

BRAZIL 2021 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution states freedom of conscience and belief is inviolable, provides for the free exercise of religious beliefs, and prohibits federal, state, and local governments from either supporting or hindering any religion. In April, the Federal Supreme Court (STF) found unconstitutional a 2015 Amazonas State law requiring schools and libraries to keep at least one copy of the Bible in their collections on the grounds it violated the principle of state secularism. In February, the Rio de Janeiro State Legislative Assembly established a commission of inquiry to investigate increasing religious intolerance and to discuss strategies to promote religious freedom. In April, the STF upheld as constitutional COVID-19-related government decrees to close religious institutions; some religious groups protested government COVID-19 restrictions on the numbers of worshippers allowed to attend events. In June, the state of Rio de Janeiro enabled individuals to use the military police's 190 hotline to report acts of religious intolerance. In March, the state of Sao Paulo approved a religious freedom law that regulated the constitutional principle of free exercise of faith and established fines of up to 87,000 reais (\$15,300) for disturbances of religious ceremonies and cults, vandalism of sacred symbols, and discrimination based on religion in schools. In July, a Sao Paulo judge acquitted a mother on charges of domestic violence filed after her daughter participated in a Candomble ritual. The judge stated religious freedom was a constitutional right and there was no justification to restrict a Candomble ritual. In July, in the state of Maranhao, Afro-Brazilian religious institutions, activists combating religious intolerance, and state government representatives discussed strategies to end attacks on *terreiros* (temples used in Afro-Brazilian religions). In August, the federal police launched Operation White Rose to investigate crimes of discrimination or prejudice based on intolerance and the spread of Nazi symbols. Civil police and the Public Ministry investigated the spread of hatred and threats of violence on social media, including against Jews; in December, civil police and prosecutors launched a series of actions, serving arrest and search and seizure warrants across seven states. In May, the Sao Paulo Secretary of Justice, through the Inter-Religious Forum for a Culture of Peace and Freedom of Faith, conducted a webinar with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to discuss freedom of religion to promote peace and tolerance in the country and worldwide. On January 21, municipalities throughout the country commemorated the National Day to Combat Religious Intolerance.

According to press reporting, anecdotal evidence, and other sources, societal respect for practitioners of minority religions – especially Afro-Brazilian religions – continued to be weak, and attacks on terreiros continued. According to the National Secretariat of Human Rights of the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights, during the year, the National Human Rights Hotline received 581 calls reporting religious intolerance, compared with 566 reports in 2020. Media reported individuals set fire to and destroyed Afro-Brazilian places of worship and sacred objects, sometimes injuring or threatening worshippers. In July, a supermarket employee said his employer verbally harassed and ultimately dismissed him for wearing a protective facemask bearing an Afro-Brazilian deity. An August report published by the press outlet *Globo* showed that in the first five months of the year, federal police investigated 36 cases of violations of the country’s laws against the use of symbols to publicize Nazism, a rate on track to be somewhat fewer than the 110 cases opened in calendar year 2020. A journalist working for one of the country’s largest broadcasters stated that Brazil could attain the economic development enjoyed by Germany “only by attacking Jews. If we kill a gazillion Jews and appropriate their economic power, then Brazil will get rich. That’s what happened with Germany after the war.” In the Israelite Federation of Sao Paulo State’s (FISESP) annual *Antisemitism Report*, it recorded 57 incidents and allegations of antisemitism in the country from January to July, compared with 149 incidents and allegations during the same period in 2020. FISESP also reported a total of 92 incidents at year’s end. FISESP attributed the drop in recorded cases to difficulties in collecting data during COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns, when local branch offices were closed. Media and religious organizations reported an increased number of accounts of hate speech directed at religious minorities on social media and the internet, in particular against practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions and Jews. In June, the Federal Public Ministry indicted a man for incitement of Nazism in 2015 on a Russian social network internet site.

