



EUROPEAN JEWISH DIGEST: LOOKING AT THE HEADLINES ACROSS JEWISH EUROPE

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1 / MURDEROUS VIOLENCE IN FRANCE

Following the murders at the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo and the kosher supermarket Hypercacher near Porte de Vincennes in eastern Paris, the French Jewish community has been gripped with a sense of shock and fear. In the immediate aftermath of the attack on the supermarket, President Hollande confirmed that four people had been killed there in what he described as a “dreadful antisemitic attack.” The Grand Synagogue of Paris did not open for Shabbat services, the first time the synagogue has not held services since World War II. Amidst talk of a mass exodus of Jews from France, Prime Minister Manuel Valls said that the emancipation of the Jews was a “founding principle” of the republic and that “if 100,000 Jews leave, France will no longer be France. The French Republic will be judged a failure.” Following the mass march through the streets of Paris in the company of many heads of state, President Hollande joined Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu together with several hundred members of the Jewish community at a memorial at the Grand Synagogue of Paris.

To help reassure the Jewish community, Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve announced that nearly 5,000 police would be deployed to protect the country’s 717 Jewish schools and a further 10,000 members of the security forces would protect other sensitive sites. In an extraordinary speech to the French parliament Prime Minister Manuel Valls denounced the rise of antisemitism in the strongest possible terms: *“Since Ilan Halimi in 2006, after the crimes of Toulouse, antisemitic acts in France have grown to an intolerable degree. The words, the insults, the gestures, the shameful attacks, as we saw in Creteil a few weeks ago, which I mentioned here in the Chamber, did not produce the national outrage that our Jewish compatriots expected... How can we accept that in France, where the Jews were emancipated two centuries ago, but which was also where they were martyred seventy years ago, how can we accept that cries of ‘death to the Jews’ can be heard on the streets? How can we accept these acts that I have just mentioned? How can we accept that French people can be murdered for being Jews? How can we accept that compatriots, or a Tunisian citizen whose father sent him to France so that he would be safe, is killed when he goes out to buy his bread for Shabbat because he is Jewish? This is not acceptable and I say to the people in general who perhaps have not reacted sufficiently up to now, and to our Jewish compatriots, that this time it cannot be accepted, that we must stand up and say what’s really going on.”*

In spite of the heightened security climate and presence of armed guards on the streets, antisemitic acts continued throughout January. In Villeurbanne, near Lyon, an unidentified man smashed a window with a hammer at a Jewish library and shouted antisemitic threats. In Le Pre-Saint-Gervais, a north-eastern suburb of Paris, a thirteen year-old Jewish boy was attacked with mace by three unidentified minors. According to the National Bureau for Vigilance Against Anti-Semitism (BNVCA), the assailants, who appeared to be of North African descent, identified the boy as Jewish because he wore a *kippah* and *tzitzit*. The boy was rendered temporarily blind by the mace and was rushed to a nearby clinic for treatment. At the beginning of January, a few days before the killings at the supermarket, a fire was started inside the main hall in Paris synagogue in the Garges suburb.

During a visit to France’s Holocaust Memorial, President Hollande expressed his “anger” and “bitterness” during a ceremony in the presence of five survivors of the Nazi concentration camps. He asked “how in 2015 can we accept that we need armed soldiers to protect the Jewish people of France?” and promised that synagogues, Jewish businesses, schools and cultural centres will be protected as long as necessary. He further said that these measures “weren't enough” and announced

a “comprehensive global plan against racism and antisemitism.” The plan will include allowing administrative authorities to block racist and antisemitic websites.

- [President Hollande pays tribute to victims of "dreadful antisemitic attack"](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, January 9, 2015)
- [For first time since WWII, Paris' Grand Synagogue closed on Shabbat](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 9, 2015)
- [Paris's Jewish community retreats in shock after deadly end to siege](#) (The Guardian, January 10, 2015)
- [French Prime Minister: If Jews Flee, the Republic Will Be a Failure](#) (The Atlantic, January 10, 2015)
- [Leave or stay - A quandary for French Jews](#) (Deutsche Welle, January 13, 2015)
- ['We Haven't Shown Enough Outrage:' French PM Issues Blistering Denunciation of Antisemitism \(VIDEO\)](#) (The Algemeiner, January 14, 2015)
- [Paris-area synagogue set ablaze](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 6, 2015)
- [Man smashes window, makes threat at Jewish library in France](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 15, 2015)
- [Anti-Semitism at schools a major aliyah factor, French Jewish leader says](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 16, 2015)
- [Jewish boy, 13, assaulted near Paris](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 21, 2015)
- [Hollande to French Jews: 'France is your home'](#) (The Local, January 27, 2015)

2 / OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE WAKE OF THE PARIS ATTACKS

Following the Paris attacks, fear and concern spread to other Jewish communities in Europe. The European Jewish Congress (EJC) called on European Union member states to increase security around Jewish institutions. In mid-January security professionals from Jewish communities across Europe gathered in Brussels to practice for a scenario in which a car bomb explodes outside a synagogue. EJC President Moshe Kantor said “we are demanding more resources, but also a uniform policy for combating and preventing antisemitic violence because the gaps that exist within the Union are playing to the advantage of the assailants.” The Jewish community of Denmark has also called on its government to increase security around its institutions. Dan Rosenberg Asmussen, the president of the Jewish Congregation in Copenhagen said “it should be evident to the justice ministry and the police that there is a need for better protection. Therefore, we demand that the authorities review the situation.”

