodox or do not belong to one of the recognized religions.

In many cases, minority religious groups were unable to gain restitution of confiscated properties in accordance with the law. Claimants said some local authorities opposed restitution or consistently delayed providing information about claimed properties to the Special Restitution Commission (SRC) of the National Authority for Property Restitution (ANRP), thereby obstructing the restitution process despite laws stipulating fines for such delays. The ANRP had received 14,814 applications for property restitution from recognized religious groups during the filing period and had approved or rejected 5,026 of them, as of the end of August. Through the end of the year, the SRC had held only five meetings, approved the restitution of 27 buildings to religious denominations, and rejected 88 other claims.

Courts delayed hearings on many restitution lawsuits filed by the Greek Catholic Church, and asked the Greek Catholic Church, as the plaintiff, to pay judicial fees, a requirement not consistent with the law. The Orthodox Church often filed appeals or change of venue requests that delayed resolution of some lawsuits. In a number of cases, courts ruled against the restitution of Greek Catholic churches, although the Greek Catholic Church had produced ownership deeds, on the grounds that the Greek Catholic Church had a smaller number of adherents than did the Orthodox Church.

In October in Salonta, following eight years of litigation, the High Court of Cassation and Justice rejected the Greek Catholic Church's request for restitution of its former church on the grounds that the number of Orthodox Church members was larger and their desires should be taken into consideration.

In April the Greek Catholic Church resumed the use of a church in Radesti after winning a 20-year-long lawsuit.

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Representatives of the Greek Catholic Church stated that local officials continued to support the Orthodox Church in restitution cases involving the two churches and discriminated against the Greek Catholic Church. On May 7, the Greek Catholic Church again attempted to obtain enforcement of an earlier final court ruling restoring to it buildings and land belonging to a monastery in Bixad, in Satu Mare County. The Orthodox Church obtained an injunction from the court in Negresti Oas suspending enforcement of the ruling. In addition, the Satu Mare County Council continued to claim ownership of one of the buildings in a lawsuit and, according to the Greek Catholic Church, harassed and pressured the Greek Catholic Church's lawyer in an attempt to remove him from the case.

The government continued to refuse to return to the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church a building housing the Batthyaneum Library and an astronomical institute, despite a 16-year-old government emergency order restituting the building and a 2012 ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ordering the government to remedy the situation.

On November 26, the Ploiesti Court of Appeal ruled to renationalize a school previously restituted to the Hungarian Reformed Church in 2002, and sentenced three members of the restitution commission to three-year suspended sentences for aggravated abuse of office against the public interest. The ruling stated the school had not belonged to the Reformed Church, despite Communist confiscation documents citing the church as the owner.

The Greek Catholic Church reported local authorities did not grant construction permits for places of worship, although church officials stated they were given no legal grounds for refusing. In Sapanta, the Greek Catholic Church continued unsuccessfully to try to obtain a construction permit for a new church on land purchased in 2003. The Greek Catholics stated they attributed the authorities' refusal to grant the construction permit to pressure from the Orthodox Church.

Local authorities continued to refuse to enforce final court rulings providing restitution to the Greek Catholic Church of churches in Casva and Lupsa. Local authorities also failed to enforce court rulings restoring land to the Greek Catholic Church in Valcau de Jos, Sapanta, Poieni, Morlaca, Bologna, Salonta, and other localities.

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Non-Orthodox religious groups continued to face difficulty in accessing cemeteries and in obtaining land to establish cemeteries. In Pesceana, authorities and local Orthodox priests continued to deny access to the local public cemetery to Greek Catholic priests and community members despite a 2006 court ruling allowing them access and a complaint made to the ECHR in 2007. The Orthodox Church, seeking to become the owner of the cemetery, initiated a local lawsuit in 2012. Similarly, local authorities and the Orthodox Church continued to deny to the Greek Catholic Church access to the cemetery in Sapanta.

A new law on cemeteries was scheduled to go into effect October 9, but in answer to a request by the Orthodox Church, parliament postponed implementation until October 2015. The Orthodox Church publicly stated the law was “faulty and ambiguous” and did not provide an adequate legal framework for the establishment of private cemeteries or the establishment of separate confessional sectors in existing cemeteries.

In August the government earmarked six million lei (\$1.6 million) from its special reserve fund for the Orthodox Church, directing funds to two monasteries and the Iasi-based Eparchy Center.

Ministry of Justice regulations provided for unrestricted access by recognized religions and religious associations to any type of detention facilities, even if their assistance was not requested specifically. The regulations also prohibited interference by the management of penitentiaries with religious programs.

According to several religious groups, all military chaplains were Orthodox priests with the exception of one Roman Catholic priest and one pastor from the Evangelical Alliance.

