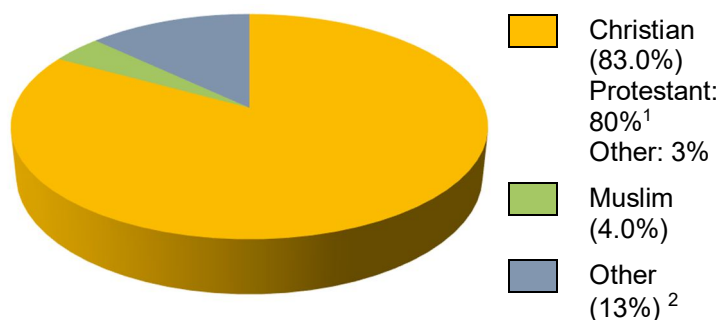


DENMARK



Area:
43,000 km²

Population³:
5.6 million

Political system:
Monarchy⁴

Major Language(s):
Danish, Faroese,
Greenlandic⁵

Legal Framework of Religion and actual application

The constitution guarantees the right of individuals to worship according to their beliefs, so long as they do not disturb the public order, and to form congregations. Access to civil and political rights may not be denied because of one's religious beliefs, and conscientious objectors are exempt from military service.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) is the national church, and the reigning monarch must be a member. It is the only religious group to receive state funding, through subsidies and church taxes. The government has granted official status to 170 other religious groups, including 109 Christian, 27 Muslim, 15 Buddhist, 10 Hindu, four Jewish, and five other groups through the Ministry of Social Affairs. While other, unrecognised groups are entitled to engage in religious practices, official registration gives religious groups special rights, including the right to perform marriages and baptisms, to issue residence permits for clergy, and tax exemptions.⁶

Religious instruction in Evangelical Lutheran theology, Christian studies, and world religions is compulsory, but students may be exempted with parental consent. Religious groups are permitted to establish private schools, provided that they meet state curriculum requirements. All public and private schools, including religious schools, are publicly funded.⁷

Ritual slaughter practices not preceded by stunning (including halal and kosher practices) were banned in February 2014; there is no provision for religious exemption.⁸ Circumcision of males is legal so long as it complies with Danish law and is performed by a doctor.⁹ Religious symbols such as headscarves, turbans, large crucifixes, and skullcaps are not permitted as judicial attire.¹⁰

Blasphemy (public mockery of, or insult to, the doctrine or worship of a recognised religion) is illegal, as is hate speech which publicly threatens, insults or degrades individuals on the basis of their religion or beliefs.¹¹

According to the most recent hate crime report by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), officials have not reported any figures for 2014.¹²

Incidents

With respect to reports of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim activity, it should be noted that because ethnicity and religion are often closely linked, it might be difficult to determine whether an incident is motivated by racism or by religious intolerance.

Related to Christianity

According to a television report in 2014, Christians of Middle-Eastern background in Denmark experience high levels of harassment in Muslim-dominated neighbourhoods. Examples include bullying women for wearing visible crosses or for not wearing headscarves.¹³

In November 2014, a study by the People's Church Development Fund, conducted by a priest with Christian asylum seekers, concluded that those questioned were repeatedly exposed to harassment, threats, and physical abuse by other refugees due to their conversion from Islam to Christianity.¹⁴

Related to Judaism

In February 2015, a Danish man of Palestinian origin attacked a Copenhagen synagogue, killing a guard and wounding two policemen, a day after attacking a free-speech debate featuring an artist who had depicted the prophet Muhammad in cartoons. Officials suspected that he was inspired by the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris a month before. Religious and political leaders, as well as up to 1,000 people, participated in a "peace ring" organised by a Copenhagen Muslim, circling the synagogue in a show of solidarity after the attack.¹⁵

According to the 2014 OSCE/ODIHR hate crime report, law enforcement forces reported three physical assaults, two threats, and four incidents of attacks against Jewish-owned property.¹⁶

