

BRAZIL 2020 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

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 religion. According to media reports, a military officer threatened an Afro-Brazilian religious group multiple times, including with weapons. In July, media outlets reported an electrician would press charges against the mayor of Belford Roxo in Rio de Janeiro State because the mayor's staff threatened him and made derogatory statements about his Afro-Brazilian Candomble religion. The city government later apologized. On July 31, a Sao Paulo court awarded custody of a 12-year-old girl to her maternal Christian grandmother, removing the girl from her mother, who had supported her daughter's choice to practice Candomble. In an August 14 appeal decision, the court restored custody to the mother. During the year, high level government officials made public remarks that religious minorities considered derogatory. In January, President Jair Bolsonaro dismissed Culture Minister Roberto Alvim after Alvim included in remarks excerpts from a speech by Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels. In October, the Santa Catarina Liberal Party leadership removed a history professor from its candidate list for a local town council election in Pomerode due to his association with neo-Nazi symbols and for not being ideologically aligned with the party. In February, in response to attacks on Afro-Brazilian religious places of worship, known as *terreiros*, the municipal government in Baixada Fluminense, Rio de Janeiro State, inaugurated the Center for Assistance to Victims of Religious Intolerance to support victims of religious intolerance in the region. On January 21, municipalities throughout the country commemorated the National Day to Combat Religious Intolerance. In May, the Sao Paulo Legislative Assembly held the Sao Paulo State Religious Freedom Week, a series of virtual meetings to promote freedom of religion and tolerance.

According to national human rights hotline data and other sources, societal respect for practitioners of minority religions continued to be weak, and violent attacks on terreiros continued. Although less than two percent of the population followed Afro-Brazilian religions, 17 percent of the cases registered by the human rights hotline during the first six months of 2019 involved victims who were practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions, down from 30 percent the previous year. According to the National Secretariat of Human Rights of the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights, the national human rights hotline received 410 reports of religious intolerance in 2019, compared with 506 in 2018. Media reported individuals set

fire to, bombed, and destroyed Afro-Brazilian places of worship, sometimes injuring or threatening worshippers. From January to August, the Jewish Federation of Sao Paulo recorded 149 incidents and allegations of anti-Semitism in the country in its annual Anti-Semitism Report. A global survey released in June by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) showed that the percentage of Brazilians who harbor some anti-Jewish sentiment increased from 19 percent in 2019 to 26 percent in 2020. Authorities investigated the physical assault on a Jewish man in rural Sao Paulo in February. Three attackers shouted anti-Semitic offenses while they beat the victim and cut his *kippah* with a knife. Media and religious organizations reported increased accounts of hate speech directed at religious minorities on social media and the internet, in particular anti-Afro-Brazilian and anti-Semitic comments. On December 13, Rio de Janeiro Mayor Marcelo Crivella inaugurated the Monument in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. Religious organizations hosted interfaith community events, including the 11th Annual Walk against Religious Intolerance in Salvador, Bahia, which drew approximately five thousand Candomble followers.

In October, the Ambassador met with the Minister of Women, Family, and Human Rights. In September, embassy representatives met with the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights' Secretariat of Global Protection to discuss the importance of religious freedom. On September 1, the Ambassador met virtually with the President of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops. In July, the embassy and consulates held an interfaith virtual roundtable to discuss the state of religious freedom, tolerance, and diversity in the country. In July, a representative from the consulate in Rio de Janeiro met with a representative of the local nongovernmental organization (NGO) Jewish Federation of Rio de Janeiro (FIERJ) to discuss challenges faced by the Jewish community in Rio de Janeiro and cases of anti-Semitism in the state. A consulate representative met with Candomble priest and head of the Commission to Combat Religious Intolerance (CCIR) Ivanir dos Santos to learn about the challenges faced within the Candomble community due to the COVID-19 pandemic, new cases of religious intolerance involving followers of Afro-Brazilian religions, and possible areas in which the United States could serve as a partner for promoting religious freedom. In August, the embassy held a virtual roundtable with four speakers, including a representative of an Afro-Brazilian community known as a *quilombo* (founded by runaway slaves), who discussed the challenges for members of the community who participate in religious events in the terreiro. The Rio de Janeiro Consul General wrote an op-ed in honor of the August 22 International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief, published by Bahia newspaper *Correio*. On October 8, embassy representatives hosted a roundtable with representatives

