



## EUROPEAN JEWISH DIGEST: LOOKING AT THE HEADLINES ACROSS JEWISH EUROPE

### VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2: FEBRUARY 2015

#### 1 / DEADLY ATTACKS IN COPENHAGEN

Following the tragic shootings at the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo and the kosher supermarket Hypercacher in Paris last month, February saw similar deadly acts of violence in Copenhagen, Denmark. On Saturday afternoon on February 14<sup>th</sup> a gunman attacked an event at a cultural centre where a debate on the issue of freedom of expression was taking place. During the shooting, Omar el-Husseini, 22, a Dane of Palestinian descent, killed film director Finn Nørgaard and wounded three policemen. Later that night el-Husseini made his way to Copenhagen's main synagogue where a bat mitzvah celebration was taking place. There he opened fire with an automatic weapon, killing Dan Uzan, a 37-year-old Jewish voluntary security guard and wounding two police officers. The following morning Danish police killed el-Husseini in a shootout.

As in Paris, the Copenhagen Jewish community has been gripped with anxiety. In a visit to the synagogue the following day, Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt said that Denmark "will do everything" it can to protect its Jewish community. At a news conference she announced that "Jews are a very important part of Danish society. I say to the Jewish community – you are not alone." Dan Rosenberg Asmussen, a spokesman for the local Jewish community, said "we are of course in shock, one of our young members died last night. I'm shocked. There has never been so much police on the street, all heavily armed, near the synagogue, and despite this a man shoots at a synagogue. It's tragic."

On the Monday after the attack tens of thousands of Danes gathered at torch-lit memorials around the country to commemorate the victims of the deadly shootings. Many hundreds left flowers outside the synagogue. Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt pledged to protect the Jewish community saying that "an attack on the Jews of Denmark is an attack on Denmark." She further added that "the Jewish community has been in this country for centuries. Jews belong in Denmark, they are part of the Danish community and we wouldn't be the same without the Jewish community in Denmark." Both the Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Mette Frederiksen attended the Uzan's funeral held at a Jewish cemetery in Copenhagen.

- [Volunteer guard killed, two policemen injured in attack on Copenhagen synagogue](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 15, 2015)
- [Fear and defiance in Copenhagen after terror](#) (The Local, February 15, 2015)
- [Denmark synagogue attack seen as 'wake up call'](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 15, 2015)
- [Defiant Danes march after gunman attacks Copenhagen](#) (Reuters, February 16, 2015)
- [Tearful Danish Prime Minister joins mourners at the funeral of Jewish security guard shot dead in Copenhagen terror attack as police snipers keep watch](#) (Mail Online, February 18, 2015)
- [Denmark mourns victims of Copenhagen terror attacks](#) (World Jewish Congress, February 25, 2015)

## 2 / IN THE WAKE OF THE COPENHAGEN ATTACKS

Following the Copenhagen attacks, as with the Paris attacks, concern spread throughout European Jewish communities leading to increasing calls to step up security at Jewish related sites. Vadim Rabinovich, Co-Chairman of the European Jewish Parliament, said that “I believe we have to hold the leaders of the EU and the leaders of European countries accountable for the Jewish fatalities and wounded. We demand tougher rules, tougher security measures and significantly tighter law enforcement. It’s time for Europe to wake up before it is too late.” Rabbi Barry Marcus, of London’s Central Synagogue, said that the attacks on Saturday were not surprising, and that the Jewish community in Europe has been very concerned for some time. He added that “we have known for a long while from colleagues in mainland Europe that there’s been an absence of will to deal with rising antisemitism. The events in Copenhagen were not a kind of aberration, there’s a pattern.” In a conference in Prague organised by the European Jewish Association, rabbis from across Europe learned self-defence in the advent of a knife attack and how to treat victims of terror attacks. Rabbi Menachem Margolin, the general director of the organisation, said that EU leaders had not done enough to combat antisemitic attacks and pointed to a need to “secure all Jewish institutions 24/7.” Shortly after the attacks, Margolin was threatened on his personal Facebook page with the words: “Menachem Margolin will be a dead man unless he stops. We will put a bullet in his head.”

