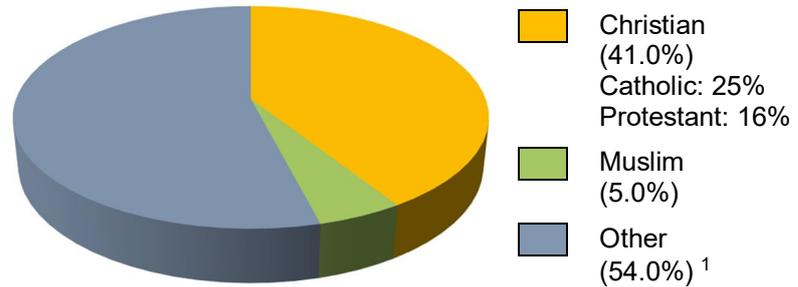


NETHERLANDS



Area:	Population:	Political system:	Major Language(s):
37,350 km ²	16,994,648 ²	Monarchy ³	Dutch, Frisian ⁴

Legal framework for religion and actual application

The Constitution protects freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. Article 6 states: “Everyone shall have the right to profess freely his religion or belief, either individually or in community with others, without prejudice to his responsibility under the law.” The government may restrict the exercise of this right “for protection of health, in the interest of traffic and to combat or prevent disorders”.⁵

All citizens are to be treated equally and discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief is prohibited by the constitution.⁶ The Dutch Criminal Code makes it a crime to make public intentional insults on the basis of religion, as well as to engage in verbal, written, or illustrated incitement to religious hatred.⁷

Education provided by public authorities must pay “due respect to everyone’s religion or belief” and exemption from military service is permitted for serious conscientious objection.⁸ The law permits employees to be exempted from working on certain days for religious reasons, but employers may deny employees this exception depending on the nature of the work, such as employment in the health sector.⁹

There is no legal requirement for religious groups to register with the government, but to receive tax-exempt status religious groups must meet specific criteria. To qualify for tax exemptions, institutions must be “of a philosophical or religious nature”, contribute to the general welfare of society, and be non-profit-making and non-violent.¹⁰ The government has required all imams and other spiritual leaders recruited from Muslim countries to take a one-year integration course before practising in the Netherlands.¹¹

Incidents

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

Related to Judaism

In April 2015, the Centre for Information and Documentation on Israel (CIDI), the country's main anti-Semitism monitoring organisation, reported that it had recorded 171 anti-Semitic incidents in 2014, compared to 100 in the previous year, representing a 71 percent increase. According to the CIDI, half of these incidents took place during the Gaza conflict in the summer of 2014 and “many of the victims of such attacks were those who visually conveyed their Jewish faith by wearing kippahs and other symbols.”¹²

In two anti-Israel political demonstrations in The Hague, some protesters carried black flags representing the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and shouted anti-Jewish statements in Arabic including “Death to the Jews.”¹³ Other demonstrators carried signs displaying swastikas.¹⁴

The government responded to this increase in anti-Semitic incidents during the 2014 Gaza conflict by issuing public statements rejecting “anti-Semitism and any form of discrimination”. It pledged to “take all available measures to counter anti-Semitism and to protect minorities.” The government prosecuted cases involving hate speech and urged individuals to report cases of discrimination based on religion.¹⁵

Government ministers met with the Jewish community to discuss additional measures to counter anti-Semitism and to create a “structural security plan”.¹⁶ Local governments provided supplementary security resources to protect Jewish institutions.¹⁷

In January 2016, a spokesman for the CIDI reported that in 2015 approximately 85 Jewish people emigrated from the Netherlands to Israel, an increase from about 61 a year earlier.¹⁸

In 2014¹⁹ and 2015 there were several incidents during football matches involving the Amsterdam Ajax team, whose fans have taken on a “Jewish identity” owing to the historic presence of the Jewish community in Amsterdam.²⁰ These include football fans chanting anti-Semitic slogans during a match calling, for example, for Jews to be burned and sent “to the gas chambers”. According to Dutch media reports, the chants went on for several minutes and included a common refrain of: “Hamas, Hamas, Jews to the gas.” The Dutch football association condemned these incidents which were investigated by the police.²¹