from three religious faiths and two interfaith organization representatives to discuss the state of religious freedom in the country and raise concerns regarding attacks on religious minorities.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 211.7 million (midyear 2019 estimate). According to a 2019 Datafolha survey, 50 percent of the population identifies as Roman 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. Two percent practice Afro-Brazilian religions, and three percent are Spiritists. According to the 2010 census, which is the most recently available data from official sources, 65 percent of the population is Catholic, 22 percent Protestant, eight percent irreligious (including atheists, agnostics, and deists), and two percent Spiritist. Adherents of other Christian groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Seventh-day Adventists, as well as followers of non-Christian religions, including Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Afro-Brazilian and syncretic religious groups, such as Candomble and Umbanda, make up a combined three percent of the population. According to the census, there are approximately 600,000 practitioners of Candomble, Umbanda, and other Afro-Brazilian religions, and some Christians also practice Candomble and Umbanda. According to recent surveys, many Brazilians 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 Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba, and Foz do Iguacu, as well as in smaller cities in the states of Parana and Rio Grande do Sul.

According to the Jewish Confederation of Brazil, there are approximately 125,000 Jews in the country. The two largest concentrations are 65,000 in Sao Paulo State and 33,000 in Rio de Janeiro State.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution states freedom of conscience and belief is inviolable, and the free exercise of religious beliefs is guaranteed. The constitution prohibits the 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 held 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 Department of Federal Revenue 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. 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. By law, the instruction must be nondenominational and conducted without proselytizing, and alternative instruction for students who do not want to participate must be available. 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 when their faith prohibits such activities. The law guarantees the right of students to express their religious beliefs and mandates that schools provide alternatives, including taking replacement exams or makeup classes.

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 Sao Paulo State law establishes administrative sanctions for individuals and organizations engaging in religious intolerance. Punishment ranges from a warning letter to fines of up to 82,000 *reais* (\$15,800); the increase reflects changes in the law.

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

Government Practices

In March, media reported that the Rio Grande do Sul Public Defender's Center for the Defense of Human Rights opened an investigation of reports of religious intolerance against an Afro-Brazilian religious group located in a suburb of Porto Alegre. According to media reports, a military police officer threatened the followers multiple times, including with weapons. The reports stated that he and several other persons drove vehicles into the middle of the group's religious celebrations. The incident was referred to the military police to evaluate the officer's conduct. The case was pending at year's end.

In July, media outlets reported electrician Wanderson Fernandes said he would press charges against the mayor of Belford Roxo in Rio de Janeiro for religious intolerance. According to Fernandes, the mayor's staff deliberately destroyed a sidewalk in front of a Candomble temple, made derogatory statements about his religion, and verbally threatened him in the mayor's presence for criticizing the mayor's policies. In July, the Federal Prosecutor's Office sent a formal request to the mayor to provide his version of events. According to Fernandes, the Belford Roxo city government repaired the sidewalk and formally apologized for the incident.

On July 31, a Sao Paulo court awarded custody of a 12-year-old girl to her maternal Christian grandmother, removing the girl from her mother, who had supported her daughter's choice to practice Candomble. The grandmother filed for custody, stating the child faced physical and psychological harm after the mother shaved her daughter's head for a Candomble religious ceremony. Although court documents were not publicly available due to the minor status of the child, media reported authorities found no evidence of physical or psychological harm and the girl said Candomble was her religion of choice. In an August 14 appeal decision, the court returned custody to the mother.

According to the Brazilian Federation of Muslim Associations (FAMBRAS), women said they faced difficulties in being allowed to wear Islamic head coverings

such as the hijab when going through security in airports and other public buildings.

In June, several media outlets published a video recording of Palmares Foundation President Sergio Camargo verbally harassing a religious leader and coordinator for promoting policies and protection of religious diversity. The Palmares Foundation is a public institution connected to the Ministry of Culture that promotes Afro-Brazilian art and culture. Mae Baiana, the religious leader, filed a complaint with the Federal District police department specializing in hate crimes based on religion. The federal police opened an investigation of the case.