In the UK, Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley of the National Policing Lead for Counter Terrorism said that “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.” Swedish Jewish communities immediately started taking extra security measures. Lena Posner Körösi, chairwoman of the Jewish Central Council in Sweden, said “the hatred against us is completely blind and will stop at nothing. It is a threat to the entire democracy and against the entire Western world. It is a war... this might as well have happened in Stockholm, Gothenburg or Malmö. It could have been a dead Jew in Sweden. It could have been more.”

There have been some positive steps in the days since the attacks. The imam at Copenhagen’s Islamic Centre, Naved Baig, visited the synagogue on the Monday after the shootings to express solidarity with the Jewish community. Baig, a long-time promoter of interfaith dialogue said “the attacks were on every Jew, every Muslim, every Christian and every person. That is what we from the Muslim community came to say.”

In Oslo, Norway, the following Saturday evening, a local grassroots Muslim group organised a show of solidarity with the Jewish community by forming a symbolic protective ring around the outside of the synagogue. An estimated 1,300 people of all faiths formed the circle chanting “No to antisemitism, no to Islamophobia.” Ervin Kohn, a Danish Jewish community leader said “it is unique that Muslims stand to this degree against antisemitism and that fills us with hope... particularly as it’s a grassroots movement of young Muslims.” Following this example, another ‘ring of peace’ was subsequently organised outside the main synagogue in Stockholm. Up to 1,000 Swedes attended and, according to the organisers, its aims were to show that Muslims “strongly condemn all types of extremism and reject all types of hatred and hatred of Jews.” Petra Kahn Nord, secretary-general of Sweden’s Jewish Youth Association said that “from our perspective, as Jews, it is very important that we feel that we are not alone.” Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven attended the event and told the crowd that their country would “never let hate take charge of our lives.”

- [Fear of a new darkness](#) (The Economist, February 21, 2015)
- [Rabbis learn how to disarm knife attackers and survive being stabbed at gathering in Prague in response to growing anti-Semitism in Europe](#) (Mail Online, February 24, 2015)

- [European Jewish Association calls for increased protection of institutions](#) (The Guardian, February 15, 2015)
- [Death threats made against Brussels Jewish lobby group's leader](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 18, 2015)
- [Jewish Schools and Synagogues in UK Warned to Increase Security Measures](#) (Yahoo News, February 17, 2015)
- [Swedish Jews 'in fear' after Denmark attacks](#) (The Local, February 15, 2015)
- [Machine guns to help protect synagogues](#) (The Local, February 15, 2015)
- [Scandinavian Jews see silver lining in strong Muslim response to Denmark shootings](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 20, 2015)
- [Norwegian Muslims form ring around Oslo synagogue](#) (Deutsche Well, February 21, 2015)
- [Oslo Muslims support Jews after CPH attacks](#) (The Local, February 22, 2015)
- [Swedes in 'ring of peace' synagogue protest](#) (The Local, February 28, 2015)

### 3 / OTHER ISSUES CONCERNING ANTISEMITISM

#### *Violence, Vandalism & Abuse*

In France and Germany there were several instances of Jewish cemetery desecrations. In Sarre-Union, France, nearly 400 gravestones in the Jewish cemetery were knocked over. French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve called it an “odious act against religious freedom and tolerance. France will not tolerate this latest attack which harms the values all French people share.” French President Francois Hollande similarly called the desecration an “odious and barbaric act” while Prime Minister Manuel Valls, tweeted that it was “antisemitic and ignoble.” On a visit to the cemetery following the attack President Hollande asked “must we put soldiers in front of cemeteries? How do we understand the unnameable, the unjustifiable, the unbearable? This is the expression of the evils eating away at the Republic.” Five teenagers were arrested in relation to the attack. A few days later swastikas were found scrawled in Jewish cemeteries in Challans, in the west, and Issoudun, in central France. At a similar time, a Jewish cemetery in the northern German city of Oldenburg was also desecrated. Swastikas were sprayed on the entrance columns, a wall and two parked cars. Over the past few years, the cemetery has been targeted by right-wing extremists.

There were many other instances of antisemitic vandalism and abuse in France in February. In Nice, at the beginning of the month, two soldiers protecting a Jewish community centre were attacked by a man with a knife. The soldiers were slightly injured and the man was arrested. The community centre houses the Nice Israeli Consistory, Radio Shalom and a Jewish association. Also at the beginning of the month, anti-racist organisation SOS Racisme lodged a complaint about a job advertisement for the Paris company NSL Studio that included in its desired person specification “if possible, not Jewish.” The advert caused considerable outrage and was taken down quickly. NSL Studio initially claimed that it was an external hack, but then promised disciplinary action if an investigation ascertained that the offending paragraph had been written by someone inside the company.

