



EU Quick Guide

to support the protection
of Places of Worship

(May 2021)

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1. Foreword

On 9 December 2020, the European Commission presented a new EU Counter-Terrorism Agenda for 2020 to 2025¹ in which the Commission commits to focusing on priority areas where the EU can bring value in support of Member States efforts to increase security in Europe.

Places of worship of all faiths are recognised as holding particularly high symbolic value and have been frequently targeted by terrorists. Therefore, the Commission services consider it a priority to strengthen their protection by fostering cooperation between the different faith communities and with relevant national authorities, and by supporting projects that enhance their physical protection.

As a first step, the Commission services have drawn up this quick guide to help places of worship assess the risks they face and implement measures that increase their protection against terrorism. Further action will follow as of 2021 to increase awareness, protection and capacity of stakeholders, notably through the EU Operators Forum on the Protection of Public Spaces and by supporting financially relevant projects through the Internal Security Fund – Police.

Valuable guidance to support the protection of public spaces, collected through a comprehensive public-private dialogue in the EU Operator's Forum, is already contained in a Commission Staff Working Document of 20 March 2019². That guidance, however, is of a general nature, aimed at all types of operators of public spaces. In view of the current terrorist threat to places of worship, the Commission services considered it essential to identify, through this quick guide, additional good practices that are specific to the protection of places of worship and their unique nature.

This quick guide has been subject to consultation of the EU Operator's Forum. It is designed to be a living document, which will be updated and revised, as necessary.

¹ COM(2020) 795 final.

² SWD(2019) 140 final.

2. Purpose of the Quick Guide

This quick guide has been elaborated by the **Commission services** (DG HOME Protective Security Advisory team) in cooperation with the police units of the **EU High Risk Security Network** created in 2018 to support protection of public spaces and high-risk locations.



Creating a guidance template that is fitting all places of worship representing **Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism and other faiths** is very challenging. The aim is to provide some **basic guidance** principles while maintaining the sacred nature of the places of worship.

Please note that this guide is

- aiming to support places of worship in defending against **random acts of violence** and it is less effective against sophisticated terrorist plots.
- for general awareness building and basic security building at places of worship that may be considered due to their size or location as **“low risk”**.
- **not** intended for evaluating places of worship representing a “higher risk” due to possible threats associated either with their symbolic location, religious events or visits of persons of high importance.
- aiming to achieve improved awareness and attempting to look at the resilience of places of worship against a **limited number of threats** such as: Vehicle, Firearms, Explosive and Bladed Weapon.