Prominent Jewish organizations publicly stated their outrage at what they considered anti-Semitic comments made by high level government officials. In May, former Minister of Education Abraham Weintraub compared a Federal Police operation against fake news to Kristallnacht. Multiple Jewish organizations condemned the comparison, and the Israeli embassy in Brasilia posted on Twitter, “There has been an increase in the use of the Holocaust in public speeches in a way that belittles its memory and this tragedy that happened to the Jewish people.” The same month, on his personal blog, Foreign Minister Ernesto Araujo criticized COVID-related stay-at-home orders by comparing them to a Nazi concentration camp. Multiple Jewish organizations condemned Araujo’s statements as inappropriate and disrespectful. In a series of tweets responding to the criticism, Araujo publicly rejected anti-Semitism and stated his comments were taken out of context. During the year, Araujo spoke out regarding the importance of religious freedom. On November 16, at the 2020 Ministerial to Advance Freedom of Religion or Belief, he stated, “Religious freedom should not be an afterthought. Religious freedom is essential to freedom as a whole.” By year’s end, there was no official investigation into comments that were alleged to be anti-Semitic.

Also in May, the President of the Brazilian Jewish Confederation objected to President Bolsonaro’s use of the slogan “Work, unity, and truth will set Brazil free,” noting its similarity to the Nazi inscription at the entrance to the Auschwitz concentration camp: “Arbeit macht frei” (“Work will set you free”). Supporters of Bolsonaro said the slogan was based on a New Testament passage: “And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

In January, President Bolsonaro dismissed Culture Minister Roberto Alvim after Alvim included in remarks excerpts from a speech by Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels. Referring to his decision to remove Alvim, Bolsonaro stated, “I reiterate our rejection of totalitarian and genocidal ideologies, as well as any kind

of explanation for them. We also express our full and unrestricted support for the Jewish community, of which we are friends and share common values.”

In October, the Santa Catarina Liberal Party leadership removed history professor Wandercy Pugliesi from its candidate list for a local town council election in Pomerode due to his association with neo-Nazi symbols and for not being ideologically aligned with the party. Pugliesi had a large, tiled swastika symbol in his personal pool and named his son Adolf; police seized Nazi-related materials from him in 1994. Fernando Lottenberg, President of the Brazilian Jewish Confederation, praised Pugliesi’s removal. The local Santa Catarina Jewish Federation’s President called Pugliesi’s actions “appalling and regrettable.”

The NGO Center for Articulation of Marginalized Populations (CEAP) reported Afro-Brazilian victims of religious intolerance in Rio de Janeiro State continued to view police and the judiciary as being indifferent, in general, to attacks on Afro-Brazilian places of worship. It cited what it said were a lack of investigations and arrests in these cases. In response to attacks on Afro-Brazilian religious places of worship, the municipal government in Baixada Fluminense, Rio de Janeiro, inaugurated a new building in February that housed the Center for Assistance to Victims of Religious Intolerance. The center offered professional legal, psychological, and social assistance to support victims of religious intolerance in the region.

In July, Sao Paulo State increased sanctions for engaging in religious intolerance. Punishments range from a warning letter to fines of up to 82,000 reais (\$15,800).

In November, during the International Religious Freedom Ministerial hosted by Poland, Foreign Affairs Minister Araujo stated his government’s commitment to protecting religious freedom at home and abroad and announced Brazil would host the 2021 ministerial.

On January 21, municipalities around the country commemorated the National Day to Combat Religious Intolerance. The CCIR and CEAP organized a series of seminars and debates at Rio de Janeiro’s Federal Justice Cultural Center to discuss respect for, and tolerance of, religious diversity, including countering religious persecution against practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions. Also on January 21 in Sao Paulo State, the city of Sao Carlos’ Human Rights Department held a film screening, followed by a discussion of different actions that could be taken to address religious intolerance. Officials from the Department of Human Rights of

the Municipal Secretary of Citizenship and Social Assistance organized and attended the event.

During the year, the Inter-Religious Forum for a Culture of Peace and Freedom of Faith, an entity of the Sao Paulo State Secretary of Justice and Citizenship with representatives from 22 religious groups, established a partnership with the Sao Paulo Court of Justice to create a panel to mediate and resolve religious conflicts. COVID-19 restrictions delayed the formation of the panel.

In May, the Sao Paulo Legislative Assembly held the Sao Paulo State Religious Freedom Week, a series of virtual meetings to promote freedom of religion and tolerance. Governor Joao Doria opened the first meeting, an International Forum of Religious Freedom and Citizenship, saying, “The ability to coexist with differences is what makes the world happier and a better place to live in. Now, more than ever, we need dialogue, understanding, and union.” State Deputy Damares Moura, President of the State Parliamentary Group for Religious Freedom, organized the event; an estimated 7,000 persons participated.

