

EUROPEAN JEWISH DIGEST

AUGUST 2014

1 / SIGNIFICANT UPSURGE OF ANTISEMITISM ACROSS EUROPE

Antisemitic incidents continued to affect European Jewish communities throughout Europe during the month of August. In France, Jewish tombstones were vandalised in a cemetery at Villiers-le-Bel, a suburb north of Paris. In Marseille a kippah-wearing man in his 60s was assaulted in an antisemitic attack in his own apartment building, and threatened with murder. Towards the end of the month two teenage Muslim girls were arrested for planning a suicide bomb attack on the Great Synagogue in Lyon. President of the Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions (CRIF), Roger Cukierman, said “Jews in France or Belgium are being killed because they are Jews... Jihadism has become the new Nazism. This makes people consider leaving France.” The National Bureau of Vigilance Against Antisemitism (BNVCA) commented that synagogues have become increasingly popular targets for Islamists and terrorists, and that the extreme measures taken to secure Jewish places of worship have turned them into “semi-fortresses”.

In Denmark, a Jewish school in the capital Copenhagen has its windows broken and antisemitic graffiti sprayed on its walls. School principal Jan Hansen said “We are the world’s second-oldest functioning Jewish school and we have never before in our 210-year-long history experienced something like this. Parents and children are worried, and some parents don’t want to send their children to school.” A few weeks earlier, the school advised against letting their children wear Jewish religious symbols outside of school grounds due to rising reports of antisemitic harassment. In response to this rise in antisemitism in Denmark local politicians organised a “kippah march” through central Copenhagen. Nearly a thousand people wearing kippot and Stars of David marched through Copenhagen’s Nørrebro district, which has one of the highest concentrations of Muslim residents in Denmark. City council member Rasmus Jarlov said that the situation in Denmark had become so bad that Jews were being forced to hide their identity. He told a news station that “We need to show that Jewish symbols and Jewish clothing is part of the streets in Copenhagen and should be allowed to move around freely, and not be seen as something that is abnormal and does not belong in the streets”.

In Belgium, a local politician wrote on his Facebook page “I think the Germans deliberately didn’t kill all the Jews so that we will be able to understand now why [Adolf Hitler] was destroying them.” Initially, Assan Aarab defended his statement, calling it “provocative” and only intended as an expression of anger towards Israel’s actions in Gaza. However, he later apologised after the leader of the Antwerp chapter of his party, Ariane Van Dooren, condemned his comments. In Brussels, a 75-year old Jewish woman was hit and pushed to the ground inside a municipal building after a man standing behind her overheard the woman give a Jewish-sounding name to an employee. In the Netherlands, the Chief Rabbi Binyomin Jacobs was attacked, for the fifth time in recent years.

In Italy, a Moroccan imam has been expelled from the country following a sermon in which he called for Jews to be killed. Raoudi Aldelbar, imam of a mosque in the town of San Dona di Piave, near Venice, was filmed saying “Oh Allah, bring upon [Jews] that which will make us happy. Count them one by one, and kill them one by one.” Also in a repeat of what happened last month, flyers urging a boycott of Jewish-owned stores were discovered in Rome plastered to walls in several districts. Renzo

Gattegna, the president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, said “We are witnessing with concern the solidifying of the extremist underworld in the name of a common anti-Jewish and anti-Israel hatred whose most violent mode of expressions, still partially latent, risks forming a danger to the entire national collective”. The flyers claimed that every Jewish owned shop, factory and business sends a percentage of its profits to Israel “to furnish weapons and continue to kill those who have a right to live in their own homeland.” Gattegna thanked the authorities for their firm response.

In Spain, Imam Sheik Saleheoldine al-Moussaoui of the municipality of Azuqueca De Henares, near Madrid said in his Friday sermon “The Jews are by nature treacherous and war-mongering. The Jews and the Zionists have treachery and killing as their way of life. They are a people of enmity and jealousy, the masters of treachery and betrayal. Oh Allah, destroy the plundering Jews. Oh Allah, the Most Merciful, count them one by one, and do not spare a single one of them.”