Anti-Semitism is a recurrent problem in some Dutch schools and especially among Muslim pupils, according to a government-commissioned report published in January 2016. The research for this report, entitled “Two Worlds, Two Realities – How Do You Deal with It as a Teacher,” took place in the summer of 2015, before the Paris attacks of November 2015.²² In it, Dutch Education Minister Jet Bussemaker wrote that the document “shows a reality that is inconvenient and sometimes painful” but one which nevertheless must be confronted and dealt with “in accordance with democratic values”.²³

The CIDI expressed concern about the fact that 15 of the anti-Semitic incidents in 2014 happened in schools. One Jewish student “was stabbed with a protractor, leaving him with a stomach wound of more than 20 centimetres. There were also several cases of victims having to change schools or classes.”²⁴

In 2014, the CIDI reported six physical assaults, including one in which a rabbi was almost run over by a car and another in which a woman was violently grabbed; three threats; two incidents of damage to property; and 20 incidents of damage to Jewish property.²⁵ Other anti-Semitic incidents included an attack on a rabbi’s house in Amersfoort, a Molotov cocktail thrown at an apartment showing an Israeli flag, and an assault on a Jewish woman in Amsterdam.²⁶ In 2015, an elderly Jewish couple were violently assaulted and robbed in their home while being called “dirty Jews.”²⁷ And in 2016, police investigated a New Year’s Eve fireworks attack on a Jewish family and their home in Amsterdam.²⁸

Related to Islam

In 2014, the Turkish Forum reported to the OSCE “a physical attack against a Muslim woman, during which her veil was torn off; five incidents of threats, one of which involved damage to a private home; three arson attacks, including one on a mosque; two attempted arson attacks on mosques; eight incidents of graffiti; four incidents of damage to property; and the desecration of a mosque involving a pig's head.”²⁹

In 2015, after the *Charlie Hebdo* attack in Paris, there was a significant increase in threats against Dutch mosques, resulting in a meeting between government officials and representatives of the Muslim community. The government issued a statement saying, “Expressions of Islamophobia are unacceptable. Destruction of mosques will not be tolerated. Perpetrators will have to answer to the criminal justice system and the courts.”³⁰

According to a University of Amsterdam researcher, anti-Muslim incidents are under-reported. “Many Mosque leaders choose not to make the violence against their address public ... because they do not want to exacerbate the matter.” As of 1st March 2016 there were already 20 threats against mosques, compared to 28 cases reported in the previous year.³¹

In November 2015, after the Paris attacks, a mosque in Roosendaal was the target of attempted arson when gasoline was poured throughout the prayer room.³² At the end of February 2016, a mosque in Enschede was attacked by a Molotov cocktail while people were inside, in what the Public Prosecutor called an act of terrorism.³³ Although the Minister of Social Affairs acknowledged that mosques were facing nearly daily threats, he also said that no extra security measures would be implemented until they became necessary.³⁴

The arrival of about 59,000 refugees in 2015, nearly double that of 2014, resulted in several violent demonstrations and asylum centres becoming the target of threats. As the police only began to record the anti-Muslim nature of attacks and discrimination in 2015, there are no official figures available to enable the assessment of any increase in aggression towards Muslims.³⁵

Regarding the question of wearing headscarves in schools and places of employment, national and municipal anti-discrimination boards have ruled on individual complaints. “The rulings generally held that any restriction on wearing headscarves should be limited and based on security or other carefully delineated grounds pertaining to the nature of the work. In practice, headscarves were permitted almost everywhere, including in schools.”³⁶ In 2015, the Dutch cabinet approved a partial ban on “face-covering clothing”, including the Islamic burqa and niqab, in “specific situations where it is essential for people to be seen” such as on public transport, in schools, government buildings, and healthcare institutions.³⁷

Related to Christianity

During the period under review, there were, so far as research was able to establish, no reports of incidents specifically directed against churches. However, in late February 2016, Dutch politicians agreed to establish separate housing facilities for asylum seekers identified as vulnerable persons, and who were harassed by other asylum seekers for a variety of reasons. This provision includes Christian asylum seekers³⁸.