Also in February, a Muslim teacher announced that he had resigned from a French private high school for Muslims because of rampant antisemitism among his students. In a letter sent to the newspaper, *Liberation*, Soufiane Zitouni, a former philosophy teacher at the Averroes high school in Lille, said that one student told him that “the Jewish race is cursed by Allah, many Muslims sages told me so.” He said that antisemitic views were commonly expressed by other students and that the faculty resented his criticisms against radical Islam. The school’s administration said that they intended to sue Zitouni for libel. In another school in Poitiers, three pupils were suspended for antisemitic bullying. The bullying allegedly started in October when the victim confronted one of the youths about his pencil

case which had the words “Jew = cremated” on it. The victim then became the focus of repeated jokes about Auschwitz and Jews. The three pupils are due to appear before a juvenile court in April. Finally in another school in Avignon, a Jewish girl was forced to leave Aubanel High School due to persistent antisemitic bullying by classmates. The school administrators told the parents that as it took place out of school grounds it was not in their jurisdiction. Following a police complaint, the school spoke to the classmates but to no effect. When the bullying continued, the Jewish pupil initially changed classes, but ultimately felt compelled to leave the school.

In another incident of antisemitic vandalism, a suspect was arrested in Paris for painting the word ‘Jew’ on at least a dozen cars in a neighbourhood with a significant Jewish population. A few days later, a video was released of an Israeli journalist walking through Paris wearing a *kippa* and *tzitzit*. The film documents the abuse he received when walking through some of the city’s heavily Muslim populated neighbourhoods. In the same week, French police arrested a Muslim teenager for emailing death threats to two Jewish leaders in France. The email, sent to Israel’s consul-general in Marseille Barnea Hasid, and Jewish Member of Parliament Meir Habib, is alleged to have contained videos of the decapitation of Islamic State’s hostages along with the threat that they would suffer a similar fate. Towards the end of the month, a monument at the synagogue in Elbeuf was attacked with red paint. The paint was thrown on yellow stars that pro-Nazi French collaborators scrawled on the synagogue in 1942 and were kept a reminder of that period in French history. The Mayor of Elbeuf, Djoude Merabet, said “a little over seventy years after what happened here, this act is clearly the disgusting fruit of the antisemitism that is manifested [also] in the profanation of Jewish cemeteries.”

At the annual dinner of the French Jewish Institutions Representative Council (CRIF), French President Hollande said his country must offer protection to the Jewish community as antisemitism is on the rise in France. He added “Jews are at home in France, it’s the antisemites who have no place in the Republic.” The dinner was notable for a boycott by Muslim community leaders following comments by Roger Cukierman, head of CRIF, to Europe 1 Radio, in which he blamed young Muslims for all violence occurring against Jews. He included within his comments that “of course, it’s a tiny minority of the Muslim community and Muslims are the first victims,” but the French Council for the Muslim Faith condemned the remarks as “irresponsible and unacceptable”, and that they “contravened the very principle of coexistence.”

In Austria, the name ‘Hitler’ and four swastikas were scrawled onto the walls of Mauthausen concentration camp. In Belgium, a local school board in Brussels summoned a teacher at Emile Jacquain School following an accusation that he told a Jewish student that “we should put you all on freight wagons.” Joel Rubinfeld, president of the Belgian League Against Antisemitism praised both the school and school board for acting promptly and in an exemplary fashion.

In Germany, *Jüdisches Berlin*, the Jewish community’s monthly magazine, took the decision to remove its logo from envelopes containing its monthly magazine to protect members from antisemitic attacks. Ilan Kiesling, Berlin Jewish community spokesman, said that “despite considerably higher costs, the community’s executive board decided to send the community magazine in a neutral envelope, in order to reduce the hostility toward our more than 10,000 members. Many community members were thinking about cancelling their subscription.” A few days later, Josef Schuster, president of the Central Council of Jews, told the Inforadio radio station that whilst community members should not hide out of fear, men should nonetheless avoid openly displaying their faith in certain areas. He added that “the question is whether in problem areas, in districts with a large proportion of Muslims, it is sensible to be recognised as a Jew by wearing a *kippa*, or if it isn’t better to wear some other form of head covering. It is a development that I did not expect five years ago and that’s a bit shocking.”

