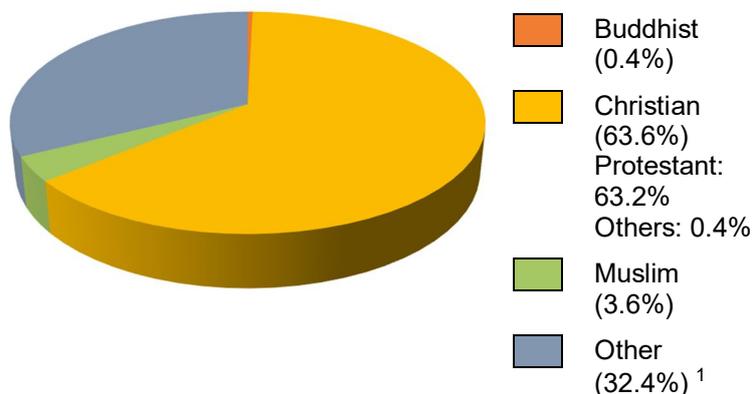


SWEDEN



Area²: 449,964 km ²	Population³: 9.5 million	Political system: Monarchy ⁴	Major Language(s): Swedish, Sami, Finnish ⁵
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Legal Framework of Religion and actual application

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation and complaints may be filed with the Discrimination Ombudsman.⁶

Recognition or registration of groups is not required to carry out religious activity and faith communities are taxed similarly to non-profit organisations. However, officially recognised religious groups (the Church of Sweden and 44 other religious groups) may raise revenues through the Commission for State Grants to Religious Communities.⁷

Threats or expressions of contempt for individuals based on religious belief are prohibited by hate speech laws. Several regions have hate crime units within their police departments to detect, raise awareness of, and inform the public of hate crimes. Police maintain statistics on hate crimes, including religiously motivated hate crimes.⁸ In 2014, the government issued a directive making the National Council for Crime Prevention (BRÅ) responsible for the production of hate crime statistics.⁹

According to BRÅ and the National Point of Contact on Hate Crimes, such crimes increased in 2014 by 14 percent from the previous year – the largest increase since hate crimes statistics have been recorded.¹⁰ The sharpest rise was among crimes with an anti-Christian bias. Islamophobia and anti-Semitic crimes also significantly increased.¹¹

Instruction covering all world religions is required in all public and private schools. Religious groups are permitted to establish private schools, provided they meet state curriculum requirements.¹² Home schooling, including for religious reasons, is not permitted except under “extraordinary circumstances.” The Jewish and Christian families who have challenged this law, arguing that it infringes on their fundamental rights, have been unsuccessful.¹³

There are legal restrictions on both animal slaughter and circumcision of males that some Jews and Muslims have said interfere with their religious traditions.¹⁴

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

Official figures reported to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) for the 2014 hate crimes report include 440 “anti-religious hate crimes”, 308 of which were motivated by bias against Christians. The OSCE/ODIHR report does not differentiate between Christians and “other religions”, except Judaism and Islam, in its reporting of type of crime, but it appears that around half of the incidents were threats, 38 percent were attacks on property, and 14 percent were physical assaults. The report does not indicate any submissions by civil society groups about incidents against Christians.¹⁵

The first incidents of violence and discrimination against Christians were reported in the wake of the “refugee crisis” that began in 2015. In accommodation centres, the Swedish Migration Service implemented a policy of not separating people on religious lines. Reports have suggested that Christian minorities were harmed by radical Muslim migrants.

In September 2015, a 26-year-old, who claimed to have fought with jihadist groups in Syria, was arrested by police after threatening to “slaughter” and “cut the throat” of a Christian refugee. The perpetrator was ultimately sentenced only to probation and a monetary fine.¹⁶ In October 2015, a Pakistani couple had to leave a shelter in Western Sweden where they were staying after harassment by some of the Muslims in the housing ended with the husband’s name being sprayed on a wall near their room calling for his death. According to the husband, the Swedish Migration Board was notified, but did not take any steps to protect the couple so they moved to a church shelter.¹⁷