In Belgium, the umbrella group of Jewish French-speaking communities, CCOJB, urged the government to take “concrete steps” to enhance security. Maurice Sosnowski, president of CCOJB, said antisemitism “is coming back to the pre-World War Two level. For years now, in some areas, Jews have been afraid to wear the kippa; they fear being assaulted in the metro. A lot of Jewish kids have left public schools to go to Jewish schools – it’s a bad sign.” In Antwerp, Belgian soldiers helped guard the Jewish quarter which was the first time that they have been used to bolster police ranks in three decades. A few days after the Paris attacks Jewish schools in Brussels, Antwerp and Amsterdam were closed as a precautionary measure following the death of two suspects in a raid by counterterrorism troops in Verviers, near Belgium’s border with France. Following the temporary closure of the Cheider Haredi School in Amsterdam, the ‘Christians for Israel’ organisation launched a fundraising campaign to collect money for security at the school. The campaign organisers said “we cannot accept that in 2015, the Jewish community lives in perpetual anxiety.” In the few days after the Paris attacks, Jews in Sweden received numerous threats from Islamic groups. Stockholm’s Jewish Community has

received the bulk of the threats and has increased security at all its sites. Jewish groups in Malmö and Gothenburg have also seen an increase in threats since the Paris attacks.

In the UK, the results of a new survey was released by the Campaign Against Antisemitism which appeared to show that more than half of British Jews fear they have no future in the country. Whilst this garnered a huge amount of press attention, the research was [criticised by JPR](#) for its methodological and analytical flaws. Nevertheless, tension and apprehension reached new highs in the British Jewish community amid a flood of news reports about the fears of British Jews. Mark Rowley, the national police lead for counter-terrorism, said officials had reviewed the terror threat to the UK following the Paris attacks and decided that protection of Jewish schools should be increased. He said “the global picture of terrorist activity does give us heightened concern about the risk to the Jewish community in the UK. In addition to our existing security measures, we are in dialogue with Jewish community leaders about further actions that we will be taking, including more patrols in key areas”. Prime Minister David Cameron said that “the idea that the Jewish people once again feels unsafe in Europe is a truly sickening thought that strikes at the heart of everything we stand for. We are going to take that spirit from the march in Paris and we are going to fight antisemitism with everything we have got”. In a speech to the Board of Deputies, Home Secretary Theresa May said “the attack on a Jewish supermarket, where four people were killed, is a chilling reminder of antisemitism, not just in France but the recent antisemitic prejudice that we, sadly, have seen in this country. I know that many Jewish people in this country are feeling vulnerable and fearful and you’re saying that you’re anxious for your families, for your children and yourselves. I never thought I would see the day when members of the Jewish community in the United Kingdom would say they were fearful of remaining here. And that means we must all redouble our efforts to wipe out antisemitism.”

Amidst the heightened tension, JPR published several articles and conducted several radio interviews about the situation, noting the increased fear and concern, but also highlighting some of the important differences between France and the UK based on recent reliable data. Links to some of JPR’s analysis can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

- [European Jewish Congress: Beef up security at Jewish institutions](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 13, 2015)
- [Jewish alarm spreads after terror in France](#) (BBC News, January 22, 2015)
- [Benelux Jewish schools shuttered for security reasons](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 16, 2015)
- [Soldiers to guard Belgian Jewish sites as Europol warns of further attacks](#) (The Guardian, January 17, 2015)
- [Dutch Jews demand troops near synagogues](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 23, 2015)
- [Islamists target Swedish Jews after Paris attacks](#) (The Local, January 14, 2015)
- [Jewish fears for safety in wake of Paris attacks](#) (BBC News, January 13, 2015)
- [The new antisemitism: Majority of British Jews feel they have no future in UK, says new study](#) (The Independent, January 14, 2015)
- [Analysis: British Jewry and a feeling of insecurity](#) (The Jerusalem Post, January 15, 2015)
- [UK police to step up patrols of Jewish areas amid 'heightened concern'](#) (The Guardian, January 16, 2015)
- [British PM: The idea that Jews feel unsafe is sickening](#) (The Jerusalem Post, January 18, 2015)
- [British Jews are thriving, but our concerns are serious](#) (The Telegraph, January 18, 2015)
- [Theresa May pledges extra police patrols to counter antisemitism threat](#) (The Guardian, January 19, 2015)
- [Special report: Security stepped up in Manchester's Jewish communities as terror attack fears grow](#) (Manchester Evening News, January 20, 2015)

- [A 'creeping cultural acceptance' of antisemitism is sweeping Britain, warns Cabinet Minister](#)
(The Telegraph, January 30, 2015)

3 / HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Holocaust Memorial Day, held on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, was commemorated widely throughout Europe. The main commemoration took place at Birkenau with 300 survivors of the death camp in attendance, alongside fifty heads of state and government including French President Francois Hollande, German President Joachim Gauck, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and royal representatives from the Netherlands and Belgium. In his speech, the former Auschwitz inmate Roman Kent told the audience that “the cries of murdered children will ring in my ears until I die.” He added that “if you, the leaders of the world, remember, then other injustices as in Darfur, Biafra or Kosovo will have no more place on this earth.” Ronald Lauder, President of the World Jewish Congress, warned of the rise of antisemitism today in Europe, arguing that “once again young Jewish boys are afraid to wear yarmulkes on the streets of Paris, Budapest, London and even Berlin... Jews are targeted in Europe once again because they are Jews.”

Commemorations took place across most countries in Europe. German Chancellor Angela Merkel told a group of survivors that “it’s a disgrace that people in Germany are abused, threatened or attacked when they indicate somehow they are Jewish or when they side with the state of Israel.” She added that the fact that synagogues and Jewish institutions had to be guarded by police was “a stain on our country.” In a speech to parliament, German President Joachim Gauck said “there is no German identity without Auschwitz. The remembrance of the Holocaust remains something for all citizens living in Germany. It belongs to this country’s history.”

In Bulgaria, the presidential palace in Sofia remained lit throughout the night of Holocaust Memorial Day to encourage actions against antisemitism. President Rosen Plevneliev said that the act was “to remind us today that there are people afraid for their safety in Europe. This gesture has symbolic meaning, as sometimes even the smallest effort is enough to drive back the darkness and bring back hope, light.”

