

EUROPEAN JEWISH DIGEST

JULY 2014

1 / ANTISEMITISM FLARES UP IN EUROPE

As Israeli military actions in Gaza intensified during July, outbreaks of antisemitism occurred in several parts of Europe, creating anxiety in Jewish communities everywhere.

In France, demonstrations against Israeli military actions turned violently against local Jewish communities. In Paris, protestors attacked several synagogues, Jewish shops and cafes, setting some on fire, including a kosher grocery store that was burned to the ground. The heavily Jewish neighbourhood of Sarcelles has been particularly badly hit. The main synagogue was attacked with a Molotov cocktail, shop windows were smashed and several stores were looted with protestors shouting "Death to the Jews". On July 13, a riot by Palestinian supporters outside the Synagogue de la Roquette trapped nearly 200 people inside the building. Only a violent street fight that ensued between the attackers and members of the Jewish Defence League alongside the existing synagogue security managed to prevent something much worse until riot police showed up to secure the synagogue. A few days later three firebombs were thrown at the Jewish community centre in Toulouse. Manuel Valls, the French Prime Minister, condemned the attacks as "intolerable".

Speaking at a ceremony to commemorate the victims of the Vel' d'Hiv roundup of Jews in 1942 he said, "I call on all elements of our society to combat antisemitism: Yes, it is a national cause... Traditional antisemitism, this old disease of Europe, is joined by a new antisemitism that cannot be denied or concealed, that we must face. It happens on the social networks and in workers' neighbourhoods, among ignorant young men who hide their hatred of Jews behind a facade of anti-Zionism or hatred of the State of Israel." Roger Cukierman, President of the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France (CRIF), said that Jews were not just afraid but anguished as well, and the rioters "are not screaming 'Death to the Israelis' on the streets of Paris. They are screaming 'Death to the Jews'".

In Germany, similar demonstrations have taken place throughout the country. In Berlin protestors gathered on Berlin's Kurfürstendamm, with some chanting in German, "*Jude, Jude feiges Schwein. Komm heraus und kämpf allein*" ("Jew, Jew, cowardly swine, come out and fight on your own"). In Dortmund and Frankfurt there were chants of "*Hamas Hamas Juden ins gas*" ("Hamas Hamas Jews to the gas"). Similar demonstrations were held in Essen, Kassel, Nuremberg, Mainz, and other cities. In Essen, 14 people have been arrested on suspicion of planning an attack on the city's Old Synagogue. In Wuppertal, petrol bombs were thrown at a synagogue in an attempt to burn it down and in Frankfurt am Main a rabbi received a phone call from a man threatening to kill 30 Jews in the city if his family in Gaza was harmed. Dieter Graumann, head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, said "We are currently experiencing in this country an explosion of evil and violent hatred of Jews, which shocks and dismays all of us. We would never in our lives have thought it possible anymore that antisemitic views of the nastiest and most primitive kind can be chanted on German streets." Angela Merkel, German Chancellor, pledged her total support to the Jewish community. Her spokesperson, Georg Streiter, said "the chancellor and the entire German government condemn the antisemitic remarks made at pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli demonstrations in Germany in the strongest terms.

These outbursts are an attack on freedom and tolerance and an attempt to shake the foundations of our free and democratic system. We cannot and will not tolerate this.” Yakov Hadas-Handelsman, the Israeli ambassador to Germany, writing in the *Berliner Zeitung* newspaper, compared the recent attacks to the plight of Jews in Nazi Germany in the 1930s. “They pursue the Jews in the streets of Berlin... as if we were in 1938, and if it continues, I fear that it is only a matter of time before innocent blood will be spilled.”

In Belgium, antisemitic demonstrations took place in Antwerp and other areas, with some speakers shouting slogans about slaughtering Jews and some protesters calling out “Jews, remember Khaybar, the army of Muhammad is returning,” referencing a seventh-century slaughter against Jews in Saudi Arabia. The Belgian League Against Antisemitism filed a complaint for incitement to violence against the participants and organisers of the Antwerp demonstration. In the same city, a Jewish woman filed a police complaint after being refused service in a local shop because she is Jewish, and in Liege, a Belgian watchdog on antisemitism lodged a complaint to the mayor against owners of a café, whose window display featured a sign declaring Jews were not allowed inside.

In the Netherlands, the home of the Chief Rabbi was attacked with stones twice in one week. The attackers yelled racial slurs against Jews before leaving. A Jewish woman in Amsterdam was targeted with a firebomb and death threats after displaying an Israeli flag from her balcony. In Malmo in Sweden a man who hung an Israeli flag outside his window was severely beaten by about ten people with iron pipes and taken to the hospital with severe injuries.