In Sweden, antisemitic incidents continued throughout the month. At the start of August, Rabbi Shneur Kesselman was attacked by men in Malmo who threw objects at him from a car and shouted abuse. This came just a few days after the main synagogue in Malmo was attacked with some of its windows being shattered. A few days later, a Swedish politician resigned after coming under attack for a Facebook post saying “our brothers and sisters in Palestine are slaughtered by the Jewish pigs.” He later apologised. In Gothenburg, a rally against antisemitism was cancelled amid fears of violence. One of Sweden’s leading daily newspapers, *Aftonblade*, removed a cartoon from their online edition after it was called antisemitic. The cartoon depicted two characters wearing Jewish symbols, with one, dressed in Orthodox Jewish attire and holding a sign with the Star of David and the words “Land of Israel”, telling the other “Hitler gassed the wrong Jews.” In Gottsunda, a suburb of Uppsala, a woman was attacked while walking through a largely Muslim neighbourhood. Anna Sjogren said a Muslim girl spat at her after seeing her Star of David necklace. After pushing the girl back, Sjogren was attacked by a group of Muslim teenagers which left her eyes swollen and a badly damaged jaw. Towards the end of the month and in response to the ongoing antisemitic incidents, nearly a thousand people took part in a ‘Kippah Walk’ organised by the Swedish Jewish community in Stockholm. Several Swedish government ministers and leaders of the opposition parties joined the walk. During August the Swedish government approved a donation of two million kronor for increasing security for Jewish congregations. Integration Minister Erik Ullenhag said “Swedes, who are part of the Jewish minority, are suddenly being held responsible for the state of Israel's actions. It is abominable that this hate towards Jews is so common, and it is our duty to fight the poison of antisemitism.”

In Switzerland, an Orthodox Jew from Belgium was lightly wounded whilst walking to his car when a man began hitting him and shouting antisemitic abuse. In Geneva, anti-Israel demonstrators protested outside the city's main synagogue carrying signs including “Every synagogue is an Israeli embassy”.

In Greece, the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece released a statement condemning antisemitism in the Greek press. Some media articles have blamed Greek Jews for not speaking out against the “genocide” in Gaza and others have justified recent antisemitic acts in Europe as retribution for “Zionist crimes”. They said “We are deeply concerned about the unexpected outburst of historical-like articles, inspired by the age-old traditional racist propaganda, that are purely antisemitic.... we do hope that readers can see the distinct line between political analysis and vulgar antisemitic propaganda.”

- [Belgian politician Hassan Aarab sorry for Holocaust comment](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 8, 2014)
- [Woman aggressed in Brussels because of her Jewish-sounding name](#) (European Jewish Press, August 24, 2014)
- [Citing security concerns, Copenhagen Jewish school forbids religious symbols](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 8, 2014)

- [‘Kippah march’ goes off without drama](#) (The Local, August 16, 2014)
- [Vandals hit one of world's oldest Jewish schools in Copenhagen](#) (World Jewish Congress, August 22, 2014)
- [Children suspected of vandalizing Jewish, Christian tombstones near Paris](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 1, 2014)
- [France No Longer a Home for Jews Fleeing Persecution](#) (The Algemeiner, August 12, 2014)
- [Jew assaulted in Marseille over Gaza](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 15, 2014)
- [French Jewish leader: Anti-Israelism is the new anti-Semitism](#) (Jerusalem Post, August 19, 2014)
- [Two Teenage Girls Arrested Over French Synagogue Suicide Bomb Plot](#) (Newsweek, August 29, 2014)
- [Young Jews in Germany fear for their safety](#) (Deutsche Well, August 1, 2014)
- [Greek Jewish communities battle anti-Semitism in the press](#) (World Jewish Congress, August 7, 2014)
- [Israeli deputy ambassador accuses Irish group of anti-semitism](#) (Irish Independent, August 8, 2014)
- ['Kill Jews to the Very Last One': Italian Imam Expelled After Anti-Semitic Sermon](#) (International Business Times, August 5, 2014)
- [Flyers in Rome call for boycotting Jewish-owned stores](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 10, 2014)
- [Dutch police to get tough on anti-semitism at pro-Gaza rallies](#) (Dutch News, August 1, 2014)
- [After fifth attack at home, a Dutch chief rabbi says he'd leave if not for job](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 5, 2014)
- [Dutch hotelier cancels Israeli family's reservation over Gaza](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 8, 2014)
- [Spanish imam: Allah, destroy every single Jew](#) (The Times of Israel, August 28, 2014)
- [Rabbi, congregant attacked in Malmo days after synagogue vandalized](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 4, 2014)
- [Politician quits after 'Jewish pigs' slur online](#) (The Local, August 5, 2014)
- [Swedish woman attacked while wearing Star of David](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 19, 2014)
- [Stockholm: Thousands of Swedes rally against anti-Semitism](#) (World Jewish Congress, August 31, 2014)
- [Jew wounded in suspected hate crime in Switzerland](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 13, 2014)
- [Anti-Israel protesters target synagogue in Geneva](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 19, 2014)
- [How Gaza has unleashed new Nazism on Europe's Jews](#) (Daily Express, August 10, 2014)
- [Antisemitism on rise across Europe 'in worst times since the Nazis'](#) (The Guardian, August 7, 2014)

2 / FOCUS ON ANTISEMITISM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Levels of antisemitism in United Kingdom have been demonstrated to be markedly lower than elsewhere on the continent. However, during August, levels of antisemitism rose significantly in the country, causing notable unrest in the Jewish community. Often under the guise of criticism of Israeli military actions in Gaza, but regularly involving acts of wanton antisemitism, attacks occurred on Jewish property and places of worship. The increase in acts of antisemitism was widely reported throughout the national and local media.