The CCIR and CEAP launched a series of events to coincide with the 13th observance of the Walk Against Religious Intolerance in Rio. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CCIR organized virtual seminars and debates from August 27 to September 27. Activities convened participants from various faiths to discuss challenges to religious intolerance and call attention to crimes of religious intolerance.

On December 13, Rio de Janeiro Mayor Crivella inaugurated the Monument in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. Acting Governor Claudio Castro said, “The inauguration of this monument sends an important message of respect, love, and tolerance that is fundamental for today’s society.” The memorial, which organizers began planning in 2017, was the result of a partnership between the municipal government, the Brazilian-Jewish community, and private donors. Prominent national and regional leaders, many from the Brazilian-Jewish and evangelical Christian communities, delivered remarks emphasizing their commitment to preserving the memory of Holocaust victims and solidarity with the Jewish people and Israel. Supreme Court Justice Luiz Fux said, “This memorial is so that we do not suffer from the vice of indifference and also to express our indignation at the Holocaust.” Plans for the monument include a small museum and cultural space to be used for Holocaust education activities and programming.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Although less than two percent of the population followed Afro-Brazilian religions, a disproportionate amount of the cases registered by the human rights hotline involved victims who were practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions; 17 percent of the cases registered by the human rights hotline during the first six months of 2019 involved victims who were practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions, down from 30 percent the previous year. Media reported multiple incidents in which individuals and groups destroyed terreiros and sacred objects.

Some religious leaders again stated that attacks on Afro-Brazilian religious groups were increasing, attributing the increase in violence to criminal groups and a climate of intolerance promoted by evangelical Christian groups.

In February, several media outlets reported neighbors bombed a local Umbanda terreiro in Riberao Preto, Sao Paulo. According to witness statements to police, near the end of religious services, an individual threw a homemade bomb into the terreiro. When the adherents fled the premises, approximately 30 persons, mostly from the surrounding neighborhood, assaulted and injured some of the practitioners while shouting epithets. The Inter-Religious Forum for a Culture of Peace and Freedom of Faith initiated an investigation, but the victims withdrew their accusations.

In February, three men assaulted a 57-year-old Jewish man in rural Sao Paulo State. The men shouted anti-Semitic epithets, including, “Hitler should have killed the Jews and freed the world” during the beating, cut the victim’s kippah with a pocketknife, and broke some of his teeth. At year’s end, police were investigating the case but had not identified the attackers.

According to media reports, on September 6, unidentified individuals set fire to an Umbanda temple in the municipality of Nova Iguacu, in the Baixada Fluminense region of Rio de Janeiro State. Religious leader Emilson Furtado filed a complaint with Rio de Janeiro’s Civil Police Office for Racial Crimes and Crimes of Intolerance. At year’s end, police continued to investigate the case.

In July, media reported a self-described evangelical drug lord calling himself “Aaron, brother of Moses” seized control of five favela communities in northern Rio de Janeiro to establish a zone called the “Complex of Israel.” Media reported that “Aaron” replaced Catholic symbols with Israeli flags and the Star of David as a demonstration of power, territorial control, and faith. The President of the Rio de Janeiro Jewish Federation gave an interview to the news outlet *Rede Globo* in July

condemning the inappropriate use of Jewish symbols. Police identified “Aaron,” but at year’s end, they had not made an arrest.

Police concluded their investigation of a 2019 incident in which self-named Drug Traffickers for Jesus reportedly attacked a Candomble temple in the Parque Paulista neighborhood of Duque de Caxias, in the Baixada Fluminense region of Rio de Janeiro State. The individuals broke into the temple, forced the priestess to destroy sacred objects, and threatened to set fire to the building if the practitioners did not stop holding regular religious services. Police identified who ordered the plot and who participated in the attack, and authorities pressed charges against seven individuals, including the alleged leader of the group, Alvaro Malaquias Santa Rosa.

On June 9, armed men entered one of Bahia State’s oldest Candomble terreiros and destroyed several sacred objects. Media identified the vandals as employees of a packaging company. Representatives of the company denied all allegations, while stating they were in the midst of a land dispute with the terreiro, which the company claimed had illegally installed fences on the perimeter of its property. According to Terreiro Icimimo, at year’s end, authorities had not identified or arrested any of the vandals.