At the national commemoration in London in the UK, Prince Charles said the Holocaust was an “unparalleled human tragedy” and “an act of evil unique in history.” He added that “Holocaust Memorial Day is not just a memorial to those six million innocent Jewish men, women and children – it is also universal because the Jews in this story represent all of us. That is why the Holocaust is not just a Jewish tragedy, nor merely a dark page from the Second World War, but a warning and a lesson to all of us of all faiths in all times. The memory of this suffering and the unspeakable, yet almost incredible details of the Nazis’ diabolical enterprise can help future generations, wherever they may be, understand not just what happened across Europe, but how this came to happen.” At the event Prime Minister David Cameron announced that a national Holocaust memorial and learning centre would be built in central London. He stated: “Today we stand together – whatever our faith, whatever our creed, whatever our politics. We stand in remembrance of those who were murdered in the darkest hour of human history, we stand in admiration of what our Holocaust survivors have given to our country and we stand united in our resolve to fight prejudice and discrimination in all its forms. As Prime Minister I will ensure that we will keep Britain’s promise to remember: today, tomorrow and for every generation to come.”

In Spain, Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy warned about the dangers of religious intolerance and fanaticism. He said: “today we pay homage to the millions of innocent people who suffered and were despicably murdered. This commemoration should serve to keep alive, today and in the future, the memory of victims of the Holocaust, one of the darkest chapters in the history of humanity.” At a

ceremony at the Spanish Senate in Madrid, King Felipe VI paid homage to “the thousands of Sephardim assassinated in the camps.” He said “we must learn the lessons of history,” in order to ensure that “something like this can never happen again.” Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel García-Margallo said: “we have not forgotten, we do not forget, we will not forget... the facts on the ground prove that antisemitism is alive,” and that remembering the victims was “the beginning but not the end of our responsibility.”

At a memorial ceremony in Moscow, Russia, Russian president Vladimir Putin said: “it is hard to imagine that factories of death, mass executions and deportations were horrible realities of the twentieth century, that they were organised in very civilised-looking Europe, that they were built with painstaking precision and in cold blood. Outright attempts to hush up the real facts of history, to distort and rewrite it are impermissible and immoral. Quite often such attempts conceal one's own disgrace, cowardice, hypocrisy and betrayal and serve as a lame excuse for direct or indirect tacit abetment to Nazis.”

In Serbia, whilst laying a wreath at the Memorial to the victims of genocide in World War II, Serbian President Tomislav Nikolic said “the Holocaust was the most shameful and abominable event in the human history... Staro Sajmiste, where we are now, is one of the execution sites that stand as a reminder of the tragic fates that were never recorded, as the innocent victims were never able to speak up. Are there words that could even begin to express their suffering, could we ever understand what took place before the eyes of the victims and their executioners? More than 55 million people were killed in this war and a whole nation faced extinction. That was the brave and proud people of Israel.” However Serbian human rights groups called on President Nikolic to apologise for saying that Nazis targeted Jews because of their overrepresentation in professions. In his speech Nikolic said that for the Nazis “the biggest threat was seen in the Jewish people, probably on the account of their characteristics and being prominent in the prestigious professions in the domains of finances, art and science.” A statement signed by a number of Belgrade-based human rights monitors and civil society groups said that Nikolic “is spreading stereotypes about the Jewish people, saying that this minority was ‘over-represented in prestigious professions.’”

At Terezin in the Czech Republic a commemoration was held by the participants of the Fourth International Let My people Live! Forum organised by the European Jewish Congress together with the Czech Government and the European Parliament. Actor Ben Kingsley said at the ceremony: “at Terezin, culture was the last fragile thread that connected its inmates to the human condition, but, because of that, Terezin housed a devilish lie: it allowed its inmates to dream of normality.” Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka told participants at the forum “the distance from Auschwitz to Terezin is about 500 km. Today it can be covered in a few hours. Seventy years ago, it was the distance between life and death.”

In Slovakia, the Speaker of Parliament Peter Pellegrini opened parliament with a minute of silence to remember the victims of the Holocaust, and across the country several commemorative films were screened. In Lithuania, the Deputy Foreign Minister Neris Germanas participated in the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust held by the Lithuanian Jewish community. He noted that by commemorating this day we remember those who have survived, bow our heads and pay grateful homage to those who saved the Jews, and once again confirm our determination to make sure that such tragedy would never happen again. In Romania, films, documentaries, and Romanian productions were screened at “the Holocaust through the eyes of a cinophile” film festival at the Romanian Peasant Museum in Bucharest. In Belarus, Holocaust Memorial Day was also marked by film screenings and theatre performances in Minsk. In Brest, a commemorative meeting to honour Holocaust victims was held at the memorial to the prisoners of the Brest ghetto where 34,000 Jews were killed between June 1941 and October 1942.

In Greece, in a pointed reference to the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party, the Greek Foreign Ministry issued a statement declaring: “today, on its ‘National Memorial Day for the Greek Jewish Heroes and Martyrs of the Holocaust,’ Greece is standing against forgetfulness and joins its voice with the conscience of humankind, honouring the millions of innocent Holocaust victims. The Greek people pay homage to the thousands of their compatriots, Greek Jews, who fell victims to Nazi barbarity. The Greek state attaches greatest importance to the categorical condemnation of antisemitism and Nazism activities. It considers Holocaust denial to be flagrantly repugnant, and expresses the certainty that neo-Nazi elements, which are attempting to undermine democracy and rule of law, will be marginalised from Greek society, the vast majority of which denounces hatred, antisemitism and intolerance.”