During the year, embassy officials assisted the government’s efforts to address the spread of hatred and threats of violence against religious groups. In January, the embassy organized a virtual roundtable with representatives from religious groups, academia, and the government, including a federal prosecutor, a professor from the University of Chicago, and representatives of both the Interfaith Forum in Sao Paulo and the Muslim Federation of Associations in Brazil, to discuss the legal instruments available in the country to promote tolerance and inclusion. In August, the Consul General in Sao Paulo met with representatives from Jewish organizations including the Jewish Confederation of Brazil (CONIB), CONIB-Sao Paulo, the Albert Einstein Hospital, and the Harmony Club, a social and cultural

club maintained by the Jewish community in Sao Paulo, to promote religious freedom and tolerance. In October, the Consul General in Rio de Janeiro met Afro-Brazilian religious leaders, community activists, and lawmakers during a meeting at Rio's Museum of the Republic to discuss religious intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religious communities. On December 22, the Consul General in Sao Paulo met with the Archbishop of Sao Paulo, Cardinal Odilo Scherer, to discuss interfaith dialogue, the impact of COVID-19 on religious groups, and human rights in the country.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 213.4 million (midyear 2021). 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 3 percent are Spiritists. According to the 2010 census, the most recently available data from official sources, 65 percent of the population is Catholic, 22 percent Protestant, 8 percent irreligious (including atheists, agnostics, and deists), and 2 percent Spiritist. Adherents of other Christian groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and 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 3 percent of the population. According to the census, there are approximately 600,000 practitioners of Candomble, Umbanda, and other Afro-Brazilian religions. Some Christians also practice Candomble and Umbanda; however, some nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) believe this is significantly underreported, given the number of terreiros located across the country. 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 (FAMBRAS) 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 CONIB, there are approximately 120,000 Jews in the country. The two largest concentrations are 70,000 in Sao Paulo State and 34,000 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 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. By law, 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.

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

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

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

A Sao Paulo State law approved in March establishes administrative sanctions for individuals and organizations engaging in religious intolerance. The new law supplements an existing one from 2019 focused on religious discrimination by broadening the concept of religious intolerance, taking steps to promote religious freedom, and increasing the fines imposed. Punishments range from a warning letter to fines of up to 87,000 reais (\$15,300).

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

Government Practices

In January, the federal government created the National Registry of Religious Organizations, a voluntary database of religious leaders and entities eligible to receive federal funds and to carry out actions in partnership with the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights. Social science professor and leader of the Protestantism and Pentecostalism Study Group at the Pontifical Catholic University, Edin Sued Abumanssur, said the program duplicated preexisting databases of religious organizations, and he suggested creation of the new database was an attempt to garner the support of churches in the lead-up to the 2022 presidential election.

In January, the Rio de Janeiro city council created the Parliamentary Front of Religious Freedom. The purpose of the group, composed of 38 city council members, was to discuss strategies to combat religious intolerance in the municipality.

Acting on a Rio de Janeiro State civil police report that said the state had registered 6,700 crimes of religious intolerance from 2015 through 2019, state legislator Martha Rocha established in February a parliamentary commission of inquiry in Rio de Janeiro's Legislative Assembly to investigate this increasing number and to discuss possible strategies to promote religious freedom.

On March 3, Governor of Sao Paulo State Joao Doria approved a state-level religious freedom law regulating the constitutional principle of free exercise of faith, including imposing fines of up to 87,000 reais (\$15,300) for verifiable cases of disturbances of religious ceremonies and cults, vandalism of sacred symbols, and discrimination in schools, such as prohibiting the use of religious attire.

In March, media reported that evangelical Christians and Catholics in Pernambuco State protested the state's imposition of COVID-19 related limitations on public religious gatherings.

In April, the STF found that government decrees to close churches and other religious temples throughout the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic were constitutional. The decision followed the STF review of Sao Paulo Governor Doria's decree ordering the closure of religious centers to avoid large crowds. Following the decision, according to press reports, religious groups protested the government's COVID-19 restrictions on religious gatherings in Brasilia. In response to the STF decision, in October, the Sao Paulo legislature overturned Governor Doria's decree, and it declared religious observances and their respective places of worship were essential activities to be maintained in times of crises, including during pandemics and natural disasters, provided that the activity complied with the recommendations of the Ministry of Health.