In the UK, the Community Security Trust (CST) reported a doubling of antisemitic incidents in July a rise by a third in the first six months of 2014. Major demonstrations against Israel took place in London which also had antisemitic undertones. In Manchester, a convoy of five cars leaving a pro-Palestinian rally for the Jewish neighbourhood of Broughton Park, flew Palestinian flags, threw cans and eggs at Jewish pedestrians and yelled “Heil Hitler.” In Glasgow, on the fringes of another demonstration, a man was reported yelling “f**king kill the Jews.” Belfast synagogue had its windows smashed.

CST said that in comparison to much more violent antisemitic demonstrations in France, where shops have been ransacked and synagogues firebombed, “here in Britain, the situation is less severe, but remains highly volatile.”

In Italy, antisemitic graffiti and flyers appeared throughout Rome in July. Posters with swastikas and slogans such as “*Anne Frank storyteller*”, “*Dirty Jews*” and “*Jews your end is near*” have appeared on walls and show windows. Ignazio Marino, Mayor of Rome, denounced it as shameful and “an insult to all Romans.” Riccardo Pacifici, head of the Rome's Jewish community said “This morning Rome woke up in the worst possible way. Its walls have been defaced by dozens of graffiti praising neo-Nazi hatred towards Jews. From Appia to Prati, from the historic centre to the outskirts, insults and death threats have plastered the shops' shutters”

In response to all of these disturbing manifestations of antisemitism, the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany and Italy issued a joint declaration of condemnation. Laurent Fabius, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and Federica Mogherini’s statement says: “Antisemitic agitation, hate speech against Jews, attacks against people of Jewish belief and against synagogues cannot be tolerated in our societies in Europe. We strongly condemn the outrageous antisemitic statements, demonstrations and attacks in our countries in recent days. We respect the freedom of assembly and the freedom of speech. However, we will proceed with all available legal means against deeds and statements that are to be considered as acts of antisemitism, racism and xenophobia. Nothing, including the dramatic military confrontation in Gaza, justifies any such transgressions in Europe.”

- [EU politicians speak out after wave of anti-Semitic attacks](#) (The Telegraph, July 22, 2014)
- [Antwerp demonstration features calls to 'slaughter the Jews'](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 15, 2014)
- [Danish Jews threatened after Gaza conflict](#) (The Copenhagen Post, July 18, 2014)
- [Anti-Semitism in France](#) (The Economist, July 22, 2014)
- [In riot outside synagogue, French Jews were left to protect themselves](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 18, 2014)
- [Synagogue attacked, rabbi gets death threats](#) (The Local, July 29, 2014)
- [Wave of anti-Semitic rallies hits cities across Germany](#) (Times of Israel, July 21, 2014)
- [Protesting Palestine, targeting Jews](#) (CST Blog, July 21, 2014)

2 / REVISITING WORLD WAR TWO ISSUES

Issues linked to World War Two and the Holocaust continued to resurface in both positive and negative ways. In Poland, a commemoration was held in the town of Jedwabne to remember the pogrom perpetrated against the local Jewish community 73 years ago when hundreds of local Jews were burned alive in a barn by residents of the town. Attending the memorial alongside Jews from Poland and Belarus were representatives of Poland's Foreign Ministry and Prime Minister's Office. A few days later, the American Ambassador to Poland Stephen Mull attended a reception in Warsaw in honour of 50 people who had risked their lives by rescuing Jews during the Holocaust. Yad Vashem had awarded them the title of "Righteous Among the Nations". To qualify for this title, assistance to be repeated or substantial and given without any financial gain.

In Hungary, the government continued to defy fierce criticism from both the Jewish community and others to finish the controversial memorial designed to memorialise the German occupation of Hungary during World War Two. Opponents of the memorial believe it whitewashes the collaborationist role of the Hungarian state and many individuals during the deportation of Jews in 1944 and 1945, by portraying Hungary and all Hungarians as victims. Owing to regular demonstrations, the last parts of the memorials were added during the night, and a government spokesman said that there would be no official unveiling ceremony due to the controversy surrounding the monument. The controversy also led the Federation of Jewish Communities in Hungary (Mazsihisz) to withdraw from all government activities planned for the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Nazi invasion of Hungary.

In Austria, the Ministry of Interior announced the closing of Mauthausen national memorial site on Mondays from September to February in order to implement technical improvements and updates to the visitor centre and museum. This move was immediately criticised by a group representing Nazi concentration camp victims, who called it a "disgrace". The head of the Association of Social Democrat Freedom Fighters' Vienna branch, Gerald Netzl, said that "we have a special responsibility for history and for the future. We must take this responsibility seriously. Mauthausen is the central Austrian remembrance and commemorative site for the crimes of National Socialism, comparable to Auschwitz-Birkenau for Poland."