In the UK, Manchester’s Chief Constable Sir Peter Fahy strongly condemned the painting of a swastika in a heavily Jewishly-populated neighbourhood. Sir Peter said, “the use of a swastika in this way is

insulting not only to members of the Jewish faith but indeed to the families of all those who fought against Nazism in the Second World War. You have to wonder whether people who do this are incredibly stupid and don't understand basic history or are just evil in wanting to cause fear and distress. Hate crime is important because it insults people's deeply held beliefs and their backgrounds and history and that is why the police see it as a priority. This incident is not just about some paint on a flagstone – it has a wider significance because of all the death, destruction and hatred that this symbol represents.” Meanwhile, in London, white supremacist activist Joshua Bonehill was arrested following a police investigation into antisemitic tweets sent to a Member of Parliament, and banned him from travelling inside the M25 as part of his bail conditions. According to an article in *The Independent*, Bonehill is the organiser of an anti-Jewish rally originally planned for the Stamford Hill on March 22 (an event that has subsequently been postponed).

A local Cornish council have backed down over attempts to erect a sign naming a local park “Hitler's Walk”. The sign had been removed in 2005 but local councillors asked for it to be restored in the week after Holocaust Memorial Day. They relented after local Jews and a Church of England bishop called for a boycott of the local fishing village.

- [Up to 400 Jewish gravestones desecrated and daubed with Nazi graffiti in 'heinous antisemitic attack' in French cemetery](#) (Mail Online, February 16, 2015)
- [Stay in France, PM Valls urges Jews after attacks](#) (BBC News, February 16, 2015)
- [Teens held after Jewish tombs defaced in France](#) (The Local, February 16, 2015)
- [French Jewish cemetery desecrated: Five Sarre-Union teenagers arrested deny antisemitic motive](#) (International Business Times, February 16, 2015)
- [Hollande visits desecrated Jewish cemetery, says French Jews belong in France](#) (The Jerusalem Post, February 17, 2015)
- [1 Christian, 2 Jewish cemeteries vandalised in France](#) (CNN, February 18, 2015)
- [Jewish Cemetery in Germany desecrated, mirroring French vandalism](#) (The Jerusalem Post, February 17, 2015)
- [French soldiers attacked outside Jewish community centre in Nice](#) (The Telegraph, February 3, 2015)
- ['No Jews' job advert provokes outrage in France amid fears of antisemitism on the rise](#) (The Independent, February 3, 2015)
- [Teacher quits Muslim school he claimed was riddled with Islamism and antisemitism](#) (The Independent, February 7, 2015)
- [Police complaints filed over antisemitic bullying in two French schools](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 13, 2015)
- [Suspect arrested in painting of 'Jew' on cars in Paris](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 10, 2015)
- [Muslim teen arrested for emailing death threats to French Jewish leaders](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 15, 2015)
- [10 hours of fear and loathing in Paris](#) (NRG, February 15, 2015)
- [French PM 'under Jewish influence,' ex-minister charges](#) (The Times of Israel, February 16, 2015)
- [French president pledges to protect Jewish community](#) (The Telegraph, February 23, 2015)
- [French Muslim leaders boycott Jewish dinner over 'violence' remark](#) (The Telegraph, February 23, 2015)
- [Monument at synagogue in northern France vandalized](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 23, 2015)
- [Swastikas, 'Hitler' written on Mauthausen walls](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 2, 2015)
- [Belgian teacher tells Jewish student: 'We should put you all on freight wagons'](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 9, 2015)

- [Jewish magazine in Germany to be delivered in plain envelopes](#) (The Guardian, February 22, 2015)
- [German Jewish leader: Don't wear kippa in Muslim areas](#) (Deutsche Welle, February 26, 2015)
- [Muslim Council says Jewish fears 'justified'](#) (The Local, February 27, 2015)
- [Police chief condemns swastika graffiti in Salford](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, February 10, 2015)
- [Jewish community slams 'sickening' and 'ignorant' racists who painted swastika on Salford road](#) (Manchester Evening News, February 10, 2015)
- [Organiser of anti-Jewish rally arrested over antisemitic tweets to Labour MP](#) (The Independent, February 15, 2015)
- [Council backs down over Hitlers Walk sign](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, February 23, 2015)