In December 2020, the city of Porto Alegre inaugurated a Police Office for Combating Intolerance with a mandate to assist victims of prejudice and investigate discrimination, including religious discrimination. As of April, the office had registered 169 occurrences, including eight related to religious discrimination.

Beginning in June, individuals could report religious intolerance in Rio State to the military police's 190 hotline. The Commission to Combat Religious Intolerance (CCIR), an independent organization comprised of representatives of religious groups, civil society, police, and public prosecutors' office representatives, was responsible for documenting cases of religious intolerance and assisting victims. CCTR coordinator Ivanir dos Santos highlighted the importance of this new channel, saying that even though victims were already able to report incidents to civil police, the 190 military police hotline was more easily accessible and familiar.

In June, Bahia's Court of Justice sentenced Edneide Santos de Jesus, a member of the Casa de Oracao Evangelical Church, to monthly court appearances and community service for repeatedly verbally harassing members of a traditional Candomble temple in Camacari, Bahia. The court also found de Jesus guilty of spreading rock salt in front of the Candomble temple to "cast out demons." The ruling by the Court of Justice was the first ruling of "religious racism" (religious intolerance or prejudice) in the state's history.

Media reported that in June, during a search for suspected serial killer Lazaro Barbosa, police officers repeatedly entered at least 10 Afro-Brazilian temples in Goias State. Religious leaders filed a complaint alleging that police used force in their entry, pointed weapons at the heads of those present, and examined mobile phones and computers without a court order. The Public Security Secretariat of Goias stated that a task force composed of police officers from Goias, the federal district, and the federal highway police was "working with a single purpose: to guarantee peace to the population of the region and to capture Lazaro Barbosa within the limits of legality."

In July, a judge on Sao Paulo's Court of Justice acquitted Juliana Arcanjo Ferreira of charges of domestic violence and bodily harm against her daughter after Ferreira took the 11-year-old to a traditional Candomble rite called a "cure" in October 2020. The girl's father filed a police report four months after the ceremony accusing Ferreira of assault, following a weekend visit during which he discovered scars on the girl's body from the rite, which entailed making small superficial incisions on the skin. Medical examiners found that the scars from the ritual were mild and did not cause disability; there was no conclusion that they were made under torture or other cruel means. The judge presiding over the case emphasized that religious freedom was a constitutional right and that the transmission of beliefs to children could not carry criminal consequences if it was done with "respect for

life, freedom, and security.” He continued that there could be no justification, other than religious intolerance, for restricting a Candomble ritual.

In August, the government of Sao Paulo State announced the creation of an Online Diversity Police Station, a tool to enable citizens to report crimes of discrimination and intolerance, including those involving religion, through an online platform. Per the tool, after reporting, cases were directed for further investigation to the city of Sao Paulo’s newly redesigned 26-person specialized precinct for crimes of discrimination and intolerance. Alternatively, cases in the interior of Sao Paulo State were directed to the State Criminal Investigation Departments. Authorities said 20 percent of the state’s police officers in these departments had special training in combating and investigating intolerance.

According to the FAMBRAS, women said they continued to face difficulties in being allowed to wear Islamic head coverings such as the hijab when going through security in airports and other public buildings.

In July, President Jair Bolsonaro met Beatrix von Storch, a German parliamentarian and lawmaker of the Alternative for Germany Party (AfD). CONIB representatives criticized the welcoming of Storch, saying that the AfD was a party that downplayed Nazi atrocities and the Holocaust. According to media reports, however, Storch’s official visit did not include any discussion of either Nazism or the Holocaust.

In March, Roberto Jefferson, leader of the Brazilian Labor Party, posted on Instagram, “Baal, Satanic deity, Canaanites and Jews sacrificed children to receive their sympathy. Today, history repeats itself.” CONIB said in a statement that Jefferson’s post constituted “a crime of racism, with an increased penalty for having been committed through a social network.” For an unrelated matter in August, authorities charged Jefferson with belonging to a criminal organization opposing democracy. He remained in jail, pending trial through the end of year.