Prospects for Freedom of Religion

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

¹ 2014 survey of Statistics Netherlands

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238416>

²<http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?VW=T&DM=SLEN&PA=37943eng&LA=EN>

³ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/nl.html>

⁴ Frisian is an official language of Frysland province, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/nl.html>

⁵<https://www.government.nl/binaries/government/documents/regulations/2012/10/18/the-constitution-of-the-kingdom-of-the-netherlands-2008/the-constitution-of-the-kingdom-of-the-netherlands-2008.pdf>

⁶<https://www.government.nl/binaries/government/documents/regulations/2012/10/18/the-constitution-of-the-kingdom-of-the-netherlands-2008/the-constitution-of-the-kingdom-of-the-netherlands-2008.pdf>

⁷http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/legal_research/national_legal_measures/Netherlands/Netherlands_SR.pdf

⁸<https://www.government.nl/binaries/government/documents/regulations/2012/10/18/the-constitution-of-the-kingdom-of-the-netherlands-2008/the-constitution-of-the-kingdom-of-the-netherlands-2008.pdf>

⁹<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238416>

¹⁰<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238416>

¹¹<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238416>

¹² <http://europe.newsweek.com/securing-jewish-sites-will-not-solve-rising-anti-semitism-says-top-dutch-rabbi-322258?rm=eu>

¹³<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238416>

¹⁴http://www.telegraaf.nl/binnenland/22851471/_Tonen_nazivlag_schandalig_.html

¹⁵<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238416>

¹⁶ <http://www.nltimes.nl/2014/06/20/jewish-communities-get-security-justice-dept/>

¹⁷<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238416>

¹⁸ <http://www.nltimes.nl/2016/01/08/more-jews-fled-netherlands-for-israel-amid-anti-semitism-rise/>

¹⁹<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238416>

²⁰ <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/football-why-tottenham-and-ajax-fans-have-a-jewish-identity-a-926095.html>

²¹ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/dutch-police-investigate-burn-the-jews-anti-semitic-chants-at-fc-utrecht-vs-ajax-football-match-10160426.html>

²² <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2016/02/01/twee-werelden-twee-werkelijkheden-een-verslag-over-gevoelige-maatschappelijke-kwesties-in-de-school>

²³ <http://neurope.eu/article/anti-semitism-a-recurrent-problem-in-netherlands-schools/>

²⁴ <http://www.nltimes.nl/2015/04/02/anti-semitism-on-the-rise-incidents-up-71-pct-group-claims/>

²⁵ <http://hatecrime.osce.org/netherlands>

²⁶<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238416>

²⁷ <http://www.nltimes.nl/2015/09/07/elderly-couple-called-dirty-jews-in-violent-robbery/>

²⁸ <http://www.nltimes.nl/2016/01/05/fireworks-attack-on-jewish-family-included-anti-semitic-shouting-amsterdam-mayor-to-respond/>

²⁹ <http://hatecrime.osce.org/netherlands>

³⁰ <https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2015/01/09/press-statement-issued-following-the-meeting-with-muslim-organisations-on-9-january-2015>

³¹ <http://www.nltimes.nl/2016/03/01/violence-against-muslims-mosques-largely-unreported/>

³² <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/03/netherlands-mosque-attacks-rising-islamophobia-160308101155120.html>

³³ <http://www.nltimes.nl/2016/03/03/mosque-molotov-cocktail-fire-an-act-of-terrorism-says-prosecutor/>

³⁴ <http://www.nltimes.nl/2016/03/11/no-extra-security-for-dutch-mosques/>

³⁵ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/03/netherlands-mosque-attacks-rising-islamophobia-160308101155120.html>

³⁶<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238416>

³⁷ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/22/netherlands-islamic-veil-niqab-ban-proposal-dutch-cabinet>

³⁸ <http://www.gospelherald.com/articles/62621/20160302/dutch-politicians-agree-on-separate-facilities-for-gay-and-christian-asylum-seekers.htm>