According to media reports, in February the inspector for religion of the Gorj County School Inspectorate asked religion teachers to collect information about “neo-Protestant” religious adherents in their schools, including the number of non-Orthodox families, the names of non-Orthodox ministers, the extent of their proselytizing activities, and any efforts by parish priests to discourage those activities. While the law forbids public authorities from asking people to specify their religion, the school inspector stated he had asked for the information in his official capacity and at the request of the Orthodox metropolitanate in order to better cooperate with non-Orthodox denominations. Following criticism from

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several quarters, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the inspector resigned.

In February the Secular Humanist Association (ASUR) reported that even when parents or students opted out of religion class, in practice students were forced to attend the class because schools provided no alternative, despite the provisions of the law. The ASUR also stated it had received reports of harassment of children who opted out of Orthodox religion classes by religion teachers and local school authorities.

The Greek Catholic Church reported Orthodox religion teachers harassed Greek Catholic children, who had to stay in the classroom during the Orthodox religion class because religious instruction in their faith was not available.

In May eleven nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) addressed an open letter to the Ministry of National Education (MEN) requesting civil society participation in assessing the content of school textbooks, with particular attention to religion textbooks. They said the involvement of only some religious denominations in the assessment process raised questions about its transparency. The NGOs said religious textbooks produced in this manner promoted discriminatory attitudes and incited hatred, such as teaching children they should not play with children who were of a different faith or of no faith. Later in May the MEN adopted a new set of criteria for the assessment of religion textbooks, including a provision forbidding statements discriminating against other denominations or advocating religious hostility. The NGOs praised this provision, but added it was insufficient.

On November 12, the Constitutional Court ruled unconstitutional the requirement for students to opt out of mandatory religion classes by submitting a written application. The court's decision said students should be required to opt into religion classes, but per the constitution, left further action to change the law up to the parliament. As of the end of the year, awaiting the official publication of the court's decision, the parliament had taken no action.

Minority religious groups, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Greek Catholic Church, continued to report that authorities generally allowed only the Orthodox Church an active role in annual opening ceremonies at schools and other community events and, in most cases, did not invite other religious groups to attend such ceremonies. Greek Catholic priests from Transylvania continued to report they were never invited to official local events.

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Mormon representatives noted an improved attitude toward their Church, particularly in interactions with police.

In March the Elie Wiesel Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania (Wiesel Institute) urged the mayor of Bucharest Sector 5 to remove a street sign naming a square after General Gheorghe Cantacuzino, the president of the inter-war, pro-fascist All for the Country Party. In August the mayor of Sector 5 removed the plaque, saying it had not been installed by his office.

In May, pursuant to a complaint from the Wiesel Institute, the Bucharest Tribunal Court issued a ruling disbanding the All for the Country political party, reportedly because of its pro-fascist doctrine and its use of symbols originating from the fascist, xenophobic, and anti-Semitic Legionnaire Movement of the 1930s. The ruling could be appealed.

In June a plaque commemorating members of the Legionnaire Movement was installed in a high school in Sighetu Marmatiei, Maramures County. At the request of the Wiesel Institute, the plaque was removed one week later.

The local council in Baia Sprie, Maramures County denied the Wiesel Institute's request to withdraw the honorary citizenship it had granted to a Holocaust-denier in 2013. The local councils of six other localities granted honorary citizenship to the same Holocaust-denier, the late Orthodox monk Justin Parvu.

Although the law forbids the promotion of the image of individuals who committed crimes against "mankind and peace," the mayor of Tirgoviste continued to refuse to cancel the title of honorary citizen given to Marshal Ion Antonescu, the country's pro-Nazi leader during World War II, who was executed as a war criminal responsible for the murder of 280,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews.

The mayor of Bucharest continued to refuse to enforce a 2013 "final" court ruling to demolish an illegally constructed office tower next to the Roman Catholic cathedral. According to the ruling, the tower was deemed a risk to the physical integrity of the cathedral. In June the Roman Catholic Church filed complaints with the ECHR and the National Anticorruption Directorate, accusing the public servants in the mayor's office of corruption and obstruction of justice. In July the Roman Catholic Church sent its 20th letter to President Basescu, asking for his support for the demolition of the building.

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On September 7, Prime Minister Victor Ponta reportedly said on a TV talk show that the impact of President Basescu's 10 years in office was "similar to that of the Nazi regime on Germany." Domestic and foreign politicians, civil society representatives, diplomats, the Federation of the Romanian Jewish Communities (FCER), and the Wiesel Institute issued statements critical of Ponta's remarks. ActiveWatch, a human rights NGO, filed a complaint with the National Antidiscrimination Council (CNCD), saying Ponta had implicitly denied the Holocaust and trivialized Nazi crimes. On September 24, the CNCD decided the statement was within the limits of the freedom of expression.