In Maranhao State, Afro-Brazilian religious institutions and activists working to counter religious intolerance, together with the public defender, the state prosecutor, and the Order of Attorneys in Maranhao, met in July to discuss strategies to end attacks on terreiros. According to the State Secretariat for Racial Equality, terreiros, including the Pai Lindomar Temple, had suffered increasingly frequent attacks for several years, despite military police presence in the Anjo da Guarda neighborhood where the temple was located in the state’s capital of Sao

Luis. For example, on average there were five complaints of religious intolerance per year, but in two months of 2021, four complaints of intolerance were filed.

In June, the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Public Ministry of Santa Catarina State (MPSC) shelved an investigation into possible illegal acts by history professor Wandercy Pugliesi. In 2020, the Liberal Party pressured Pugliesi to step down as a candidate 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. In June, Pugliesi's lawyers requested that the Public Prosecutor's Office shelve the case after Pugliesi provided photos showing that the symbol in the swimming pool had been removed. In September, a member of the Superior Council of the MPSC requested that the Center for Confronting Racial Crimes and Intolerance study the case prior to shelving it. According to media, while there was no firm timeline for the study, upon completion the MPSC's Superior Council would consider the results of the study and whether to recommence the investigation.

In August, federal police launched Operation White Rose, a reference to the historical White Rose anti-Nazi movement in World War II Germany, to address crimes of discrimination or prejudice based on race, color, ethnicity, religion, or national origin, as well as the placement of Nazi symbols. Documents in a database of Safernet Brazil – an NGO that promotes human rights on social networks and monitors radical websites – provided the basis for an operation against a man who made discriminatory comments against categories of individuals that included Jews and Catholics. According to press reports, the man also displayed Nazi symbols, declared himself to be a Nazi, and disseminated content related to antisemitism and idolatry of Nazism and fascism, with the intention of inciting violence.

During the year, civil police and the Public Ministry initiated Operation Bergon (named after a French nun who helped rescue Jewish children during World War II) to investigate the spread of hatred and threats of violence on social media, including against Jews. In December, civil police and prosecutors launched a series of actions, serving four arrest warrants and 31 search and seizure warrants across the states of Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Norte, Parana, Santa Catarina, and Rio do Sul.

The NGO Center for Articulation of Marginalized Populations reported Afro-Brazilian victims of religious intolerance in the state of Rio de Janeiro 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 was a lack of investigations and arrests in these cases and that offenders were rarely held accountable.

In April, the STF declared unconstitutional a 2015 Amazonas State law requiring schools and libraries to keep at least one copy of the Bible in their collections on the grounds that it violated the principles of state secularism. Following the ruling, some postings on social media stated the STF had banned the Bible from schools and public libraries, allegations that the government said were false.

In September, acting Rio State Governor Claudio Castro declared the Terreiro de Gomeia (Gomeia Temple) in Duque de Caxias an historical and cultural heritage site. Candomble followers founded the Gomeia Temple in the 1950s. The declaration emphasized the value of Afro-Brazilian religious practices.

On January 21, municipalities around the country commemorated the National Day to Combat Religious Intolerance. In Rio Grande do Sul, civil police distributed an educational booklet on religious intolerance, including information on what encompasses crimes of religious intolerance and how to report incidents.

On May 25, the Sao Paulo Secretary of Justice, through the Inter-Religious Forum for a Culture of Peace and Freedom of Faith, promoted a webinar in partnership with UNESCO to discuss freedom of religion as an integral effort to promote peace and tolerance in the country and worldwide. The event included representatives from a variety of faiths including Afro-Brazilian religions, Islam, and Judaism.

In May, Sao Paulo Legislative Assembly Caucus of Religious Freedom representatives held a Sao Paulo State Religious Freedom Week, a series of 16 webinars to promote freedom of religion and tolerance, with the participation of various civil society groups. Assembly deputy Damaris Moura, who led the promotion for the week's events, said, "Defending religious freedom for all is a fundamental right constitutionally guaranteed, but still with practical problems. Therefore, it is always necessary to alert, raise awareness, and prevent." The President of the Legislative Assembly, deputy Carla Pignatari, defined religious freedom as "freedom to profess any religion [and to] hold services and [practice] traditions related to beliefs," and he emphasized that religious beliefs should not have "direct influence on the formulation of public policies." Approximately 1,000 persons attended the opening event of the week, held at the Legislative Assembly.

