



## Religion

## Population

## Area

- Christians : **81.3%**
- Agnostics : **11.6%**
- Muslims : **4.7%**
- Others : **2.4%**

5.691.000

42.921 Km<sup>2</sup>

## Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application

The constitution guarantees the right of individuals to worship according to their beliefs so long as they are not contrary to morals, and do not disturb the public order. Equally, they have the right to form congregations.<sup>[1]</sup> No one may be deprived of their civil and political rights because of religious beliefs,<sup>[2]</sup> and conscientious objectors are exempt from military service.<sup>[3]</sup>

The Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) is the national Church and is supported by the state. The reigning monarch must also be a member of the Church.<sup>[4]</sup> The Ministry of Culture and Ecclesiastical Affairs has officially registered 176 other religious groups, 113 of which are Christian, 30 Muslim, 15 Buddhist, 8 Hindu, and three Jewish communities. 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, provide residence permits for clergy, and tax exemptions<sup>[5]</sup>

Religious instruction in Evangelical Lutheran theology is compulsory, as are world religions, life philosophies, and ethics. Parents may however request that their children be exempt. All public and private schools, including religious schools, are publicly funded. Non-compulsory prayer in schools is permitted at the discretion of the schools<sup>[6]</sup>

Ritual slaughter practices not preceded by stunning (including halal and kosher practises) are illegal, but halal and kosher food may be imported. Judges are not allowed to wear religious symbols such as headscarves, turbans, large crucifixes, and skullcaps.<sup>[7]</sup> A bill drafted by the Ministry of Justice in early 2018 would ban face-coverings in public, including the burqa and niqab.<sup>[8]</sup>

Circumcision of males is legal so long as it complies with Danish law and is performed by a doctor. However, a citizens' petition was filed in 2018 requesting Parliament ban the procedure. Muslim and Jewish leaders have criticised the

proposal.<sup>[9]</sup>

The Danish Parliament repealed the blasphemy provision in the Danish Penal Code on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2017. In the months that followed, Blasphemy charges against a man accused of burning of a *Qur'an* were dropped by prosecutors.<sup>[10]</sup> Speech which publicly threatens, insults, or degrades individuals on the basis of their religion or belief remains illegal.<sup>[11]</sup>

In December 2016 the Aliens Act was amended to include section 29c which enables the Danish Immigration Service to create a “sanctions list” to prohibit certain religious preachers from entering the country if concern for public order in Denmark requires it.<sup>[12]</sup> As of December 2017, the list bans 11 preachers, all of whom are Muslim except an American pastor who burnt copies of the *Qur'an* in 2011.<sup>[13]</sup>

## Incidents

The 2016 Hate Crime Reporting database provides official figures for six unspecified crimes motivated by anti-Christian bias.<sup>[14]</sup> There were no anti-Christian incidents reported by civil society organizations.<sup>[15]</sup>

According to a July 2016 survey of priests living near housing for asylum seekers and a 2016 report by the Danish Institute for Human Rights, Christian asylum seekers were subjected to harassment and threats because of their conversions from Islam to Christianity.<sup>[16]</sup>

The Hate Crime database provides official figures of 21 unspecified crimes motivated by anti-Semitism.<sup>[17]</sup> There were five incidents (one attack against property and four threats) reported by civil society organisations.<sup>[18]</sup>

In August 2016, someone threw a brick through the window of a kosher butcher shop in Copenhagen.<sup>[19]</sup> In September 2016, a Jewish man received threatening messages referring to the Holocaust and a Jewish man working for a youth organisation was insulted with anti-Semitic slurs and threatened.<sup>[20]</sup>

In May 2017, a Jewish community leader in Denmark complained about a sermon made by an imam at the Masjid al-Faruq mosque in Copenhagen in which he encouraged attacks on Jews.<sup>[21]</sup>

The *Hate Crime* database did not report any anti-Muslim crimes and no incidents were reported by civil society organisations.<sup>[22]</sup>

In August 2016, a Muslim school was vandalised with anti-Islamic epithets and targets painted on several windows. In September 2016, members of an anti-Islamic group vandalised a grave in a Muslim cemetery with a blood-like substance and a pig's head.<sup>[23]</sup>

## Prospects for freedom of religion

In the period analysed, there were no other significant incidents nor any negative developments regarding religious freedom in Denmark. If the proposed legislation criminalising circumcision of boys passes, it may have a negative impact on the religious freedom of Muslims and Jews in Denmark.