- [Jewish Leaders, Survivors Warn Of Antisemitism At Auschwitz Anniversary](#) (Radio Free Europe, January 27, 2015)
- [Auschwitz 70th anniversary: Survivors warn of new crimes](#) (BBC News, January 27, 2015)
- [Holocaust Memorial Day: survivors return to Auschwitz](#) (The Telegraph, January 27, 2015)
- [Survivors call leaders to remember Auschwitz](#) (The Local, January 27, 2015)
- [Germany remembers horror of Auschwitz](#) (The Local, January 26, 2015)
- [Merkel calls threats, attacks against Jews in Germany 'disgrace'](#) (Yahoo News, January 27, 2015)
- ['No German identity without Auschwitz'](#) (The Local, January 27, 2015)
- [Sofia Marks Holocaust Remembrance Day with Education, Memory on Focus](#) (Novinite.com – Sofia News Agency, January 27, 2015)
- ['The darkest hour of human history': David Cameron honours Auschwitz victims as he and Prince Charles meet Holocaust survivors and call on Britain to stand together against antisemitism](#) (Daily Mail, January 28, 2015)
- [David Cameron announces new Holocaust memorial will be built in London](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, January 27, 2015)
- [Holocaust Memorial Day: Events held across Scotland](#) (BBC News, January 27, 2015)
- [Fight against fanaticism not over: Spanish PM](#) (The Local, January 27, 2015)
- [King of Spain attends Holocaust Day at Spanish Senate](#) (The Jerusalem Post, January 2015)
- ['We must never forget the Holocaust'](#) (The Local, January 28, 2015)
- [Gentiloni: Remembrance Day, Italy strong in fight against anti-Semitism and religious intolerance](#) (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 27, 2015)
- [Putin to visit Jewish museum, Center of Tolerance in Moscow](#) (Itar-Tass, January 26, 2015)
- [President: Holocaust most shameful crime in history](#) (B92 a.d, Belgrade, January 27, 2015)
- [Serbian president called on to apologize for Holocaust Day remarks](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 1, 2015)
- [Terezin, a nightmare where the music played on](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, January 29, 2015)
- [Slovakia commemorates liberation of Auschwitz](#) (The Slovak Spectator, January 28, 2015)
- [International Day of Commemoration in Memory of Victims of Holocaust in Vilnius](#) (The Baltic Course, January 27, 2015)
- [Bucharest museum to screen Holocaust movies this January](#) (Romania-Insider.com, January 23, 2015)
- [Brest honors Holocaust victims](#) (Belarusian News, January 27, 2015)
- [Belarus to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day](#) (Belarusian News, January 27, 2015)
- [Greek Foreign Ministry Issues Statement on Holocaust Remembrance Day](#) (Greek Reporter, January 27, 2015)

4 / OTHER ISSUES CONCERNING ANTISEMITISM

With so much press coverage of the Paris attacks and then Holocaust Memorial Day, there were fewer reports on other antisemitic incidents during January. However, in Italy, on the night before Holocaust Memorial Day, a banner proclaiming ‘the Holocaust is a historical lie’ was displayed in a park outside Rome. The banner, signed by the extreme right wing group ‘Militia,’ also said ‘Hitler for a thousand years.’ The police removed the banner from Rabin Park, named after the former Israeli prime minister.

Sweden came under the spotlight with an investigation by broadcaster Sveriges Television (SVT) who reported that police in Skåne in the south have recorded 137 antisemitic hate crimes in the past two years. These crimes included offensive swastika doodles to threats, harassment and in some cases violence. The investigation suggested that too few suspects have been prosecuted for antisemitism. The city of Malmö also, once again, came to nationwide attention for increased levels of antisemitism. Sveriges Television showed footage of what happened to non-Jewish Swedish reporter Petter Ljunggren when he walked around Malmö swearing a *kippah* and a Star of David necklace for a few hours. In one scene, several passers-by hurled antisemitic abuse at him whilst he was sitting a café. He was called “Jewish devil,” “Jewish shit” and one person told him to “get out.” In the heavily Muslim neighbourhood of Rosengård, Ljunggren was surrounded by a dozen men shouting antisemitic slogans whilst eggs were thrown at him from apartments overhead. He quickly fled the area. Ljunggren explains in the film that most of the perpetrators of these antisemitic incidents are Muslims of Middle Eastern descent using the Arab-Israeli context as a pretext for their antisemitism. Malmö’s Muslim community has since reached out to the Jewish community. Following the main synagogue’s decision to build a wall around the building, Muslim representative Sheikh Salahuddin Barakat told a local newspaper “this is absolutely about antisemitism and there are probably young people of Muslim background who are behind it. But just because there is a conflict about Palestine does not make it right [for the perpetrators to] act as they did. I know how it feels and do not want anyone else to have to deal with this. The Jews should not feel that they need to move from the city. They are part of Malmö’s history and culture.” Barakat and another member of his mosque also presented Malmö rabbi Shneur Kesselman with flowers, and a note saying “To Rabbi Shneur Kesselman, the Jewish congregation in Malmö and all the Jews of Malmö – Malmö would not be complete without you.”

In the UK, Holocaust Memorial day posters were defaced with antisemitic graffiti in Newham in London. The words ‘Liars’ and ‘Killer’ were scrawled across posters promoting Newham Council’s HMD commemoration. Mayor of Newham Sir Robin Wales said “this despicable and cowardly hate crime is an assault on the values of decency and mutual respect which the vast majority of us share. This outrage underlines not only the importance of keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive, but of standing up to intolerance and hatred at every opportunity.”

In Poland, at the end of January, vandals defaced the fence of the main Jewish cemetery in Warsaw. The word “Jews for slaughter” and the date of 10 December 2014 were sprayed. The date is the day Poland’s Constitutional Court ruled that the ban on ritual slaughter was unconstitutional.

In Belgium, Joel Rubinfeld, president of the Belgian League Against Anti-Semitism, warned that the country’s public schools are becoming “Jew-free” zones because of harassment. The weekly *Le Vif/L’Express* published a story about the only Jewish student of the Emile Bockstael high school who left the school due to harassment and threats she received from classmates following the posting of a picture of an Israeli flag on her Facebook page. Rubinfeld said that the school “has become ‘Judenfrei,’ there are no more Jewish students there”. *Le Vif/L’Express* wrote that the student received 288 abusive comments, including threats, on Facebook, by classmates and other pupils she did not know. After leaving the school she received a photo of a former classmate performing a Nazi salute and telling her she was missed.