There was a sharp increase in anti-Semitic incidents during the Gaza conflict in the summer of 2014. The Jewish Society reported 29 incidents from July to August of that year. Examples include a man wearing a Star of David necklace being spat upon and people shouting insults like "Jew pig" in public.¹⁷ A Jewish school in Copenhagen was vandalised¹⁸ and school leaders warned students not to wear visible Jewish symbols outside of school. As a result of these incidents, political and faith leaders met to discuss the issue.¹⁹

Related to Islam

OSCE/ODIHR's 2014 hate crime report does not report any official hate crime data and there were no incidents reported by law enforcement forces.²⁰

In June 2015, the Muslim cemetery operated by the Danish Islamic Burial Fund was desecrated by vandals, with 50 tombstones destroyed and strewn over the grounds. Among those buried in the cemetery was the 22-year-old gunman from the February shootings in Copenhagen. Police initially called the incident a "prank", but then called it "political-religious vandalism" following an outraged reaction on social media.²¹ In August 2015, a man was arrested for attempted arson of the headquarters of the Islamic Society in Denmark while there were 40 people inside the building. The society said that it "was likely the result of political and religious motives."²²

In 2016, two adult education schools announced policies that have been criticised by the Muslim community: one has banned wearing the niqab (which covers a woman's face with an opening for the eyes) and the other has banned prayers at school during school hours. Regarding the ban on prayer, officials said that "religion and education don't belong together."²³ Of the niqab ban, the school claimed that it was not religiously-motivated, but that "free and unhindered communication requires that we can see each other's faces."²⁴

In March 2016, plans to build a mega-mosque in Aarhus were postponed after a television documentary revealed the presence of a Shari'a council there. After the airing of the program, the council voluntarily disbanded out of "respect for Danish values."²⁵

Prospects for Freedom of Religion

While it appears that there was no significant increase in governmental restrictions on religious freedom during the period under review, there seems to be an increased risk of social intolerance towards both majority and minority religions, some of which may be a backlash against global terrorism or geopolitical conflicts attributed to particular religious groups.

¹ Evangelical Lutheran Church

²http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_66_2.asp

³<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17929661>

⁴<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/da.html>

⁵<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/da.html>

⁶<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=238374>

⁷<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=238374>

⁸<http://time.com/3974498/denmark-ban-kosher-halal/>

⁹<http://nordic.businessinsider.com/the-danish-government-defends-circumcision-as-a-human-right---even-though-75-are-against-it-2016-6/>

¹⁰<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=238374>

¹¹<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=238374>

¹²<http://hatecrime.osce.org/denmark?year=2014>

¹³<http://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/2014-09-23-kristne-chikaneres-og-overfaldes-i-danmark>

¹⁴<http://debatez.com/forum/discussion/50/in-denmark-chistian-refugees-persecuted-by-muslims>

¹⁵<http://www.thelocal.dk/20150314/peace-ring-at-copenhagen-synagogue-shooting>

¹⁶<http://hatecrime.osce.org/denmark?year=2014>

¹⁷ http://antisemitism-europe.blogspot.co.uk/2014_08_01_archive.html

¹⁸<http://cphpost.dk/news/local-news/copenhagen-jewish-school-vandalised.html>

¹⁹<http://cphpost.dk/news/leaders-meet-to-discuss-rise-in-anti-semitism.html>

²⁰<http://hatecrime.osce.org/denmark?year=2014>

²¹<http://www.thelocal.dk/20150608/calls-for-unity-in-wake-of-muslim-cemetery-desecration>

²²<http://www.thelocal.dk/20150816/copenhagen-mosque-arson-suspect-held>

²³<http://www.thelocal.dk/20160610/debate-rages-as-danish-school-tells-muslims-they-cant-pray>

²⁴<http://www.thelocal.dk/20160504/danish-school-rejects-muslim-students-over-niqab>

²⁵<http://cphpost.dk/news/aarhus-super-mosque-shelved-following-sharia-revelations.html> and

<http://www.thelocal.dk/20160307/danish-sharia-council-disbands-and-support-for-aarhus-mosque-crumbles>