Several acts of antisemitic vandalism took place across the country, notably targeting synagogues. A sign reading “Child Murderers” was found on Kingston Synagogue in London, “Free Gaza” was spray-painted above the windows of Hove Hebrew Congregation and vandals targeted Cockfosters and New Southgate synagogue. A blue plaque marking the birthplace in Belfast of the late Israeli President Chaim Herzog was eventually removed following repeated acts of vandalism against the property.

Two high profile supermarket chains were targeted for stocking ‘Israeli’ food. In Birmingham up to 100 demonstrators ran amok in a Tesco store throwing around stock and some attacked police officers in apparent protest against its selling of Israeli food. In London a Sainsbury's store removed its kosher food from display after fearing that anti-Israeli protesters would attack it. It was later put back on the shelves.

Early in August, London’s Tricycle Theatre refused to host the UK Jewish Film Festival unless it returned the small amount of sponsorship it received from the Israeli Embassy in London. The Tricycle, which has hosted the film festival for many years, offered to cover this funding itself instead, but the Film Festival board refused to comply. Following a huge outcry from the Jewish community and wide media coverage, the Tricycle eventually withdrew its objections. However, in the interim, festival organisers were compelled to find alternative venues for the film showings, so the event will now be held elsewhere in 2014.

North of the border, the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCOJeC) released figures towards the middle of the month showing a dramatic increase in antisemitic sentiment in Scotland. In one week at the beginning of August, the council received as many reports of antisemitic incidents as in the whole of 2013. SCOJeC also noted increased anxiety among Scottish Jews to wear Jewish symbols or to speak Hebrew on the street. The council said that Jews are limiting contact with non-Jews “to avoid aggressive attempts to draw them into arguments about the Middle East,” and university students also report feeling unsafe on campuses. According to the Council, community members “are worried and depressed, and unable to sleep. A number of people have said they no longer feel welcome in Scotland and are actively considering moving to Israel; some Israelis who have made their lives in Scotland have said they are afraid to say where they are from.”

Writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis wrote, “We need to acknowledge that the problem of antisemitism is today pronounced and causing deep anxiety among Jewish people across Britain and worldwide... Antisemitism stigmatises innocent people, legitimises hatred, breeds intolerance and is an open invitation to “permissible persecution”. Jews have been described as the canaries in the coal mine for Western civilisation: when we begin to suffer from poisons in the atmosphere, others would be wise to take note”. At the end of August, Campaign Against Antisemitism UK held a rally outside the Royal Courts of Justice. The Chief Rabbi told the large crowd “I would never have believed a year ago I would be standing here expressing my deep concern about the rise of antisemitism in the UK.”

- ['Child Murderers': Outrage at sick note pinned to the front of synagogue in Surrey in response to war in Gaza as anti-Semitic attacks soar by a third in Britain](#) (Daily Mail, August 1, 2014)
- [Tricycle theatre refuses to host UK Jewish Film Festival over Israeli embassy funding](#) (The Guardian, August 6, 2014)
- [Teenagers admit vandalising gravestones at Jewish cemetery](#) (Manchester Evening News, August 8, 2014)
- [British Jews 'frightened and insecure' following increase in antisemitic attacks](#) (Christian Today, August 8, 2014)
- [Week of anti-Semitism in Scotland comparable to entire 2013](#) (The Times of Israel, August 12, 2014)

- [Blue plaque marking Belfast birthplace of former Israeli president removed 'due to anti-Israeli attacks'](#) (Belfast Telegraph, August 12, 2014)
- [Tricycle Theatre in UK Jewish Film Festival U-turn](#) (BBC News, August 15, 2014)
- [Gaza protesters run amok in Tesco and attack staff and police 'because it stocks Israeli food'](#) (Daily Mail, August 17, 2014)
- [Sainsbury's removes kosher food from shelves amid fears over protesters](#) (The Guardian, August 17, 2014)
- [The kosher controversy at Sainsbury's speaks to a profound problem: acquiescence to anti-Semitism](#) (The Telegraph, August 18, 2014)
- [Politicians step up fight over 'disgusting' anti-Semitic attacks in the UK](#) (Daily Express, August 22, 2014)
- [Crisis of Confidence for British Jewry](#) (Tablet Magazine, August 27, 2014)

3 / INTERFAITH WORK

Despite inflamed tensions between Jewish and Muslim communities in many places across Europe, interfaith work continued as leadership on both sides tried to improve the situation. In Austria, young Muslims and Jews from around the world met for the fifth Muslim-Jewish Conference. 100 people from 35 countries gathered to discuss their similarities and differences as well as antisemitism and Islamophobia. The conference included a trip to Mauthausen concentration camp and local synagogues and mosques.