The Swedish Evangelical Alliance, as well as the Patriarch of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church, has appealed to Swedish authorities for action to protect Christians in refugee housing.¹⁸

Vandalism against Christian buildings included an arson attack against a Lutheran church in August 2015, during which the perpetrators used a Molotov cocktail to set fire to the building.¹⁹ The Assyrian Christian community was the victim of threats and attacks, including an arson attack in December 2015 which completely destroyed the headquarters of the National Association of Assyrians in Sweden. Islamists took responsibility.²⁰ Assyrian-owned businesses in Gothenburg were targets of jihadist graffiti, including messages of “Convert or Die.”²¹

Related to Judaism

According to the 2014 OSCE/ODIHR hate crime report (the most recent available), officials recorded 146 anti-Semitic hate crimes (12 physical assaults, 54 cases of attacks against property and 80 cases of threats).²² Civil society reported two violent attacks (including two physical assaults against a rabbi on the same day) and five incidents of attacks against property.²³

According to the Kantor Centre for the Study of Contemporary Jewry, there was a pronounced anti-Israel atmosphere in Scandinavia during the Gaza conflict in the summer of 2014. In Sweden, politicians’ and other public figures’ public media criticisms of Israel were met with clearly anti-Semitic comments online.²⁴ The Jewish communities in Stockholm and Malmö reported that youth of Middle Eastern origin perpetrated many of the anti-Semitic hate crimes.²⁵

Examples of physical attacks include a July 2014 assault by 10 men with iron pipes on a man in Malmö after he hung an Israeli flag from his window. In August 2014, a rabbi in Malmö was attacked twice in one day by unknown men.²⁶ Furthermore, in November 2014, the newspaper Goteborgs-Posten in Gothenburg reported that the city's rabbi received death threats via email.²⁷

Examples of attacks on property include the vandalism of a Jewish man's car in Stockholm in September 2014. All the windows were smashed and a laminated card with a swastika had been placed under the windshield wiper. Rocks were thrown at several synagogues in Swedish cities, resulting in smashed windows.²⁸ In October 2014, two swastika flags were raised in Kronoberg in southern Sweden: one in a school courtyard; the second outside a grocery store in Vaxjo.²⁹

The Kantor Centre reported that the Jewish community in Malmö was shrinking to critically low levels, with as few as 700 members compared to more than 1,000 ten years ago, but does not attribute this to anti-Semitism. In Stockholm, street anti-Semitism is common and men are advised not to wear a kippah or other Jewish symbols in public.³⁰ The Simon Wiesenthal Centre still maintains its 2010 travel advisory for Jews traveling in southern Sweden, warning Jews in Malmö could be "subject to anti-Semitic taunts and harassment."³¹

In a bid to combat anti-Semitism, two seminars, one in Gothenburg and one in Malmö, were arranged in 2014 by the Swedish Committee against Anti-Semitism in co-operation with the cities of Gothenburg and Malmö, and with support from the Ministry of Employment.³² In August 2015, the government announced it would grant SEK 2 million (US\$259,000) to the Swedish Jewish Council to increase security for Jewish congregations in light of religious tensions.³³

In 2015, the Simon Wiesenthal Centre again reiterated its 2010 travel advisory, saying the situation for Jews had worsened in Malmö. In addition to serial harassment of the city's rabbi, incidents in 2015 included harassment of "Jewish citizens by Muslim youth" as they buried loved ones in the Jewish cemetery; and "a group of anti-Israeli demonstrators, wearing protective clothing and masks in order to avoid being infected by Zionist bacteria and 'Isolera' viruses, entered some stores in the city to confiscate Israeli products, declaring them fruits of illegal occupation of Palestine and as such must be boycotted or destroyed."³⁴

Related to Islam

OSCE/ODIHR's 2014 hate crime report provides official figures of 281 crimes motivated by anti-Muslim bias (60 physical assaults, 24 cases of attacks against property, and 197 cases of threats).³⁵ There were no incidents reported by civil society.³⁶

In September 2014 the Supreme Court ruled that a 56-year-old man's physical attack on two veiled women was a hate crime. Witnesses heard the man screaming obscenities about Muslims, saying "I hate you all."³⁷ In February 2015, the imam of the Stockholm Mosque and his family received death threats.³⁸