Vehicle threats



Firearms threats



Explosive threats

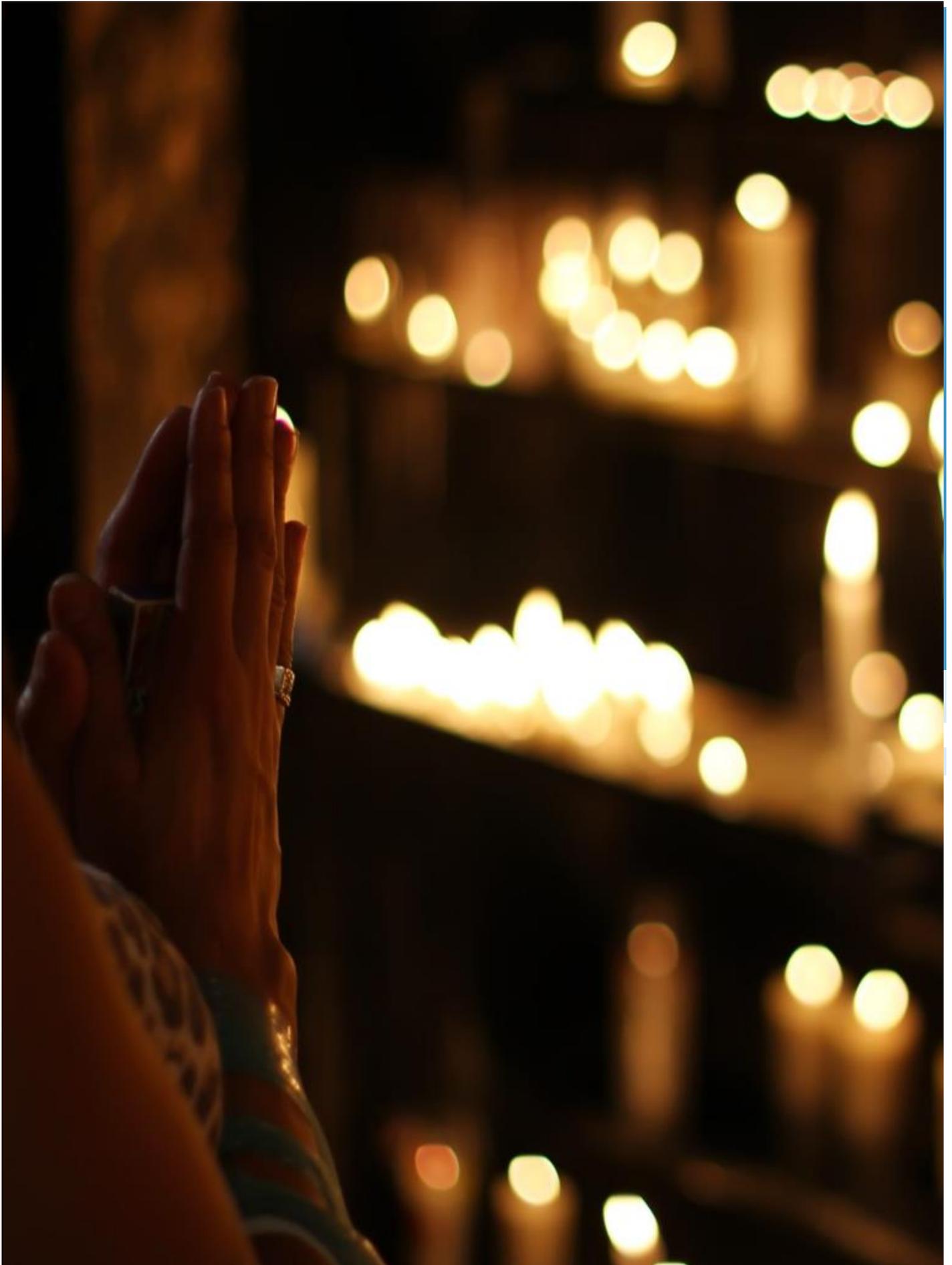


Bladed threats



Police officer inside church after the terrorist attack and murder of a priest in church attack in Rouen





3. Managing the Risk

Without breaking the principles of the sanctuary that places of worship represent, such places can deploy certain measures, which may dissuade or deter potential attackers who are acting without advanced preparation and who may choose a place of worship simply **at random** and **as a target of opportunity**.

Some very basic security measures may prove highly efficient such as a strong door lock which prevented the 2019 Halle Synagogue shooter from entering and killing and injuring innocent worshippers.



Attackers who may select the attack location at **random** could be mitigated by some basic security steps and measures which include:

- **Visual Deterrents**: deploy signs, post guards and guard booths, even imitation of CCTV cameras and signs as well as other actions that may give the impression of robust security that could potentially discourage attacker.
- **Detection Capability**: create awareness among staff, establish a basic environment to detect strange and abnormal behaviour or direct threats, consider physical measures, CCTV, monitoring of abandoned and suspicious packages.
- **Response Capability**: once you have detected a potential threat, establish a functional alert system that can covertly or openly alert your colleagues, staff and worshippers and law enforcements of potential danger, and can activate your evacuation process?

Whilst the responsibility for security inside a place of worship rests with the faith organisation, attackers have in the past also targeted the areas and patrons of such events outside such places. The 2017 van attack in London on mosque worshippers as well as other attack examples show that operators should not only consider “in-house” security, but also the security of areas outside the place of worship which may be targeted.