Media reported incidents of evangelical Christian missionaries traveling to isolated and recently contacted indigenous communities to proselytize and spread their religion. Indigenous organizations raised concerns that these attempts violated indigenous peoples’ constitutional right to maintain their cultural heritage and sacred practices and threatened their safety. According to media reports, on April 16, the Federal Court of Tabatinga banned three evangelical Christian missionaries and the Christian missionary organization New Tribes Mission of Brazil from entering indigenous communities in the Javari Valley region. The order also included a fine of 1,000 reais (\$190) for noncompliance. In his decision, Judge Fabiano Verli said that this was not a religious freedom issue and that Brazil, as a secular state, must prioritize protecting vulnerable populations from the spread of COVID-19.

From January to August, the Jewish Federation of Sao Paulo recorded 149 incidents and allegations of anti-Semitism in the country in its annual anti-Semitism report. From January to August 2019, the Federation recorded 194 incidents. The report was based on a range of sources, including traditional media, social media, and reports from other branch offices of the organization. The survey reported sightings of swastikas and other anti-Semitic graffiti.

A global ADL survey, released in June, showed the percentage of Brazilians who harbor some anti-Jewish sentiment increased from 19 percent in 2019 to 26 percent in 2020. A survey from the Henry Sobel Human Rights Observatory found that acts of intolerance and anti-Semitic attitudes were increasingly common in social and political spheres. The organization recorded 30 such acts during the first six months of the year, compared with 26 in all of 2019. According to anthropologist Adriana Magalhaes Dias at the State University of Campinas, there were 349 active neo-Nazi organizations in the country. She said the largest concentrations were in Sao Paulo, with 102 groups; Parana, with 74; and Santa Catarina, with 69.

In June, a pastor in Rio de Janeiro, Tupirani da Hora Lores, stated in a sermon delivered at the small, evangelical Christian Geracao Jesus Cristo Church that he prayed for God to “destroy the Jews like vermin.” In another sermon, he said God should bring about a second Holocaust. Sinagoga Sem Fronteiras, an organization representing a network of Jewish communities, filed a complaint for incitement against da Hora Lores with federal police, who said they were investigating the case. According to FIERJ, at year’s end, the investigation remained pending.

Neo-Nazi groups maintained an active presence online. In May, Safernet, an NGO that promotes human rights on social networks and monitors radical websites, reported the creation of 204 new pages of neo-Nazi content in the country during the year, compared with 42 new pages in May 2019, and 28 in May 2018. At year’s end, the Public Ministry was investigating many of these cases.

There were reports of private entities and individuals inciting violence against or engaging in verbal harassment of religious minorities on social media and in the press. FIERJ reported 42 complaints of anti-Semitic incidents on social media, of which it determined that 12 constituted anti-Semitism.

Media reported a group of men interrupted a virtual lesson at the College of Business Administration, Marketing, and Communication in Sorocaba, Sao Paulo, on August 20, to shout Nazi, racist, and sexist epithets at the teacher and students. During the attack, they posted images of Adolf Hitler and his followers marching with the Nazi flag.

In May, media reported Federal Senate President Davi Alcolumbre was the target of anti-Semitic harassment on social media. A user said, “Jews are miserly. Jews are wicked and think only of their well-being.” Facebook deleted the user’s account after the Brazilian Jewish Confederation denounced the post.

According to FAMBRAS, there was an increase in anti-Muslim messages on the internet, mostly associating Islam with terrorism and spreading messages of hate against Muslim representatives and their religious symbols. According to FAMBRAS legal advisor Mohamed Charanek, Google removed from social media two videos associating halal food with terrorism and cruel practices to comply with a 2019 decision by the Third Civil Court of Justice of Sao Paulo. The organization said the videos were offensive and contained anti-Muslim sentiment. At year's end, authorities had not identified the authors of the videos.

There were multiple reports of harassment of Afro-Brazilian religious practitioners on social media. In September, social media blogger Monique Elias posted online that she was a victim of religious intolerance. She said hate messages started in July, after she posted a video where she discussed her Candomble religion.

On August 13, a television host from private news network Arapuan mocked Afro-Brazilian religions on air. The Bar Association of Paraiba, the Interinstitutional Forum for Communication, the state Public Attorney's Office, the Religious Diversity Forum, and some religious leaders filed complaints of religious intolerance against the network with the Federal Prosecutor's Office. The host made a public apology on live television, but the network did not take action.

Hindu religious leader Rajan Zed accused national fashion brand Jon Cotre of religious insensitivity and sacrilege for using the image of Lord Ganesh, a Hindu deity, in its line of shorts. A spokeswoman for the company apologized and said, "Our intention was never to trivialize or offend." The Sao Paulo-based brand removed ads from its website and stopped producing the shorts.