## Politics

In the political sphere, leading politicians have issued strong statements condemning antisemitism and urging concerted action. In a speech to the French Representative Council of Jewish Institutions (CRIF), President Hollande called for “faster, more effective” measures against hate speech. He said he wanted such speech “to come under criminal law rather than press laws” and that antisemitism should be considered an aggravating circumstance in the prosecution of all offenses. Hollande also mentioned a new proposed law against jihadism, and that he would push major web firms Google and Facebook to agree on how to fight the spread of hate speech online. According to Hollande “there is no such thing as virtual hatred when it is spreading... major internet firms must face up to their responsibilities.”

In the UK, the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism published a wide-ranging report on antisemitism in the UK and how it should be tackled. Recommendations listed in the report include government funding for synagogue security, a review of how hate crimes are committed on social media, a national review of interfaith work, a call for police to review how they monitor anti-Israel protests and more research on the issue. The report’s launch was attended by dozens of parliamentarians from across the political spectrum. House of Commons Speaker John Bercow said “we need to modernise the fight against antisemitism and to recognise the internet is now the principal theatre of battle in that regard, and adjust accordingly... whichever of us are re-elected, there will be a group in parliament holding the next government to account and to ensure the work is carried out. By the end of the next parliament, we need to be in a position where no Jewish 16- or 17-year-old feels or thinks that they have no future in this great country of ours. That’s the measure of success we need to see.” Endorsing the report, Prime Minister David Cameron said “tackling antisemitism goes right to the heart of what we stand for as a country. This report has a vital role to play. There can be no excuses. No disagreements over foreign policy or politics can ever be allowed to justify antisemitism or any other form of racism, prejudice or extremism.”

In Scotland, a joint statement by representatives of the Scottish National Party, Scottish Conservatives, and the Liberal Democrat, Labour and Green parties said: “as political leaders in Scotland, we join together to express sadness and concern about the recent antisemitic terrorist murders in Paris and Copenhagen, the rise in antisemitism across Europe that has been highlighted by several recent reports, and the raising of the security threat level in the UK. We celebrate Scotland's traditionally positive relationship with its Jewish population, but understand why events elsewhere can undermine their sense of security, belonging, and well-being, and come together unreservedly to condemn all manifestations of antisemitism in Scotland and to assert Scotland's warm desire that Jewish people living in Scotland should feel safe, completely at home, and a key part of the multicultural Scottish community.” The statement was supported by several religious institutions including the Church of



Scotland, the Roman Catholic Bishops Conference and the Muslim Council of Scotland, as well as the Scottish Trades Union Congress.

In Italy, new Italian President, Sergio Mattarella, warned against the threat of antisemitism in his inaugural address as President. He mentioned the 1982 terror attack outside Rome's main synagogue and referred to the murder of Stefano Gaj Tachè, the two-year-old Jewish boy killed during the attack by five Palestinian terrorists in front of the main synagogue of Rome, as "our child, an Italian child." The day after his inauguration Matterella visited the Ardeatine Caves, where German occupation troops killed 335 people, 75 of whom were Jewish, in March 1944, saying "the alliance between nations and peoples was able to beat the Nazi, racist, antisemitic, totalitarian hate of which this place is a painful symbol... the same unity in Europe and around the world will be able to beat those who want to bring us in a new season of terror."

In the UK, following a petition from the British Veterinary Association calling for a ban on animal slaughter without stunning, parliamentarians spent three hours debating the issue. Shechita UK director Shimon Cohen said, "once again, the position of the Jewish community as regards religious slaughter has been extremely well represented and the debate was in fact dominated by those whose priority was the protection of shechita." Prime Minister David Cameron has promised several times to preserve legal ritual slaughter.