Public sidewalks or areas adjacent to places of worship may, during certain periods, become subject of random attacks targeting the worshippers. Therefore, whilst defending against such attacks may be challenging, especially in light of COVID-19 social distancing rules, security concepts needs to consider also the vulnerabilities that exist outside the physical boundaries of the places of worship.

Addressing such vulnerabilities demands often that a security partnership between the places of worship operators and authorities is established via private-public partnership and established community protection programmes.



4. Building Basic Awareness



Attempting to defend against every possible threat in a place of worship will conflict with the very principle that places of worship represent. Therefore, the security and security awareness in the places of worship must be addressed in a respectful and balanced manner to preserve the nature of sanctuary that all places of worship represent.

When designing the process, some key components to be considered are:

- What are the core threats and how do I carry out my risk assessment process?
- What are the threats to mitigate against and what are the consequences of an attack?
- What are my vulnerabilities and what risks am I willing to accept?
- What actions can I take in my place of worship?

Security awareness and preparedness of the staff and the faith leaders inside a place of worship is crucial to potentially recognise and respond to the signs of impending acts of violence.

Risk acceptance is part of the risk management process and an essential part of any security process – and places of worship are no exception. Therefore designing, planning and implementing the right security process and measures in places of worship means building on traditional threats and a risk assessment methodology, which is adapted to the physical nature of places of worship.

The history of attacks against different places of worship and different religions, has led to creating differences in the security cultures and awareness among the different faiths and their places of worship.

This is where more work is needed.





5. Principles for a Security Evaluation for Places of Worship

There are many physical differences between the various places of worship. Even within the same denomination, such differences can play a significant role and therefore a moderate approach should be taken when evaluating small to medium size places of worship.

Be mindful that, although the risk is reduced, for a number of reasons a small place of worship can be targeted by an opportunistic attacker just as well as a large monument with a symbolic value.

The following **guiding questions** and the **security checklist** aim to aid you in evaluating the security of your facility and offer suggestions for some basic actions you may consider. Pictures aim to illustrate potential situations and aid the evaluators.

- a) Do you maintain the same security level of your facility during certain seasonal events (Hanukah, Ramadan, Christmas etc) when the threat may be elevated?



- b) Do you have signage in front of the place of worship, which indicates security measures are applicable inside the facility?
- c) Are the main entry points freely accessible or is access to the place of worship granted after visual verification of those requesting access?
- d) Has your facility been targeted in the past by vandalism, hate and racist graffiti, threatening calls or emails, threats on social media and other events ?
- e) Are the practitioners gathering in front of the place of worship before or after the religious activities? Are the gathering places exposed to possible vehicle attacks or other possible threats ?





- f) Are there side or rear entrances that give access to the place of worship? Can these be opened from the outside and give unexpected access to the interior of the place of worship? Can such exits be used when exiting from the inside or give access to persons outside?



- g) What are the evacuation routes from the place of worship? Are the routes tested regularly to ensure that the doors and pathways are not blocked and allow expected evacuation flow? Are there any safe rooms inside the facility that can provide robust shelter against attackers?

h) Does your place of worship provide parking facilities, are these open or do they require some form of access control? Could the carpark be exploited to conduct a bombing attack? Could the parking be exploited as a platform for firearms attack (ex. poor lighting) (below, the Christchurch Al Noor Mosque parking with victims cars)



i) Is the main gate or access point lockable and is the access strong enough to prevent external break-in attempts? What actions could be taken to strengthen the access?