In Greece, in the national elections towards the end of the month, the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party received 6.3 percent of the vote and remained the third largest party. The party won seventeen seats in the 300 member national parliament, just below the eighteen it won in the 2012 election. This was despite a widespread crackdown during the last year that saw most of the party's top leadership jailed on charges of heading a violent criminal organisation. The winner of the elections, the anti-austerity Syriza party, went into coalition with the nationalist Independent Greeks party. Only last month the Independent Greeks leader, Panos Kammenos, accused Greek Jews of not paying their taxes. The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece called on Kammenos, the new Defence Minister, to apologise for this "serious antisemitic act."

However, there was also some good news and minor victories in the battle against antisemitism in January. The Ukrainian government announced that it would soon appoint a special envoy tasked with preventing and fighting antisemitism and xenophobia. The Foreign Ministry asserted that "International Holocaust Remembrance Day is a reminder that we should make joint efforts to prevent a repeat of this tragedy. We share the concern of the international community [over] antisemitism and express solidarity with Jewish communities around the world." They added that this appointment is important especially during a time of "Russian aggression" that threatens Ukrainian achievements in building a tolerant society in which different peoples and religions can peacefully coexist.

In Germany, three defendants on trial for an arson attack on the Wuppertal Synagogue last July apologised in court for their actions. The defendants are all of Palestinian descent and said they had been angry about the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza but that they did not want to hurt anyone. However Leonid Goldberg, President of the Jewish community in Wuppertal, told reporters that he did not believe this statement and saw the arson attack as a sign of "pure antisemitism." Also in January, *Berliner Zeitung*, one of Berlin's leading daily newspapers, apologised for publishing a caricature on its front page which many deemed antisemitic. In an open letter to readers the editors apologised for the "regrettable error." They had published a cartoon by cartoonist Joe Lecorbeau one day after the terror attack on the Paris offices of Charlie Hebdo which, in a spoof of a Charlie Hebdo magazine cover, showed an Orthodox Jew with an enlarged nose, under the banner 'Shoah Hebdo' with the caption '1 million rebate out of six, for Palestine' (the conflation between 'rebate' and rabbi is a deliberate anti-Jewish play on words). The newspaper was publishing a series of Charlie Hebdo cartoons in solidarity and claimed not to have realised that this one was a fake. The apology published on its website said "there was a manufactured picture... from the title pages of magazine Charlie Hebdo. We regrettably showed... an antisemitic cartoon from Joe Lecorbeau. We offer this as an apology."

In Italy, a Rome court convicted six men of spreading pro-fascist and antisemitic hatred. The charges related to a hate campaign between 2008 and 2011, which included offensive posters, graffiti and demonstrations against Rome's Jewish community and the representatives of Italian institutions. Sentences for the convictions ranged from eight to eighteen months. A seventh defendant was acquitted. A Rome Jewish community spokesman said the verdict rendered a "clear-cut condemnation of neo-fascism and of all racist and xenophobic cultures." Those convicted have been ordered to pay €7,128 to the Jewish community, a symbolic sum representing the 7,128 Italian victims of the Holocaust. The funds will be donated to the cancer ward of a Rome hospital.

Finally in the UK, four teenagers from Newcastle who attacked a rabbi as a protest about the conflict in the Middle East, have been sent to a young offender institution, three of them for twelve months and the youngest, aged 16, for four months. The night before the attack one of the defendants sent a text message saying "I'm going to go Jew bashing. Haha" and asked a friend "Do you want to go to Gateshead to smash some Jews up?" In sentencing them, Judge Brian Forster QC said: "I hope this case sends out a clear message to anyone tempted to behave in a similar way. The courts will not in

any circumstances tolerate a situation where one person is tempted to attack another by reason of their race or religion. Anyone who chooses to attack someone for their race or religion commits a very serious offence. Our country is the stronger because people come from many different backgrounds and people do their best to live together in harmony. Gateshead is renowned for the large Jewish religious complex which is based there and members of the local community now feel unsafe as a result of what has taken place.”

- [Antisemitism mars Holocaust Memorial Day](#) (The Local, January 27, 2015)
- [Spotlight on hate crimes in Sweden’s Skåne](#) (The Local, January 21, 2015)
- [Yarmulke-Wearing Journalist Forced to Flee Swedish Neighborhood](#) (Arutz Sheva, January 25, 2015)
- [Malmö’s Muslim Leaders Reach Out to Jewish Community](#) (Arutz Sheva, January 25, 2015)
- [‘Liars’ and ‘killer’ daubed on Holocaust Memorial Day posters](#) (Jewish News, January 16, 2015)
- [Jewish community’s boycott call over village’s Hitler sign](#) (BBC News, January 31, 2015)
- [Vandals attack large Jewish cemetery in Warsaw](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 2, 2015)
- [Antisemitism watchdog: Belgian public schools becoming ‘Jew-free’ zones](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 20, 2015)
- [Neo-Nazi Golden Dawn holds steady in Greek elections](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 26, 2015)
- [New Greek coalition partner accused of antisemitic slur](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, January 27, 2015)
- [Kiev to appoint special envoy to combat antisemitism](#) (The Jerusalem Post, January 25, 2015)
- [Defendants apologize for setting fire to German synagogue](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 16, 2015)
- [German paper apologizes for antisemitic cartoon](#) (The Jerusalem Post, January 16, 2015)
- [Antisemitic neo-fascists convicted in Rome](#) (The Local, January 21, 2015)
- [Newcastle West End gang locked up for attack on Tyneside Rabbi in Bensham](#) (The Chronicle, January 27, 2015)

4.1 / ANTISEMITISM IN FIGURES

A few countries in Europe released their statistics for antisemitic incidences in 2014. In France, the Service de protection de la communauté juive (SPCJ), the Jewish community’s watchdog on antisemitism, recorded a doubling of antisemitic events, from 432 in 2013 to 851 in 2014, and was the third highest year on record. Using Ministry of Interior data, the report demonstrates that just over half of all racist attacks in France in 2014 targeted Jews, even though Jews constitute about one percent on the French population. Violent incidents were also up in 2014, 130 higher than in 2013.