In Italy, representatives of the Muslim and Jewish communities appealed for respect and dialogue. Florence Chief Rabbi, Joseph Levi, and Imam Izzedin Elzir met with Mayor Dario Nardella, issuing a joint statement stating “We pray to the Lord of all humanity to guide the religious leaders of our communities in the service of all humanity, staving off any form of hatred for others who are different from ourselves, any temptation to evoke and again manipulate ancient forms of antisemitism, anti-Christianity and Islamophobia.”

In the UK, the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) issued a joint statement condemning Islamophobia and antisemitism and called on both communities to “redouble efforts to work together and get to know one another”. However disagreement ensued over the line in the statement “the targeting of civilians is completely unacceptable and against our religious traditions.” The Board insisted that this only referred to Hamas whilst the MCB said it referred to both Israel and Hamas.

However in a setback for interfaith work, Frankfurt’s Jewish community dropped out of the city’s “Council of Religions” alleging antisemitic and anti-Israel statements by local Islamic leaders.

- [The grassroots group uniting Muslims and Jews](#) (The Local, August 13, 2014)
- [In Vienna, Muslim-Jewish dialogue tackles conflict head-on](#) (The Times of Israel, August 18, 2014)
- [Frankfurt Jewish community drops out of interfaith council over anti-Israel statements](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 11, 2014)
- [Florence’s Jewish, Muslim reps appeal for interfaith dialogue](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 13, 2014)
- [British Jews and Muslims issue joint call for peace](#) (BBC News, August 28, 2014)
- [Jewish and Muslim attempt at harmony hits flat note](#) (Jewish Chronicle, August 27, 2014)

4 / JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN UKRAINE

Life for Jews in Ukraine continues to be affected by the conflict there, and questions about the Jewish future in the country remain moot. While there has been few reports of antisemitic incidents, Ukrainian Jews, like other Ukrainians, are concerned about their future and trying to adapt the changed circumstances of their lives.

- [For 'hardcore' Jews displaced by Ukrainian fighting, Israel beckons](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 12, 2014)
- ['As gunmen came in, we hid in the cellar'](#) (Jewish Chronicle, August 22, 2014)
- [Chabad Rabbi Remains with Trapped Jews as Ukraine Troops, Rebels, and Russians Fight for Mariupol](#) (The Jewish Press, August 28, 2014)

5 / REVISITING HOLOCAUST ISSUES

Once again issues linked to World War Two and the Holocaust continued to resurface. In Poland, the City of Warsaw agreed to return and preserve 1,000 Jewish headstones that were used to construct a recreational facility inside one of the city's parks. In the Jewish cemetery of Serock, a town 25 miles north of Warsaw, a Shoah memorial was inaugurated. The memorial was supported by the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland and the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad. 'From The Depths', an organisation working to preserve Jewish sites in Poland, has invited Israeli chief rabbis, ministers and MKs to attend a ceremonial burial next month at the site of Sobibor death camp. The bones of the camp victims have been scattered over the site for the last seventy years and will be reburied according to Jewish law.

In Völklingen in Germany a ceremony took place to commemorate the slave labourers forced to work in the town's iron and steel factory. Between 1942 and 1944, 219 adults and 35 children died at the factory as a result of malnutrition, disease and the terrible working conditions. A *stolpersteine* (stumbling block memorial) was dedicated in front of the factory in front of 100 local residents.

In Hungary, the Jewish community leadership expressed its deep disappointment with the government's neglect for the community's position concerning commemorations of the 70th anniversary of the Holocaust and the planned Holocaust memorial and education centre. Following recent disagreements over the new memorial commemorating the Nazi occupation of Hungary, Hungarian Jewish federation Mazsihisz's leader Andras Heisler voiced regret that he had seen "no meaningful communication" between Mazsihisz and the government during the past months.

In Kosovo, the handful of Jews who remain is seeking government help to recognise sites belonging to the Jewish community before the Shoah. The local Jews are beginning with Boxing Club Pristina which they claim housed a yeshiva or Jewish community centre before World War Two. It is unclear yet if it is to be restored or become a monument.