During the presidential campaign that ran from October to November, Prime Minister Victor Ponta, while speaking as a presidential candidate, said he belonged to the majority Orthodox faith in comparison to Klaus Iohannis, one of his opponents who was an ethnic German and whom he described as "neo-Protestant." Iohannis belonged to the Evangelical Church of Augustan Faith. Electoral fliers saying "We vote for Ponta for everyone's good, we vote for a true believer, not for a neo-Protestant" were distributed in some areas.

The government continued to implement the recommendations of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania (Wiesel Commission) Report and to cooperate with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in promoting Holocaust education in school curricula. The MEN provided written materials and maintained a website with a guide for teaching about the Holocaust. The government commemorated National Holocaust Remembrance Day with a series of events October 8, including a wreath-laying ceremony at the Holocaust Memorial in Bucharest and a commemorative session of the parliament.

The government expanded teaching about the Holocaust, including it in history courses in the seventh, ninth, 11th, and 12th grades. The MEN sponsored national and international seminars on teaching Holocaust history, as well as a national school competition on "the Memory of Holocaust," and provided additional educational resources to combat anti-Semitism. In March the Bucharest School Inspectorate and the Wiesel Institute sponsored a seminar regarding the teaching of the Holocaust for 150 teachers, with the participation of representatives of the Washington-based Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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

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Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were reports of a range of anti-Semitic incidents, including desecrations of synagogues, anti-Semitic sermons by Orthodox priests, Holocaust denials, and commemorations of former pro-Nazi Legionnaire leaders. In one well-publicized case, an individual advertised on the internet to sell a lampshade he said had been made from the skin of a Jewish victim of the Holocaust. Orthodox clergy reportedly harassed Greek Catholic clergy and church members and denied minority religious groups' access to cemeteries. Minority religious groups said the media favored the Orthodox Church and disseminated negative reports about minority religious denominations.

In June unidentified individuals threw stones and broke the windows of a synagogue in Ploiesti. In Sighisoara, an unidentified individual threw a Molotov cocktail into a former synagogue housing a Jewish cultural center. The authorities started investigations in both cases.

The Orthodox Church continued to demolish former Greek Catholic churches or modified them to remake them in the Orthodox style, including in Sapanta and Salonta.

In many rural localities with two churches, where at least one of them had been Greek Catholic before Communist era confiscation, the Orthodox Church reportedly did not allow the Greek Catholic Church to use either place of worship.

The Greek Catholic Church continued to report that in many localities, particularly in rural areas, Orthodox priests harassed and intimidated its members and encouraged Orthodox Church members to threaten them in order to prevent people from joining the Greek Catholic Church. In the village of Vintere, Bihor County, where Orthodox and Greek Catholic priests alternate religious services in the former Greek Catholic church, Orthodox Church members waiting to enter the church for their service used offensive language toward the Greek Catholics as they departed from their Mass. In September the local Greek Catholic priest asked the head of the Bihor County police to intervene and try to defuse tensions.

According to members of the Greek Catholic Church, Orthodox priests tried to intimidate people from joining the Greek Catholic Church in Caianul Mic and

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Spermezeu in Bistrita Nasaud County and did not allow church bells to toll for deceased Greek Catholics.

Although the law allowed religious groups access to cemeteries belonging to other churches, Orthodox priests denied minority religious groups access to cemeteries in some places. Across the country, members of some minority religious groups, including the Greek Catholic Church and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, reported Orthodox priests would not allow the burial of non-Orthodox deceased in denominational cemeteries or in public cemeteries (often treated as denominational by Orthodox priests) unless certain conditions were met: the burials had to take place in isolated sections of the cemetery, or Orthodox religious services had to be used in the burials. On September 6, an Orthodox priest refused to allow the burial of an Adventist adherent in the public cemetery in Costesti, Arges County, reportedly because the cemetery belonged to the Orthodox Church. Along with a group of Orthodox Church members, the priest reportedly disrupted the Adventist religious service taking place at the home of the deceased. The Adventists called police and reported the officers were hesitant and reluctant to engage with both the Orthodox priest and Orthodox Church members. The police failed to resolve the problem and the religious service could not be completed at the home. In Palici, Buzau County, and Cazaci, Dambovita County, Adventists had to be buried in the cemeteries in neighboring localities because of the local Orthodox priests' refusal to allow their burial in the local public cemeteries.

According to the Greek Catholic Church, Orthodox clergy did not allow the burial of Greek Catholics in public cemeteries in Salva and Borleasa, Bistrita Nasaud County.

Mormon representatives reported a private owner in Bucharest refused to rent an office space to the organization on the grounds of its religion.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church stated private employers frequently refused to hire Seventh-day Adventists.

The Wiesel Institute continued to educate the general public regarding the Holocaust. Many politicians from major parties continued to publicly denounce anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial.