The State Secretariat of Human Rights in Espirito Santo State organized a State Week of Combating Religious Intolerance from January 18 to 21. Programming included a virtual educational campaign on the secretariat's website, a roundtable on religious intolerance with inmates from the Linhares Detention and Rehabilitation Center, and two seminars on religious intolerance that included speakers representing Catholicism, Protestantism, and Afro-Brazilian religions as well as the State Council for the Promotion of Racial Equality.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Although only approximately 2 percent of the population were followers of Afro-Brazilian religions, a disproportionate number of cases registered by the human rights hotline involved victims who were practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions. Media reported multiple incidents in which individuals and groups destroyed terreiros and sacred objects.

In January, an unidentified man broke into an Umbanda temple in Duque de Caxias, Baixada Fluminense, in the city of Rio de Janeiro, and set a fire and destroyed sacred religious objects. According to the temple's priest, Maria Antonia dos Santos, the man said his pastor had instructed him to break "all the demons he could find in the temple." The suspect was arrested the same day and sent to a psychiatric hospital after police concluded he was suffering a mental health crisis. The leaders of the temple organized a fundraising campaign and rebuilt the temple, which was rededicated in May.

In February, unidentified men set fire to a food stand of Candomble priestess and street vendor Maria Enoia de Sousa, known as Mae Enoia, in Macae, southern Rio de Janeiro State. The priestess had reportedly been harassed since November 2020, when she had begun selling *acaraje*, a regional dish associated with practitioners of Afro-Brazilian faiths. According to media reports, when she attempted to file a police report, the police precinct said she needed to pay a fee of 700 to 800 reais (\$120-\$140) to conduct the investigation. Police investigated the case, with monitoring by the CCIR, through year's end.

In February, Gleidson Lima, an evangelical Christian pastor and leader of the Tenda dos Milagres Church, destroyed Afro-Brazilian sacred objects and offerings in the neighborhood of Belford Roxo, part of the greater metropolitan area of the city of Rio de Janeiro. A video posted on the internet following the attack showed the pastor stating he was breaking the objects "in the name of Jesus." Police

indicted Lima on February 24 on charges of religious intolerance, and a trial date was pending at year's end.

In March, media reported that an unidentified, apparently intoxicated man destroyed a statue of Our Lady of Sorrows in a Catholic church in Petropolis, Rio de Janeiro State. According to Father Lucas Thadeu, who witnessed the incident, the man broke the statue after declaring that due to his religion he did not like religious images. Police were investigating at year's end.

According to media in May, four individuals entered the Nossa Senhora dos Remedios Parish in Osasco, Sao Paulo, and destroyed seven religious images, plus flower vases, and toilets, saying they did so "in the name of Jesus." After reviewing security camera footage in June, the Secretariat of Public Security detained four suspects, including two minors. Police indicted the two adults for the crimes of religious intolerance and "vilification of images" (the mistreatment or disrespect of objects) and took the minors to the Childhood and Youth Court. Authorities released all the suspects after their hearings to await the outcome of the investigation, which according to media reports, the Ocasco police investigation continued through year's end.

According to press reports, on December 3, police arrested and charged a man with aggravated theft and arson for the November 26 arson of the Shia Imam Ali Mosque in Ponta Grossa, in Parana State. The man broke into and set fire to the *huseiniya* (Shia congregation hall), dirtied the kitchen walls, destroyed *masbahas* (prayer beads), and set fire to five volumes of the Quran. The individual confessed to the crime, which carries a possible sentence of up to 14 years in prison. In response to the attack, Parana Governor Carlos Massa Ratinho Junior stated his support for the mosque, stating, "We will not tolerate any criminal acts, especially those of religious intolerance, like what happened at the mosque, in Ponta Grossa," and he pledged civil police would conduct a full investigation.