In February, the Paraiba State Commission of Soccer Referees ordered Edson Boca not to wear clothing that represented his Afro-Brazilian religion while he worked as a massage therapist for the Sao Paulo Crystal soccer team.

The Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights' National Secretariat of Human Rights received 410 reports of religious intolerance via the nationwide Dial 100 Human Rights hotline in 2019, compared with 506 in 2018. Most of the reports involved discrimination but did not specify what kind.

The Rio de Janeiro Civil Police Office for Racial Crimes and Crimes of Intolerance received 32 reports of religious intolerance from January through September. At year's end, authorities indicted two persons on charges of religious intolerance.

According to the Bahia State Secretariat of Racial Equality, there were 10 instances of religious intolerance in the state between January and August, compared with 34 instances in the comparable period in 2019. The State Secretariat for Human Rights in Rio de Janeiro reported 31 instances of religious intolerance between January and June, compared with 42 instances during the same period in 2019. Afro-Brazilian religious groups experienced the greatest number of occurrences, with four cases involving practitioners of Candomble and 19 cases involving practitioners of Umbanda. Municipalities in the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area registered 17 incidents, including three in Rio's Baixada Fluminense Region.

On January 11, the Yle Axe Oya Bagan community in the Federal District hosted an event on combating religious intolerance, with the support of the State Secretary for Citizenship and Justice.

On February 20, approximately five thousand Candomble followers and supporters participated in the "Pedra de Xango" Annual Walk against Religious Intolerance in Salvador, Bahia. Candomble priest Mae Iara de Oxum organized the 11th annual event, which had the support of the Salvador municipal government and the Gregorio de Matos Foundation.

In February, the Pew Research Center published findings on attitudes towards democratic principles, such as regular elections, free speech, and free civil society as well as religious freedom, in 34 countries, based on interviews it conducted in its *Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey*. According to the findings, 82 percent of Brazil's respondents considered religious freedom to be "very important," ranking it among the highest of their priorities for democratic principles of nine cited.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

In October, the Ambassador met with Minister of Women, Family, and Human Rights Damares Alves to raise concerns regarding reports of Christian missionaries attempting to contact isolated indigenous tribes with the aim of converting them to Christianity, noting concerns about their culture, health, and desire to remain isolated.

On September 10, embassy representatives met virtually with the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights' Secretariat of Global Protection. They noted the President's June Executive Order on religious freedom and explained the

United States' recommitment to the human rights enshrined within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

On September 1, the Ambassador met virtually with the President of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops, Dom Walmor Oliveira de Azevedo. The Ambassador stated the embassy and consulates were closely following threats to religious minorities in the country and underlined the importance of religious freedom.

In July, a consulate representative from Rio de Janeiro met FIERJ representative Paulo Maltz to discuss challenges the Jewish community faced and learn about possible cases of anti-Semitism in the state. A consulate representative also met with Ivanir dos Santos to learn about the challenges faced within the Candomble community due to the COVID-19 pandemic, new cases of religious intolerance involving followers of Afro-Brazilian religions, and possible areas in which the United States could serve as a partner for promoting religious freedom.

On July 29, embassy and consulate general officials held a virtual roundtable with representatives of Afro-Brazilian religions, Islam, Judaism, Catholicism, and evangelical Christianity to discuss the state of religious freedom, tolerance, and diversity in the country.

On August 14, the embassy and consulates general held a virtual roundtable with four speakers, including a representative of an Afro-Brazilian community known as a quilombo, who discussed the challenges for members of the community participating in religious events.

The Rio de Janeiro Consul General wrote an op-ed in honor of the August 22 International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief. The Bahian newspaper *Correio da Bahia* published the op-ed, which highlighted a \$500,000 grant by the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, as well as the 2019 International Religious Freedom Award for Rio's Ivanir dos Santos, CCIR head and a Candomble priest.

On October 8, embassy representatives hosted a roundtable with representatives from three religious faiths and two interfaith organizations to discuss the state of religious freedom and raise concerns about attacks on religious minorities.

On December 18, the embassy and consulates general hosted a webinar with an associate professor of political science from a U.S. university and author of a book

on religion and democracy. She discussed religion, politics, and environmentalism in the country. The embassy disseminated her presentation via embassy social media platforms.