In Belgium, the number of antisemitic incidents rose by 60 per cent in 2014 compared to the previous year, up to 200 in total. In Austria, incidents almost doubled in 2014 according to the Vienna-based watchdog group Forum Against Antisemitism, reaching 255 in total, the highest recorded level since 2008. Out of the total of 255, nine were physical assaults and 57 were cases of vandalism.

In the UK, the highest level of antisemitic incidents was recorded since records began: 1,168 incidents in total, a 118 per cent increase on 2013. Three-quarters of incidents were recorded in London and Manchester with London up 137 per cent and Manchester seeing a 79 per cent rise. The majority of the cases recorded were in the abusive behaviour category, 884 in total, but there was also a 17 per cent rise in the number of violent assaults.

In all of these cases, a sharp increase in the number of antisemitic incidents coincided with conflict in Gaza in July and August 2014. Figures for antisemitic incidents at other points in the year were largely in line with previous levels.

- [Watchdog: Antisemitic incidents doubled in France](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 27, 2015)
- [Austrian watchdog records near doubling of antisemitic incidents](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 30, 2015)
- [Hate attacks on Jews soared 94% last year, police figures show](#) (The Telegraph, January 21, 2015)
- [Attacks on Jews doubled in London area](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 23, 2015)
- [Surge in hate crime against Jews in Glasgow is "unprecedented", according to religious leaders](#) (Glasgow Evening Times, January 24, 2015)
- [Antisemitic attacks in UK at highest level ever recorded](#) (The Guardian, February 5, 2015)
- [CST figures show 2014 worst year on record for hate](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, February 5, 2015)

4.2 / PRAGUE CONFERENCE ON ANTISEMITISM

The European Jewish Congress held a two-day programme in Prague and Terezin with the Czech Government and the European Parliament – the ‘Let My People Live’ forum – to discuss the rise in hate, racism, antisemitism and xenophobia in Europe. The purpose was to find practical solutions and recommendations for dealing with these threats. About thirty parliament speakers and 500 other guests participated. At the conference, the European Council on Tolerance and Reconciliation (ECTR), a panel of legal experts, presented a framework statute for the promotion of tolerance. The document, which took three years to complete, aims to provide a legal basis for criminalising activities deemed to violate fundamental religious, cultural and gender rights. This would include legislation banning the burka, female genital mutilation and denial of the Holocaust. The statute aims to serve as a model for European legislatures in passing laws against incitement to discrimination and hatred. However, the document is expected to have little impact with Vera Jourouva, an EU justice commissioner, admitting that while some European countries already have laws that cover hate speech such as Holocaust denial, overall there is a lack of political will to implement them let alone to pass further ones. She said: “This is something I am working on right now – to get individual member states to implement their promises on cracking down on hate speech.”

- [Over 500 guests to join Prague forum on antisemitism](#) (Prague Daily Monitor, January 26, 2015)
- [Jewish leaders call for Europe-wide legislation outlawing antisemitism](#) (The Guardian, January 25, 2015)
- [Outlawing intolerance](#) (The Economist, January 29, 2015)
- [Anti-Semitism exposes legal gaps in Europe](#) (BBC News, January 28, 2015)
- [European Jewish leaders push to outlaw antisemitism](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, February 2, 2015)

5 / REVISITING HOLOCAUST ISSUES

Many Holocaust-related issues surfaced in January, including ones involving non-Jewish rescuers. In Lithuania, the Social Security and Labour Ministry announced that state pensions will be granted to 98 Lithuanian residents who rescued Jews during the Holocaust. In the UK, the Foreign Office hosted an event together with the Israel embassy at which the ambassador Daniel Taub and Minister for the

Middle East Tobias Ellwood honoured three righteous gentiles. Elsie Tilney, a British missionary who saved many Polish Jews whilst a prisoner of war in occupied France, was awarded the status of Righteous among the Nations. They also paid tribute to Lithuanians Vanda Janaviciene and Kazys Janavicius who saved Lilly Winterfield by hiding her until the war was over. In Slovakia, ten citizens were awarded the Righteous Among the Nations award. Slovakia's President Andrej Kiska said: "I fully realise today how important it is not only to remember the Nazi bestiality, but also to recognise those who opposed it, those who did not hide their eyes from the suffering of others and found courage and determination to help those persecuted, though they were not Jews."

Issues involving memorialisation also surfaced in January. In Poland, Warsaw ghetto fighters protested the placement of a monument to righteous gentiles in the former ghetto. The monument is due to be situated next to the new Museum of the History of Polish Jews and Warsaw Ghetto Uprising monument. However in an open letter sent to Poland's president and the mayor of Warsaw, former resistance fighters Simcha Rotem and Pnina Grynszpan Frymer wrote: "the Republic of Poland, our first homeland, has bestowed upon us medals for our relentless fight against the Nazi occupier. In this fight, we were often alone, but we have survived the Holocaust. We are also alive today because of help received from the Righteous Poles. However, we fail to understand why such a monument should be erected on the grounds where hundreds of thousands of people died a lonely death before any help arrived." On a more positive note in Poland, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation announced that it had raised \$140 million of its \$156 million campaign goal. The campaign was launched in 2009 to fund a perpetual endowment to continue to preserve the authentic remains, buildings, ruins, artefacts, documents and artworks at the Auschwitz Memorial.