In December, a group of preschool students visited Xica Manicongo, the urban *quilombo* (a historical community founded by formerly enslaved persons) in the municipality of Niteroi in Rio de Janeiro State, to watch a cultural performance. Afterward, individuals virtually attacked the participating school on social media. Commenters conflated the quilombo with an Afro-Brazilian terreiro in the city, with posts using offensive language and criticizing the school administrators for permitting the visit. In response, Niteroi's municipal Secretary of Education defended the children's participation in the event, explaining that schools have "autonomy to develop activities that defend freedom of expression and the

antiracist education agenda.” The secretary’s statement also reiterated that these activities were supported by laws that promote the culture and history of Afro-Brazilian peoples. In response to the municipality’s clarification, many persons expressed support for the school’s position and the visit.

In February, followers of Afro-Brazilian religions in Maceio, Alagoas State, paid homage to Tia Marcelina, a temple leader whom security forces beat in 1912. According to the Municipal Foundation for Cultural Action, the objective of the event, which included singing, instrumental music, and the hanging of a banner, was to remember the power and ancestry of the day in history and to renew what the foundation termed the fight against “religious racism.”

In July, former Mundial Supermarket employee Rafael Oliveira denounced the chain for religious intolerance, stating supermarket management verbally harassed, and ultimately fired him when he wore a protective facemask containing an image of the *orixa ogun*, an Afro-Brazilian deity. According to Oliveira, other Mundial employees in the northern Rio de Janeiro State city of Ramos wore facemasks in support of other religions and sports teams without reprimand, while a manager told Oliveira to change his mask. In the three weeks thereafter, the supermarket transferred Oliveira five times and changed his hours eight times before terminating his employment. The supermarket chain stated that “it does not condone any act of discrimination or religious intolerance and respects all beliefs,” and said Oliveira’s dismissal was not related to discrimination.

In July, Afro-Brazilian religious leaders met with officials from Bahia State’s Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality to discuss a series of attacks against Terreiro Icimimo, a 104-year-old site recognized by the Bahia State government as a cultural heritage site. That same month, unidentified men had broken into the temple and destroyed sacred objects and outdoor ceremonial spaces. According to a representative for the terreiro, authorities had not indicted or arrested any suspects by year’s end.

In August, representatives of Afro-Brazilian religions in Pernambuco State, under the coordination of the Pernambuco Terreiros Walk Network (ACTPE), which unites the state’s terreiros to combat racism and religious prejudice, held a demonstration against acts of religious intolerance. During the event, the representatives announced they had filed a complaint with the Public Ministry of Pernambuco through the State Secretariat for Social Defense against an evangelical Protestant pastor for having maligned Afro-Brazilian religions. On social networks, Pastor Aijalon Berto of the Evangelical Church Dunamis (meaning

power) Ministry objected to artistic graffiti panels installed near the Abolition Museum that depicted Afro-Brazilian cultural and religious symbols, saying these were associated with evil and Satan. In the video, the pastor stated, "Entities referred to in Candomble are witchcraft." Civil police said they were investigating the case. In November, the ACTPE held a second march in conjunction with the start of the country's Month of Black Consciousness to mark the fight against racism and religious intolerance. Local and state political leaders spoke alongside Afro-Brazilian religious leaders, calling for respect on a daily basis.

Media continued to report on cases of Candomble practitioners being expelled from the community and being prohibited from wearing the white clothing that is generally used by adherents of the Candomble faith in the area controlled by a criminal group self-identifying as evangelical. Alvaro Malaquias Santa Rosa, known as Peixao, who, according to media in 2020, had joined forces with a militia group to expand influence over a group of five *favelas* (informal housing settlements) to establish what came to be known as the "Complex of Israel" in northern Rio de Janeiro, continued to avoid arrest despite police operations targeting his drug trafficking operation. As a child, Peixao followed his mother's Umbanda practices but later converted to evangelical Christianity.

Media continued to report on cases of evangelical Christian missionaries traveling to isolated and recently contacted indigenous communities to proselytize. Indigenous organizations said these actions violated indigenous peoples' constitutional right to maintain their cultural heritage and sacred practices and threatened their safety. In September, STF Minister Luis Roberto Barroso reaffirmed a 2020 court decision that prevented the entry of third parties, including members of religious groups, into areas in which isolated indigenous peoples were living to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

An August report published by *Globo* using data obtained through the Access to Information Law showed that in the first five months of the year, federal police investigated 36 cases entailing violations of the country's laws against the use of symbols to publicize Nazism, a rate *Globo* estimated was on track to be only slightly fewer than the 110 cases opened in all of 2020. In 2020, the highest number of cases was opened in the southeast of the country, particularly in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro States, with 27 and 23 cases, respectively. The data did not include the states of Mato Grosso do Sul, Rondonia, and Tocantins.