In Spain, the World Jewish Congress' President Ronald Lauder criticised the world-famous Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum for not returning the Impressionist masterpiece 'Rue Saint-Honoré' to the heirs of the Jewish family from whom it was stolen by the Nazis shortly before World War Two. He said that despite Spain being party to agreements to resolve such issues, the museum had refused to meet with the family's representatives and used every possible means of delay.

Hungary

- [Government makes midnight move to finish controversial WWII memorial following court decision](#) (Politics.hu, July 20, 2014)
- [Work completed overnight on Hungarian WWII monument](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 21, 2014)

Poland

- [World War II massacre at Jedwabne commemorated](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 11, 2014)
- [50 righteous gentiles honored in Warsaw](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 16, 2014)

Austria

- [Nazi victims group raps reduced hours at Austrian Mauthausen memorial](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 18, 2014)

Spain

- [Ronald Lauder urges Spanish museum to return looted painting to Jewish owners](#) (World Jewish Congress, July 11, 2014)

3 / RESTORATION EFFORTS

In Austria, activists are attempting to rescue the country's oldest remaining synagogue building in Korneuburg. The stone building was constructed in the 14th century and was last in use as a synagogue in the 15th century. It was declared a landmark in the late 1990s but lack of funds is currently hampering the reconstruction effort.

In the Czech Republic, the restored Jewish cemetery in Brno reflects the reviving Jewish presence and a hope for the future in the area according to a short feature in the BBC News Magazine. New tours are being run which highlight the community's history in the region.

Austria

- [Austria's oldest shul? It's a garage](#) (Jewish Chronicle, July 3, 2014)

Czech Republic

- [Hope for the future in Brno's Jewish cemetery](#) (BBC News, July 3, 2014)

4 / BUILDING JEWISH COMMUNITIES

Three Jewish communities were highlighted in separate stories in the last few weeks. In the UK, the *Jewish Chronicle* argued that a cultural renaissance has taken place recently, exemplified by the success of the new Jewish Community Centre in north London, "JW3". With a claimed 130,000 visits in its first few months and a weekly average of around 4,000, the centre was heralded in the article as a great success. The article also claimed that other Jewish cultural centres in the area – notably, the London Jewish Cultural Centre, London School of Jewish Studies, the Jewish Museum and Ben Uri Gallery – are all reporting steady or increased numbers of visitors over the last year, suggesting that the arrival of JW3 onto the scene has not had a detrimental effect on any of these other centres, as some feared it might.

In Hungary, younger and newer Jewish grassroots organisations have been growing outside the traditional Jewish communal framework but are now demanding greater investment in activities that meet their needs. Synagogues are maintained by Mazsihisz, the umbrella group of Hungarian Jewish communities, which controls most of the small real-estate assets across Hungary but provides limited support for the country's vibrant Jewish youth scene. Newer organisations such as Marom, Moishe House, Haver Foundation and Minyanim which all cater for younger people are beginning to push for a fairer share of communal funding.

In an interview with eJewish philanthropy, Bulgaria-based rabbi Aaron Zerbib discusses the challenge of being an orthodox rabbi in a very secular community.

United Kingdom

- [Riding the wave of a cultural renaissance](#) (Jewish Chronicle, July 17, 2014)

Hungary

- [In Budapest, young Jews angling for slice of communal pie](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 1, 2014)

Bulgaria

- [An Orthodox Rabbi in Bulgaria's Secular Community](#) (eJewish Philanthropy, July 18, 2014)

5 / CONTROVERSIAL POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS

In a move that outraged a number of Jewish organisations, anti-racism campaigners and European leaders, German neo-Nazi Udo Voigt took a seat on the European Parliament's Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee. Former leader of National Democratic Party of Germany (NDP), Voigt is on record as having praised Adolf Hitler, glorifying the Waffen SS and once claiming that "no more than 340,000 Jews" died in the Holocaust. Voigt won his seat in the European Parliament in May when the NDP won a little more than 1% of the German vote, the new threshold for admission after a reduction of the previously higher barrier. Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament, condemned Voigt, and said that anyone who denied the Holocaust would face the "strongest of resistance" from him. He pledged to do all he can to oppose him.

In Hungary, following strong protests from opposition parties regarding the nomination of Péter Szentmihályi Szabó by the government as the country's new ambassador to Italy, the candidate himself withdrew from the position. He had been described as a far-right activist and antisemite and opposition politicians said that he had published articles in several far-right newspapers and been associated with a radical-right political party. The leftist Democratic Coalition had written to Italy's Foreign Minister urging Italy not to accept his appointment.