Below - Synagogue attacker shooting at the locked door



Below -Fire arms attacker outside New York church



j) In case of threatening situations outside of the door of your facility, can the access point be quickly closed and locked quickly when emergency occurs to prevent access and guarantee protection of worshipper ?

k) In case you or the faith leader(s) conducting the gathering of worshipers observes suspicious behaviour by a person(s) inside the place of worship, what possible silent alert system could be installed to alert facility staff – is a silent alert system feasible – can a WI-FI system be installed? If there is an emergency, *will you have time to open your smart phone, open the app and activate emergency?*



l) Is your CCTV capable of monitoring areas and allow you to identify possible strange behaviour? Is the CCTV continuously monitored by trained staff to enable detection of suspicious acts ? Otherwise, such tool should be considered as a tool that may aid post crime investigations (theft and other types of crime). Is there an access control system which is linked with CCTV monitoring? Could CCTV monitoring allow you to respond and protect your facility?



CCTV of Mosque firebomber in Australia.



Security fighting with axe attacker outside Ukrainian Synagogue

m) Is there a security system, which is linked with a silent alert? Is this silent alert linked with the Police or a private security provider? Have you tested recently the silent alert response? How long is the response time to given alerts?



n) Hostile Monitoring – attackers have used different means to monitor security or layout of different attack targets, have you reviewed the internet available data (ex. *Google Streetview*, live webcams – ex. *windy.com*) to establish if your facility is well detailed and could provide support for attackers? Could the facility operations offer a target to conceal explosives (e.g. rubbish bins and other storage equipment).



o) In case you cannot install a CCTV system, could you install imitation CCTV cameras which may cause people to think that the place is well monitored and secured? Could you place security labels on facility staff cars outside of your facility to imitate the presence of security?



p) Can you install a small security booth outside the place of worship which intends to imply the presence of security?

q) Are there regular controls of parcels or items left in the place of worship? Is your facility receiving a sizable number of shipments? Could you be targeted by terrorists via mail parcels?

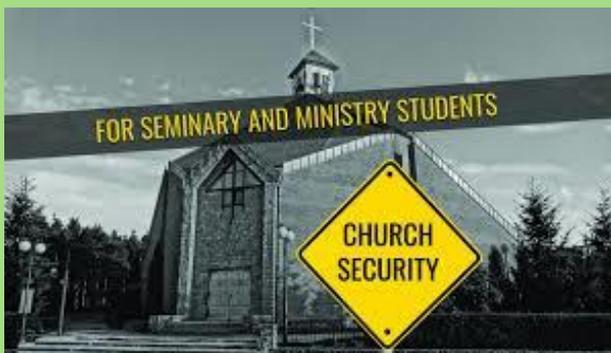
r) As noted from the past attacks against places of worship, religious leaders can be often a target and therefore, are you taking any steps to protect them? Do they alter their ways when travelling to and from places of worship? Can some unpredictability be built into their daily routines?



Mosque evacuated after a bomb threat



s) Have you in the past conducted any type of emergency response trials to see how your staff will perform in a crisis situation? Does the staff supporting the activities in the place of worship know what procedures to undertake in case of emergency (excluding the burglary scenarios)? Have you conducted any security awareness activities with the staff?



t) Have you established an effective and clear communication channel with authorities involved in the response to an emergency in your place of worship (ex. police, civil protection, fire and emergency responders)? Is everyone among the staff aware of these contacts?



u) Have you established a working contact with the public authorities responsible for security of places of worship to receive security information and other relevant risk information ?

v) Do you utilise the social media platforms to alert your worshippers of details concerning religious activities ? If yes, would you consider also including some basic security messages into such future communications to increase security awareness without raising concerns among your practitioners ?



w) Has the COVID-19 pandemic measures such as social distancing created potential vulnerabilities? Are the worshipers more exposed to threats like vehicle ramming or firearms attack when they are outside of your place of worship?



When using the checklist and guidance, you may divide your assessment activities into different actions and phases that may affect the place of worship or the event:

- Vicinity of the place of worship –
- Opening up the place of worship-
- Arrival of worshippers –
- The Religious Event –
- Departure/Exit of worshippers –
- Closing of the place of worship-



* * *

6. Can EU Help ?

The EU Protective Security Advisors (PSA) team of experts is available to support you with technical advice.