FISESP's annual *Antisemitism Report* recorded 57 incidents and allegations of antisemitism in the country from January to July, compared with 149 incidents and

allegations during the same period in 2020. FISESP also reported a total of 92 incidents at year's end. The report was based on a range of sources, including traditional media, social media, and reports from branch offices of the organization. The survey reported a variety of activities including sightings of swastikas and other antisemitic graffiti, antisemitic hand gestures, and the sale of Nazi artifacts. FISESP attributed the drop in recorded cases to difficulties collecting data during COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns, when local FISESP branches were closed.

From the end of 2020 to May, neo-Nazi cells grew from 349 to 530, according to anthropologist Adriana Magalhaes Dias at the Sao Paulo State University of Campinas. The cells were most prevalent in the south and southeast regions, with 301 and 193 identified, respectively. Dias also mapped cells in the midwest (18) and northeast (13). According to Dias, a neo-Nazi cell was a group of at least three persons inspired by the Nazism in Europe in the 20th century.

According to press reports, on March 12, the federal police raided the Pentecostal Generation Jesus Christ Church in the city of Rio de Janeiro to seize literature and antisemitic materials related to a 2020 video broadcast of the church's leader, evangelical Pastor Tupirani da Hora Lores, praying with congregants for another Holocaust. He said, "Massacre the Jews, God, hit them with your sword, for they have left God, they have left the nation." The police raid supported a cybercrimes police investigation of the pastor for inciting practitioners to discriminate against Jews through his in-person and online sermons. In August, press reported that despite the police investigation, the pastor continued to make offensive comments.

Neo-Nazi groups maintained an active presence online. The National Cyber Crime Reporting Center, operated by Safernet Brazil, recorded for the second year in a row an increase in complaints about internet content supporting Nazism. During the year, Safernet Brazil stated it received 14,476 reports of neo-Nazi content online, a 60.7 percent increase compared with 2020 and the highest number registered since 2010. The reports included 894 different webpages, of which 318 were removed by TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter because of content defined as illegal and pro-Nazi.

There continued to be reports of private entities and individuals inciting violence against or engaging in verbal harassment of religious minorities on social media and in the press. As of August, the Israelite Federation of the State of Rio de Janeiro reported that it had confirmed 10 cases of antisemitism in Rio de Janeiro. The number of reports of crimes of intolerance – racial, religious, or related to

sexual orientation or gender identity – registered by the ombudsman’s office of the Sao Paulo Department of State between January-July represented a 24.5 percent increase compared with the same period in 2020. During this period, 311 reports were registered, compared with 248 during the same period in 2020.

In June, the Federal Public Ministry indicted a man in the First Federal Criminal Court of Sao Paulo for incitement of Nazism on a Russian online social network in 2015. Authorities accused the man, who had a history of involvement with neo-Nazi groups, of being responsible for a webpage containing neo-Nazi symbols and photos referencing Adolf Hitler, with faces covered by emojis. Identified through police cooperation between Brazil and Russia, the man confessed to the authorship of the publications. The Public Ministry said the man would be prosecuted for inciting discrimination and prejudice based on race, color, religion, or nationality and if found guilty, would be subject to a fine, up to five years in prison, or both.

According to media, on August 7, an unidentified individual or individuals scattered antisemitic pamphlets on the sidewalks and streets of Rio de Janeiro’s Barra de Tijuca neighborhood that stated, “Jews, impulsive accumulators of gold, diamonds, and dollars.” Rio de Janeiro civil police said they were investigating the incident as a possible hate crime.