Germany

- [German neo-Nazi to serve on key European Parliament committee](#) (World Jewish Congress, July 8, 2014)
- [Neo-Nazi's EU Parliament appointment 'ultimate insult' to Jews](#) (EurActiv Network, July 9, 2014)

Hungary

- [New Hungarian envoy to Italy, called 'raging' anti-Semite, quits](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 23, 2014)

6 / JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN CONFLICT ZONES

As fighting in the rebel-held areas of the Ukraine intensified in July, Josef Zissels, Chairman of Ukraine's Vaad (Association of Jewish Organisations and Communities), expressed his belief that Jewish life in the eastern part of the country has no long-term future. At a conference held in London, he estimated that around one-third of the Jewish population in the east had already left their homes. Jewish refugees are surviving on aid from local and foreign groups such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee who are providing housing, food, medicine etc. Many Jews have fled to Dnepropetrovsk which has one of Ukraine's largest Jewish communities, whilst numbers making *aliyah* to Israel have increased significantly.

Ukraine

- [Donetsk Jewish community struggles to hold together under fire](#) (Jerusalem Post, July 27, 2014)
- [Fleeing 'place full of death,' Jews from eastern Ukraine weep for homeland](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 21, 2014)
- [Jewish life in east will disappear, says Ukrainian leader](#) (Jewish Chronicle, July 11, 2014)

7 / NEW JPR REPORT ON ANTISEMITISM IN UK

A new JPR report issued in July demonstrates that over half of all Orthodox Jews in Britain are worried about becoming a victim of an antisemitic act, and that they are more than twice as likely as non-Orthodox Jews to have experienced antisemitic harassment or discrimination. The report, entitled: "*The exceptional case? Perceptions and experiences of antisemitism among Jews in the United Kingdom*", is based on a new analysis by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research of data gathered by JPR and Ipsos MORI for the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

Close to two-thirds of Orthodox Jews believe antisemitism to be a problem in the UK, compared with under half of non-Orthodox Jews, and close to a half avoid certain places out of fear for their safety as a Jew, compared to a quarter of the non-Orthodox. However, in general, the report shows that levels of antisemitism in the UK are significantly lower than in other Western European countries, and that Jews in Britain feel noticeably less anxious about it than elsewhere on the continent.

Commenting on the findings, Dr Jonathan Boyd, JPR Executive Director and co-author of the report, said: "Orthodox Jews in the UK live in a very different reality to non-Orthodox Jews when it comes to experiencing and perceiving antisemitism. Indeed, when we compare them, as a group, to the French Jewish population as a whole, they are more likely to have experienced antisemitic harassment, and equally likely to feel the need to avoid certain locations out of fear of antisemitism. Given that the UK Jewish Orthodox sector will become an ever larger proportion of the UK Jewish community as a whole, this should be an issue of grave concern." He added "At present, it is clear that levels of antisemitism in the UK are considerably lower than elsewhere in Europe. In general, Jews here experience it less than other Jews on the continent, and are less worried about it. But there is no cause for complacency – the fact that one in five British Jews experienced some form of antisemitic harassment or discrimination in the twelve months prior to the survey demonstrates that much more needs to be done to address the very real concerns the community has."

- [The Exceptional Case? Perceptions and experiences of antisemitism among Jews in the United Kingdom](#) (JPR, July 18, 2014)
- [Israel-Gaza conflict: Most British Jews feel they are blamed for actions of Israeli government](#) (The Independent, July 23, 2014)

8 / OTHER ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS

In Greece, the Holocaust memorial was defaced in Athens. The vandals left a note threatening to attack the nearby synagogue. The 2010 memorial memorialises the 60,000 Greek Jews killed in the Holocaust. This comes several weeks after the Jewish cemetery in Thessaloniki was desecrated.

Greece

- [Memorial vandals say Athens synagogue is next](#) (Jewish Chronicle, July 3, 2014)

/ ABOUT JPR

The **Institute for Jewish Policy Research** (JPR) is a UK-based research unit, consultancy and think tank that specialises in contemporary Jewish issues. Formerly the Institute of Jewish Affairs, JPR has stood at the forefront of Jewish community research for several decades and is responsible for much of the data and analysis that exist on Jews in the UK and across Europe.

JPR's research and analysis offers detailed insights into a wide range of issues, including Jewish population size, geographical density, age and gender structure, education, charitable giving, volunteering, antisemitism, Jewish practice, religious outlook and communal participation. All of JPR's publications can be downloaded free of charge from our website: www.jpr.org.uk.

/ ABOUT THE EUROPEAN JEWISH DIGEST

The **European Jewish Digest** is a new monthly publication that summarises some of the key Jewish-interest stories in Europe, and provides links to articles about various newsworthy items. Its purpose is simply to provide the reader with an overview of incidents and activities that have occurred across Europe in the previous month.

As this is a new service we are particularly eager to receive feedback about it. If you have any comments, positive or negative, please [email us at JPR](#).