In case of questions concerning this Quick Guide and its content, feel free to send an email to EU-PSA@ec.europa.eu and we will reply to you swiftly.

Remember, in case of urgent questions, don't wait and contact immediately your local police or national authority.

Aide Memoire Checklist

Nr	Question – Area of Concern	Status of Facility	Action Point
1	What is my access control ? Are the main entry ports fully open ? Is the access to the place of worship granted after visual verification of those requesting access ?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
2	Is the main gate or access point lockable and is the construction strong enough to prevent external break-in attempt, what actions could be done to strengthen the access gate ?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
3	Are there side or rear entrances that give access to the place of worship ? can these be opened from inside or outside and give unexpected access to the inside of place of worship ?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
4	In case of threatening situations outside of the door your facility, can the access point be closed and locked quickly when emergency occurs outside of the door to prevent access and protection of worshipper ?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
5	Does your place of worship provide parking facilities ? is there access control or are these parking facilities fully public ? Could the carpark be exploited for a bombing type attack ?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
6	Are the practitioners gathering in front of the place of worship before, or after the religious activities ? Are the gathering places exposed to possible vehicle attacks or other possible threats ?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
7	In case staff or religious figure leading the place of worship) observe suspicious behaviour by a person or group or persons inside place of worship, what possible actions can be taken to alert staff ?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
8	Is the CCTV capable of monitoring areas which allow you to identify possible strange behaviour inside or outside your facility ? Is the CCTV continuously monitored ? Is there an access control system which is linked with CCTV monitoring ? Could CCTV monitoring allow you to respond and protect your facility ?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
9	Is there a security system which is linked with a silent alert ? Is the silent alert linked with Police or private security provider? Have you tested the silent alert response ? how long is the response time to given alerts ?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
10	Do you have signage in front of place of worship which indicates security measures are applicable inside the facility ?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
11	Hostile Monitoring – review if your facility is well detailed on the internet sites and maps (ex. Google Streetview, live webcams – windy.com)		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
12	Is the CCTV either connected to private or public authority surveillance system ?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
13	Do you have or could you install a small Security booth outside the place of worship which intend to imply the presence of security ? is it practical in your case ?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK

14	Are there regular review of parcels or items left in the place of worship? Do you receive a sizable amount of mail? Could your place of worship be targeted via mail parcels (explosive threats)?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
15	Have you in the past conducted any type of emergency response trials to see how your facility staff will perform in crisis situation?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
16	Is the staff supporting the activities of the place of worship familiar with emergency procedures? (excluding the burglary scenarios)?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
17	Have you conducted any security awareness activities with the staff?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
18	Have you established an effective and clear communication channel with authorities involved in the response to emergency in your place of worship (ex. police, civil protection, fire and emergency responders), is everyone among the staff aware of these contacts?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
19	Has the COVID-19 pandemic measures such as social distancing created potential vulnerabilities in your mind? are the worshippers more exposed to threats like vehicle ramming or firearms attack when they are outside of your place of worship?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
20	Have you established a working contact with your public authorities responsible for security of places of worship to receive security information and other relevant risk information?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
21	Do you maintain the same security level of your facility during certain seasonal events (Hannukah, Ramadan, Christmas etc) when the threat may be higher?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
22	Do you utilise the social media platforms to alert your worshippers of details concerning religious activities? if yes, would you consider also building some basic security messages into such future communications to increase security awareness without raising concerns among your practitioners?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
23	To prevent targeting the religious leaders (priest, rabbi, imam) are you taking any steps to protect them? Can some unpredictability be built into their daily routines?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
24	Have you established a working contact with your public authorities responsible for security of places of worship to receive security information and other relevant risk information?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK
25	Are the evacuation routes clear and unobstructed to facilitate an emergency evacuation? Is staff aware of evacuation procedures?		<input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> NOK