According to press reports, on August 23, unidentified men online posted pornographic images and antisemitic messages during a virtual Jewish ceremony organized by the Israelite Religious Association in Rio de Janeiro. Hackers threatened the participants by posting messages such as, “We will burn all synagogues” and “Death to Jews.” Organizers suspended the event until a new link could be sent to the participants. Rio de Janeiro police were investigating the case at year’s end.

In November, journalist Jose Carlos Bernardi, working for *Jovem Pan*, one of the country’s largest broadcasters, stated that Brazil could attain economic development enjoyed by Germany “only by attacking Jews. If we kill a gazillion Jews and appropriate their economic power, then Brazil will get rich. That’s what happened with Germany after the war.” The journalist and network later apologized for the remarks, following public complaints.

According to FAMBRAS, anti-Muslim messages on the internet, mostly associating Islam with terrorism and spreading messages of hate against Muslim representatives and their religious symbols, continued. In March, according to FAMBRAS legal advisor Mohamed Charanek, the Court of Justice in Brasilia

ordered the removal from social media of all material associating Islam with terrorism posted by a group self-identifying as the “Conservative Party,” a group seeking recognition as a political party. The court fined the group 10,000 reais (\$1,800).

The Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights’ National Secretariat of Human Rights received 581 reports of religious intolerance via the nationwide Dial 100 Human Rights hotline during the year, compared with 566 in 2020.

The Rio de Janeiro Civil Police Office for Racial Crimes and Crimes of Intolerance (DECRADI) reported receiving 78 reports of religious intolerance during the year. According to the Chief of Police and head of DECRADI, authorities had indicted nine persons on charges of religious intolerance. The State Secretariat for Human Rights in Rio de Janeiro reported 51 instances of religious intolerance between January and July, compared with 26 instances during the same period in 2020. Afro-Brazilian religious groups experienced the greatest number of occurrences, with harassment, discrimination, and destruction of religious temples reported regularly.

According to the Bahia State Secretariat of Racial Equality, there were 19 instances of religious intolerance in the state between January and July, compared with eight instances in the comparable period in 2020.

On January 21, in celebration of the Brazilian National Day Against Religious Intolerance, Temple Ile Axe Abassade Ogum organized a tribute to the late Candomble priest Mother Gilda, who experienced verbal abuse involving religious intolerance during her lifetime. The ceremony took place at Parque do Abaete, in Salvador, Bahia State, the site of a bust of the religious leader.

Bahia State University (UNEB) organized an online event entitled “Religion, (in)Tolerance, and Respect” to celebrate the January 21 National Day to Combat Religious Intolerance. The UNEB event focused on the growth of religious diversity in the country and how religious intolerance could lead to discrimination and aggression when members of one religious group did not recognize the religious freedom of other religious groups.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

During the year, embassy officials assisted the government's efforts to address the spread of hatred and threats of violence against religious groups, including by providing information leading to the launch of Operation Bergon.

On January 29, the embassy organized a virtual roundtable with government, legal experts, and interfaith and religious leaders on the legal instruments available in the country to promote tolerance and inclusion. Panelists included a federal prosecutor, a professor from the University of Chicago, Professor Vania Maria da Silva Soares from the Interfaith Forum in Sao Paulo, and Ali El Zoghbi, vice president of the Muslim Federation of Associations in Brazil in Sao Paulo.

On August 8, the Consul General in Sao Paulo met with representatives of Jewish organizations, including CONIB, CONIB-Sao Paulo, Albert Einstein Hospital, and the Harmony Club, a social and cultural club maintained by the Jewish community of Sao Paulo, to discuss further engagement in support of religious freedom. On October 22, the Consul General in Rio de Janeiro visited the Museum of the Republic to meet with Afro-Brazilian leaders, activists, priests, prosecutors, and lawmakers involved in the religious freedom and tolerance movement for Afro-Brazilian religious communities. During the visit, the Consul General toured the "Free Our Sacred" exhibit, which included more than 500 artifacts seized from Afro-Brazilian religious communities during police raids between 1890 and 1945. On December 22, the Consul General in Sao Paulo met with the Archbishop of Sao Paulo, Cardinal Odilo Scherer, to discuss interfaith dialogue, the impact of COVID-19 on religious groups, and human rights in the country.