At the end of 2014, several Swedish mosques were attacked in one week, and in the aftermath of the January 2015 Charlie Hebdo attack, a Swedish mosque received a bomb threat.³⁹ In response, the national police have tightened security at mosques and other religious buildings across the country and there were demonstrations held to show support and solidarity with the Muslim population.⁴⁰

In 2015, the Discrimination Ombudsman ruled that the Karolinska Institute discriminated against a Muslim dentistry student when it refused to mitigate its hygiene and clothing policies to allow her to wear a uniform with long sleeves, instead of short sleeves.⁴¹

The Ankara-based Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research's (SETA) 2015 European Islamophobia Report says: "Negative and/or discriminating trends toward Islam and

Muslims in Sweden are generally evident in every aspect of society included in this report: Media, legal, political, and school systems, the labour market and in public attitudes.”⁴²

Prospects for Freedom of Religion

While it appears that there were no significant new or increased governmental restrictions on religious freedom during the period under review, there seems to be an increasing societal intolerance against both majority and minority religions, some of which may be a backlash to global terrorism or geopolitical conflicts attributed to religious groups, as well as anti-immigration sentiments in Sweden.

¹ http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_215_1.asp

² <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17955808>

³ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17955808>

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

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

⁶ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238438>

⁷ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238438>

⁸ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238438>

⁹ <http://hatecrime.osce.org/sweden>

¹⁰ <http://hatecrime.osce.org/sweden>

¹¹ <http://www.thelocal.se/20150805/record-increase-in-swedish-hate-crimes>

¹² <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238438>

¹³ <https://www.hslda.org/hs/international/Sweden/201501060.asp>

¹⁴ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238438>

¹⁵ <http://hatecrime.osce.org/sweden>

¹⁶ <http://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/case/sunni-muslim-threatens-to-kill-christian-syrian-in-kalmar-accommodation.html>

¹⁷ <http://www.dagen.se/hotad-pa-asylboende-flyttade-till-kyrka-1.421974>

¹⁸ <http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/christian-refugees-facing-persecution-in-sweden-asylum-centers/>

¹⁹ <http://www.dagen.se/man-anhallna-for-kyrkobranden-1.390425>

²⁰ <http://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/case/national-association-of-assyrians-in-sweden-victim-of-arson.html>

²¹ <http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/restaurangagare-hotades-med-is-budskap-konvertera-eller-do/>

²² Figures reported to ODIHR include an estimated 264 hate crime reports. The number reported by ODIHR excludes cases of defamation and hate speech that do not fall within the OSCE definition of hate crime.

²³ <http://hatecrime.osce.org/sweden>

²⁴ <http://kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/sites/default/files/Scandinavia%202014.pdf>

²⁵ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238438>

²⁶ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238438>

²⁷ <http://kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/sites/default/files/Scandinavia%202014.pdf>

²⁸ <http://kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/sites/default/files/Scandinavia%202014.pdf>

²⁹ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238438>

³⁰ <http://kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/sites/default/files/Scandinavia%202014.pdf>

³¹ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238438>

³² <http://hatecrime.osce.org/sweden>

³³ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238438>

³⁴ <http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/apps/nlnet/content.aspx?c=IsKWLBpJLnF&b=8776547&ct=14546401>

³⁵ Figures reported to ODIHR include an estimated 492 hate crime reports. The number reported by ODIHR excludes cases of defamation and hate speech that do not fall within the OSCE definition of hate crime.

³⁶ <http://hatecrime.osce.org/sweden>

³⁷ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=238438>

³⁸ http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/reports/2015/en/EIR_2015_SWEDEN.pdf

³⁹ <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/religious-discrimination-a-common-denominator-for-muslims-in-western-europe>

⁴⁰ http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/03/world/in-sweden-the-land-of-the-open-door-anti-muslim-sentiment-finds-a-foothold.html?_r=0

⁴¹ <http://www.do.se/lag-och-ratt/diskrimineringsarenanden/karolinska-institutet/>

⁴² http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/reports/2015/en/EIR_2015_SWEDEN.pdf