In Germany, pressure has been mounting in Munich to allow the placing of Stolpersteine memorials which were banned in 2004. These 'stumbling blocks' brass plaques have been placed on pavements in 1,000 cities and towns throughout Europe outside places of residence to commemorate the names of Holocaust victims, their birthdates, dates of deportation and if known, the dates and places of death. However opposition to their placement still exists. Charlotte Knobloch, leader of Munich's Jewish community, argues that victims' memories would be desecrated when passers-by walked on the plaques.

Issues concerning former Nazi camps also reached the press in January. In Germany, Josef Schuster, President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, called for compulsory school trips to concentration camp memorials. However the spokesperson for the museum at Bergen Belsen said this would be very difficult to achieve as they already have to limit the number of groups they receive. Stephanie Billib said "we get around 1,000 group visits a year, and around half are school classes. We have to turn a lot away because we don't have the capacity to accompany them all." Overcrowding and budgets for paying guides are major issues hampering visitor expansion. In Italy, the Jewish community has spoken out against the suggestion that there should be an entrance free to visit Risiera di San Sabba, a Nazi detention facility for political prisoners and a transit camp for Jews. 3,000 people died there. Mario Tabor from the Union of Italian Jewish Communities said: "Risiera di San Sabba is a cemetery and a point of reference for past and future generations. No economic issues are possible to discuss; people should be permitted to visit the site for free. This proposal shocks me and I hope that Mayor Roberto Cosolini will reject it with clear words."

In the UK, the British Library launched 'Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust,' a new online collection of over 280 in-depth Holocaust survivors' testimonies. With over 1,000 hours of recordings, testimonies are grouped into various themes, including life before the Holocaust, the camps, resistance and liberation.

In Poland, at the beginning of January, the University of Wroclaw announced it would symbolically restore the doctorates of 262 mostly Jewish academics that were annulled by the Nazis. The degrees

were awarded by the University of Breslau which was dissolved at the end of the war. Whilst its students and teachers became part of the University of Cologne at that time, the university campus was re-organised as the University of Wroclaw.

In Romania, the Centre for Monitoring and Combating Antisemitism (MCA Romania) condemned President Klaus Iohannis for admitting anti-Communist political activist Octav Bjoza into the Order of the Star of Romania for his work within the Association of Former Political Prisoners. MCA Romania accused Bjoza of praising the pro-Nazi Iron Guard who helped murder Jews during the Holocaust. President Iohannis claimed that the criticism of Bjoza was unfounded because he was never a member of the Iron Guard.

In Ukraine, there was a new year torchlight march through downtown Kiev led by the ultra-nationalist Svoboda Party and the Right Sector movement in honour of nationalist leader Stepan Bandera. Bandera led the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists in World War Two, an organisation whose military units murdered thousands of Jews and Poles during the war. Efraim Zuroff from the Simon Wiesenthal Center said “the march has more to do with the systematic Holocaust distortion prevalent in post-Communist Eastern Europe, which has a very fundamental antisemitic component, than outright antisemitism.” According to the *Kyiv Post*, the march, which was not condemned by the Ukrainian Jewish community, had nearly five thousand participants.

In the Netherlands and the UK, Jewish leaders reacted with rage and despair at the arrival in Rotterdam of the world’s biggest ship, the Pieter Schelte, named after a Dutch officer in the Waffen-SS. Esther Voet, director of the the Hague-based Centre for Information and Documentation on Israel (CIDI) said “we lost our battle to have the ship’s name changed, and we are left eating dust. We’ve fought this for ten years, tried to persuade everyone involved that this was offensive. But no, we’re left with this fact: the largest ship in the world is named after an officer in the SS, and not enough people are offended to get this changed.”

In Austria, the government could expropriate Adolf Hitler’s childhood home following the owner’s refusal to sell it to them. The government is determined not to let it become a neo-Nazi shrine. The Interior Ministry has been the main tenant of the building since 1972, subletting it to various charitable organisations. However it has stood empty for more than three years since a workshop for the mentally disabled moved out.

Finally, in Germany, there are reports that a museum is planning to reconstruct part of Hitler’s bunker complex where he committed suicide. They intend to build five rooms of the *Führerbunker* including his secretary’s office, the radio room and the clinical room of Hitler’s personal physician. Reports indicate that it will be opening in the summer of 2015 in Oberhausen, near Duisburg in North Rhine-Westphalia.

- [Lithuania grants state pensions to nearly 100 Jew rescuers](#) (Delfi, January 27, 2015)
- [Daniel Taub honours righteous gentiles at Foreign Office ceremony](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, January 22, 2015)
- [Ten more Slovaks recognised as Righteous Among the Nations](#) (The Slovak Spectator, January 29, 2015)
- [70th anniversary of liberation of Budapest ghetto marked](#) (Politics.hu, January 19, 2015)
- [Hungary’s Orbán acknowledges country’s complicity in Holocaust](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 26, 2015)
- [Former Warsaw Ghetto fighters protest memorial’s placement](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 21, 2015)

- [Auschwitz Foundation close to endowment goal](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 19, 2015)
- [Pressure mounts to allow 'Stolpersteine' in Munich](#) (The Local, January 21, 2015)
- [Concentration camp 'can't take more visitors'](#) (The Local, January 26, 2015)
- [Italian Jewish community rejects fee to enter former Nazi camp](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 21, 2015)
- [British Library launches Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust – an online collection of over 280 in-depth Holocaust survivors' testimonies](#) (The British Library, January 20, 2015)
- [Polish university to restore Ph.D.s stripped by Nazis](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 8, 2015)
- [Romanian watchdog group protests honoring fascist sympathizer](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 23, 2015)
- [Wiesenthal Center pans Svoboda march but many Ukrainian Jews aren't worried](#) (The Jerusalem Post, January 4, 2015)
- [Jewish outrage as ship named after SS war criminal arrives in Europe](#) (The Guardian, January 24, 2015)
- [Hitler's childhood home in legal battle](#) (The Local, January 15, 2015)
- [Hitler's bunker to be rebuilt](#) (The Local, January 8, 2015)