## Endnotes / Sources

[1] Denmark's Constitution of 1953, Article 67, [constituteproject.org](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Denmark_1953.pdf?lang=en), [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Denmark\\_1953.pdf?lang=en](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Denmark_1953.pdf?lang=en), (accessed 12 February 2018).

[2] Ibid, Article 70.

[3] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 'Denmark, International Religious Freedom Report for 2016, U.S. State Department, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>, (accessed 12th February 2018).

[4] Denmark's Constitution of 1953, Articles 4 and 6.

[5] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, op. cit.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] 'Denmark's burka ban could also forbid masks and fake beards', The Local – Denmark, 26th January 2018, <https://www.thelocal.dk/20180126/denmarks-burka-ban-could-also-forbid-masks-and-fake-beards>, (accessed 26th February 2018); J. Blem Larsen and P. Glud, 'Forbud mod burkaer skal også gælde kunstigt skæg, masker og huer', DR, 25th January 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/forbud-mod-burkaer-skal-ogsaa-gaelde-kunstigt-skaeg-masker-og-huer>, (accessed 26th February 2018).

[9] S. Gadd, 'Ban circumcision for boys under-18s, says Intact Denmark', The Copenhagen Post, 30th January 2018, <http://cphpost.dk/news/ban-circumcision-for-boys-under-18s-says-intact-denmark.html>, (accessed 20 February 2018).

[10] Elin Hofverberg, 'Denmark: Blasphemy Law Repealed', Global Legal Monitor, Library of Congress, 6th July 2017, <http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/denmark-blasphemy-law-repealed/>, (accessed 4 February 2018).

[11] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, op. cit.

[12] Forslag til Lov om ændring af udlændingeloven [Bill of the law on Amending the Aliens Act], Section 29c, Folketinget (Danish Parliament), [http://www.ft.dk/Rl/pdf/samling/20161/lovforslag/L48/20161\\_L48\\_som\\_vedtaget.pdf](http://www.ft.dk/Rl/pdf/samling/20161/lovforslag/L48/20161_L48_som_vedtaget.pdf), (accessed 25th February 2018).

[13] 'Denmark adds Saudi cleric to list of banned "hate preachers"', The Local – Denmark, 12th December 2017, <https://www.thelocal.dk/20171212/denmark-adds-saudi-priest-to-list-of-banned-hate-preachers>, (accessed 25th February 2018).

[14] Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2016 Hate Crime Reporting – Denmark, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, <http://hatecrime.osce.org/denmark>, (accessed 7th February 2018).

[15] Ibid.

[16] Jonas Christoffersen, Louise Holck, Ulla Dyrborg, Emil Kiørboe and Christoffer Badse (eds), Human Rights in Denmark: Status 2016-2017, The Danish Institute for Human Rights, [https://www.humanrights.dk/sites/humanrights.dk/files/media/dokumenter/udgivelser/status/dihr\\_status\\_2016-17\\_uk.pdf](https://www.humanrights.dk/sites/humanrights.dk/files/media/dokumenter/udgivelser/status/dihr_status_2016-17_uk.pdf), (accessed 16th February 2018);

[17] 2016 Hate Crime Reporting – Denmark, op. cit.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, op. cit.

[20] 2016 Hate Crime Reporting – Denmark, op. cit.

[21] 'Copenhagen imam accused of calling for killing of Jews', BBC, 11th May 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39885745>, (accessed 22nd February 2017).

[22] Jonas Christoffersen et al., op. cit.

[23] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Op. cit.