Participants in television talk shows and in internet discussions expressed anti-Semitic views and attitudes. The Center for Monitoring Anti-Semitism in

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Romania (MCA Romania) and the Wiesel Institute continued to urge authorities to enforce existing legislation against anti-Semitism. Printed and online publications linked to extremist organizations, including the Greater Romania Party, published anti-Semitic articles. The New Right movement and similar organizations and associations promoted the ideas of the Iron Guard, a para-military arm of the Legionnaire Movement, in the media and on the internet.

On May 27 and June 21, an Orthodox monk made anti-Semitic statements during religious services at Petru-Voda monastery and during a religious service to celebrate the 87th anniversary of the Legionnaire Movement in Ciolpani. He said former Prime Minister Petre Roman had lifted the ban on abortion because “he is a Jew, and Jews want to annihilate us.” He also said the “Legionnaire Movement was the work of the Holy Spirit.” The Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania, the Wiesel Institute, and MCA Romania urged the Orthodox Church and the authorities to impose sanctions on the monk. The Orthodox Church rejected accusations its clergy were preaching anti-Semitism and said it asked the monk’s supervisors to take measures against him.

In August Antena 1 TV broadcast a news item regarding an internet advertisement in which an unidentified person living in Targu Jiu offered a lampshade he said had been made from the skin of a Jewish victim of the Holocaust, for the price of 20,000 Euro (\$24,000). During a telephone interview with journalists, the seller stated he had a certificate authenticating the lamp was human skin and not cowhide. He also said he had two additional lampshades made of the skin of Jewish individuals for sale. MCA Romania filed a complaint with the Police Inspectorate of Gorj County for trafficking in human organs. Police began an investigation, about which no further information was available at the end of the year.

Nationalist organizations, including the New Right Organization, the Professor George Manu Foundation, the Legionnaire Movement, and the All for the Country Party, held public events with anti-Semitic themes and continued to sponsor religious services, symposia, and marches commemorating leaders of the Legionnaire Movement such as Horia Sima and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. Such events took place in Sibiu, Sibiu County; Alba Iulia, Alba County; Tandarei, Ialomita County; Fetea, Mures County; Ciolpani, and Bucharest.

Minority religious groups said the Orthodox Church was treated as the national church, although it did not formally have this status. In public speeches, some

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politicians and the media equated Romanian Orthodoxy with Romanian national identity, suggesting followers of other religions lacked patriotism. The Seventh-day Adventist Church reported media used offensive language when discussing minority religious communities and, in many cases, refused their right to rebuttal. Media reports often mentioned the minority religious affiliation of people who had committed criminal acts.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church said minority religions did not have access to the national media. Meetings of political leaders with Orthodox Church representatives or the participation of politicians in Orthodox religious events enjoyed significant media coverage, according to the Seventh-day Adventists. Political leaders, the Adventists said, avoided public appearances alongside representatives of minority religions.

The media reported an Orthodox priest in the locality of Feldru accused the local mayor, who was of Pentecostal faith, of organizing the “days of the locality” in order to proselytize.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

U.S. embassy officials continued to raise concerns with the government about the slow pace of religious property restitution, particularly properties belonging to the Greek Catholic and historical Hungarian Churches. Embassy representatives and visiting U.S. government officials continued to discuss with government officials the importance of full official recognition of the Holocaust in the country, improvements in Holocaust education, and complete implementation of the 2004 recommendations of the Wiesel Commission.

Embassy representatives and visiting U.S. Department of State officials met regularly with leaders of the Greek Catholic Church to discuss Orthodox-Greek Catholic relations, local discrimination incidents, and relations with the national government. Embassy officials met regularly with Muslim and Jewish community leaders to discuss promoting tolerance and curbing anti-Semitism.

In March embassy representatives attended Holocaust teacher training workshops in Bacau and selected two high school teachers to participate in week-long Holocaust teacher training in the United States.

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In September the embassy sponsored an event dedicated to freedom of religion to recognize the wide variety of religions present in the country and to promote religious tolerance and freedom.

On October 7, embassy representatives attended events promoting religious tolerance sponsored by the Islamic community in Constanta on the last day of the Feast of Sacrifice. An embassy official delivered a speech and took part in an interview with local media, advocating religious tolerance and emphasizing the importance of allowing each religion to perform its rites and rituals.

The Charge d'Affaires and other embassy representatives participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the National Holocaust Memorial and attended and addressed a session of the parliament to commemorate National Holocaust Remembrance Day, October 8. Embassy representatives took part in other commemorative events, including the opening of an exhibit and a conference about the Holocaust in the country.

The embassy supported the activities of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in its efforts to access the Romanian National Archives and to further Holocaust education by making arrangements and supplying logistics for the meetings of representatives of the museum with government officials.