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

In Poland, there were a few examples of remembering and restoring the Jewish past. The Forum for Dialogue Among Nations held a gala at the National Opera and Theatre in Warsaw for 1,200 Polish students who took part in its programmes exploring the history of their own Jewish towns and villages. In the presence of government officials, politicians, diplomats and representatives of the Jewish community, Senate Speaker Bogdan Borusewicz told the students that “studying the history of Polish Jews builds understanding for other cultures and religions as well as tolerance... This is especially important in Poland, which is now ethnically homogenous.” Also in January, during the Polish Church’s Annual Day of Judaism commemoration, bishops called for the honouring of Jews murdered in the Holocaust. In an appeal read in churches throughout the country, bishops urged Catholics to care for old Jewish cemeteries, synagogues and graves of victims of the Holocaust, calling it a “duty of conscience.” Also in Poland, the ‘From the Depths’ commemoration group announced a partnership with the Polish Strongman Federation to help return Jewish tombstones to Jewish cemeteries. Both the Nazis and communist regimes used Jewish tombstones from disused Jewish cemeteries for construction. At the same time, the contemporary Jewish community in Poland has sought to emphasise that Jewish life continues to exist today in a country so strongly associated with Jewish death and destruction, and there has been some noticeable media focus on this issue in several high profile international publications.

In Germany, the Bayern Munich football team launched a new campaign commemorating the contribution of Jews to football in the country. The touring exhibition, ‘Footballers, Fighters and Legends: Jews in German football,’ includes Jewish players and coaches whose visions and methods helped shaped the modern game. Most were killed in the Holocaust. In Washington D.C., German Ambassador to the United States, Peter Wittig, presented World Jewish Congress President Ronald Lauder with the Commander’s Cross of the Order of Merit, the country’s highest medal of honour, for his support of Jewish life in Germany since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In the UK, Bradford’s Reform Synagogue included a member of the Muslim community on its council. This comes after the Muslim community came to the financial rescue of the synagogue in 2013. In

Wales, the once vibrant Jewish community in Aberdare has been recognised with the unveiling of a blue plaque on the site of the former synagogue.

In Portugal, following the passing of legislation by the national parliament to allow descendants of Jews expelled from the country in the fifteenth century to reclaim citizenship in 2013, the government's Council of Ministers approved the final modifications. Justice Minister Paula Teixeira da Cruz said "I would not say that it is a historical reparation because I believe that in this regard there is no possibility of repairing what has been done. I would say that it is the granting of a right."

In Greece, fallen trees caused significant damage to historic tombstones in the Jewish cemetery in the northern city of Ioannina during a storm. About twenty stones were crushed during the storm. Ioannina has been the main centre for Greece's Romaniote Jews, whose roots in Greece date back some 2,300 years.

In Lithuania, the government agreed to establish a special commission for dealing with issues important to the Jewish community. The commission will deal with concerns related to Jewish culture and history, heritage, Jewish cemeteries, the preservation of mass burial sites and other matters of importance to the community.

In Switzerland, Jewish umbrella organisations from Germany, Austria and Switzerland launched a new project focusing on strengthening cooperation among the German-speaking Jewish communities. According to organisers from the Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities (SIG), 'Next Step' is due to start in March with a three-day seminar in Zurich for dozens of young Jewish leaders from the three countries. Jonathan Kreutner, SIG's secretary general, said: "this is the first attempt of its kind, which aims specifically to generate closer cooperation between the young leaders of these communities. A lot more can be done to enhance the cooperation of these communities, which share many characteristics and challenges despite belonging to different countries."

In Ukraine, towards the end of January, Jewish leaders in the port city of Mariupol urged their members to flee as casualties mount amid shelling by Russian-backed separatists. Aaron Kaganovsky, the assistant to city Rabbi Mendel Cohen, said "there's turmoil in the community, but we continue to function. Additionally, we are trying to persuade everyone who is willing to leave the city for Zhitomir and other places where we may be received. The move will be organised with our help." The Jewish community of Zhitomir in central Ukraine is providing Mariupol's Jews with a bus and will provide housing for the refugees.

- [Polish students honored for exploring history of Jewish towns](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 11, 2015)
- [Polish Catholics hold annual Day of Judaism](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 16, 2015)
- [Polish strongmen partner with group moving Jewish headstones](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 1, 2015), 2015)
- [The third-generation Polish Jews rediscovering long-buried roots](#) (The Guardian, January 25, 2015)
- [Krakow's Jewish community builds a future in Poland](#) (Deutsche Welle, January 26, 2015)
- [Poland's Jewish Culture Rises From the Ashes of Persecution](#) (Newsweek, January 27, 2015)
- [Bayern Munich launch commemorative exhibition about Jews in German football](#) (Fare network, January 26, 2015)
- [WJC President receives Germany's highest honour](#) (World Jewish Congress, January 15, 2015)
- [Bradford Shul appoints member of Muslim community to its council](#) (Jewish News, January 28, 2015)

- [Once-thriving Aberdare Jewish community recognised with blue plaque for former synagogue](#) (Wales Online, January 30, 2015)
- [Portugal okays law of return for Sephardic Jews](#) (The Jerusalem Post, January 29, 2015)
- [Historic Jewish cemetery in Greece damaged in storm](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 7, 2015)
- [Lithuanian government to set up commission for Jewish affairs](#) (Delfi, January 14, 2015)
- [Jewish leaders from German-speaking communities to gather in Switzerland](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 23, 2015)
- [Ukrainian Jews look to evacuate city as Jewish woman reportedly killed by shelling](#) (The Jerusalem Post, January 24, 2015)

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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.

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The **European Jewish Digest** is a 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 to provide the reader with an overview of incidents and activities that have occurred across Europe in the previous month. Note that all details come exclusively from press reports, and have not been verified by JPR researchers.