With support from the local Jewish community, the Ukrainian Supreme Court forbade the Municipality of Lviv from moving ahead with controversial plans for commemorating Jewish heritage sites. In 2010, the city of Lviv announced plans to commemorate the city's old Jewish quarter, a 14th century Jewish cemetery, now being used as a market, and a former Nazi camp. However Meylakh Sheykhet, director of the Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union, said that they and the Golden Rose Synagogue opposed the plan as "it was meant to cover up and commemorate the Jewish past instead of restoring its ruins and celebrating Jewish life here and now."

- [Warsaw to restore 1,000 Jewish tombstones used for construction](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 15, 2014)
- [Holocaust memorial erected in Polish Jewish cemetery](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 28, 2014)
- [Jewish bones in Sobibor to be buried 70 years later](#) (Jerusalem Post, August 29, 2014)
- [Shoah 'stones' pop up across Europe](#) (Jewish Chronicle, August 21, 2014)
- [Jewish community sets conditions for cooperation on planned memorial centre](#) (Politics.hu, August 9, 2014)
- [Jewish community disappointed with gov't policies](#) (Politics.hu, August 19, 2014)
- [In Muslim Kosovo, Jewish remnant stakes claim to nation's past and future](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 20, 2014)
- [Ukrainian court nixes controversial Jewish heritage projects in Lviv](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 15, 2014)

6 / OTHER NEWS STORIES ABOUT JEWISH LIFE IN EUROPE YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

Amidst the worrying and negative news of rising antisemitism, Jewish communities continue to thrive and change. In Hungary, the 25th annual summer session of the JDC-Lauder International Jewish Summer Camp at Szarvas took place with more than 1,300 young Jews from more than twenty countries exploring Jewish culture, customs, and history whilst playing sports and generally having a lot of fun.

In France, following the surprising discovery of a small village called La Mort aux Juifs (Death to the Jews), the Wiesenthal Centre wrote to the French government requesting it change the name. Shimon Samuels, the Centre's director wrote "It is extremely shocking that this name has slipped under the radar in the seventy years that have passed since France was liberated from Nazism and the (pro-Nazi) Vichy regime." However, deputy mayor of Courtemaux (under whose jurisdiction the village falls), Marie-Elizabeth Secretand, downplayed any concerns saying "It's ridiculous. This name has always existed. No one has anything against the Jews, of course. It doesn't surprise me that this is coming up again."

In the Czech Republic, the long-time chief rabbi of Prague, Karol Sidon, resigned after 22 years in the position. The Prague Jewish community cited his age as the reason for him stepping down. He will be succeeded by Rabbi David Peter. Sidon will be returning to his largely ceremonial position as chief rabbi of the Czech Republic after a six-month break.

In Greece, Chief Rabbi Yaacov Arar died, aged 76. Arar served as Chief Rabbi for 46 years.

In the Netherlands, the Jewish Historical Museum has launched a new children's education programme focusing on Jewish elements of the story of Anne Frank. School pupils will have two preparatory lessons before they watch a new play about Anne Frank at the Theatre Amsterdam. Another lesson is given after the performance. The goal is to look at what Anne Frank's Jewish identity meant to her and familiarise pupils with Jewish customs and history.

At the end of the month prominent high-street retailer Zara apologised for selling a striped T-shirt with a yellow star which bore a striking likeness to the uniforms worn by concentration camp inmates during the Shoah.

In Russia, the *Times of Israel* article looks at the issues facing the local Jewish communities, their unease about the future and their thoughts about remaining in the country or rebuilding their lives elsewhere.

- [Szarvas @ 25: A Jewish Camp, Fueling Europe's Jewish Engine](#) (eJewish Philanthropy, August 6, 2014)
- [Defying European anti-Semitism, Hungarian camp points to renewal of Jewish life](#) (JNS.org, August 19, 2014)
- [Jewish group asks France to rename 'Death to Jews' hamlet](#) (BBC News, August 12, 2014)
- [Prague's longtime chief rabbi leaves colorful and controversial legacy](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 25, 2014)
- [Rabbi Yaacov Arar, Athens chief rabbi for four decades, dies](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 7, 2014)
- [Dutch Jewish museum uses Anne Frank theater for education](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 12, 2014)
- [Zara says sorry over 'yellow star' T-shirt](#) (Jewish Chronicle, August 27, 2014)
- [Uneasy about future in Russia, 'Putin's Jews' seek quiet exit](#) (The Times of Israel, August 15, 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.

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/ 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](#).