In Austria, Philip Christl, the spokesman for the prosecutor office in the city of Linz, said that Facebook postings from a Turkish man showing Adolf Hitler together with a statement praising the death of Jews, are a legitimate way of criticising Israel. In response, Stefan Schaden, member of the advisory board of the Austria-Israel Society, said that "this position is, unfortunately, becoming more popular. Everything passes as so-called criticism of Israel. Antisemitism seems to have been officially abolished. In view of the climate in Europe, it is a dramatic development." Further uproar generated by this ruling has pushed the senior prosecutor to re-evaluate the case. In a seemingly similar ruling, a German court in Wuppertal convicted two German Palestinians of an arson attack on a synagogue, but denied the crime was motivated by antisemitism. Objecting, Green Party deputy Volker Beck said "this is a mistaken decision as far as the motives of the perpetrators are concerned... what do Jews in Germany have to do with the Middle East conflict? Every bit as much as Christians, non-religious people or Muslims in Germany, namely, absolutely nothing. The ignorance of the judiciary toward antisemitism is for many Jews in Germany especially alarming."

Also in Germany, Jewish leaders criticised Germany's Interior Ministry for failing to appoint Jewish experts to its Commission on Antisemitism. Julius Schoeps, founding director of the Moses Mendelssohn Centre for European Jewish Studies in Potsdam, called it "an unprecedented scandal." Anetta Kahane, head of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation, added "no one would ever propose setting up a conference on hatred of Islam without Muslims, or a roundtable on discrimination against women with no woman present." In a joint statement, several groups said they would establish their own expert commission.

In Greece, it was announced that the leader of Greece's Golden Dawn party, Nikos Michaloliakos, and more than seventy party members will be tried on charges including murder and belonging to a criminal group. This will include all eighteen of the far-right party's MPs in the last Greek parliament. In Sweden, Sveriges Radio has apologised for a presenter's question to the Israeli ambassador which asked about Jewish responsibility for antisemitism. In a statement of their website, the radio station wrote "we offer our fullest apologies for this question. It was misleading and put blame on individuals and on a vilified group."

Finally, the Pew Research Centre released the results of a new study that showed the number of countries where Jews faced harassment rose to a seven-year high in 2013. The result showed that

harassment of Jews was reported in 77 out of 198 countries, and in Europe Jews were harassed by individuals or social groups in 34 of the region's 45 countries.

- [Hollande promises harsher penalties for hate speech](#) (Deutsche Welle, February 24, 2015)
- [Francois Hollande urges web firms to fight hate speech online](#) (The Irish Times, February 24, 2015)
- [Ban racists from social media, anti-Semitism report says](#) (BBC News, February 9, 2015)
- [Report calls for measures on shul security and internet hate](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, February 9, 2015)
- [All Party Report: MPs highlight shul security and internet hate](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, February 12, 2015)
- [Scottish political leaders join together in condemning antisemitism](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, February 24, 2015)
- [Scotland: Catholic Church endorses Jewish call for end to anti-Semitism](#) (Independent Catholic News, February 24, 2015)
- [Italy president highlights threat of antisemitism](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, February 12, 2015)
- [British lawmakers debate ban on religious slaughter](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 25, 2015)
- [Austrian prosecutor: Call to kill Jews is legal criticism of Israel](#) (The Jerusalem Post, February 11, 2015)
- [German Judge: Torching of Synagogue not motivated by anti-Semitism](#) (The Jerusalem Post, February 7, 2015)
- [Germany criticised for forming antisemitism commission without Jews](#) (The Guardian, February 10, 2015)
- [Greece far-right Golden Dawn leaders to go on trial](#) (BBC News, February 4, 2015)
- [For the first time, issue of anti-Semitism dealt with by European Parliament body](#) (European Jewish Press, February 28, 2015)
- [Swedish Radio rapped for 'Jews' question](#) (The Local, February 18, 2015)
- [Harassment of Jews on the rise worldwide, study finds](#) (The Times of Israel, February 26, 2015)

#### 4 / MONITORING DEVELOPMENTS IN UKRAINE

Events concerning Ukrainian Jews, especially in the rebel-held Donbas region, made headlines in February. In an apparent antisemitic reference, Alexander Zakharchenko, leader of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, claimed that Kiev's pro-Western leaders were "miserable representatives of the great Jewish people." He added that the country's historical nationalists "would turn in their graves if they could see who is running Ukraine." Also at the beginning of the month, it was reported that the Babi Yar memorial was defaced with swastikas for the third time in the last few months. Later in the month, it was discovered that the grave of a daughter of the Breslover movement's founder, Rabbi Nachman, was set on fire and daubed with a swastika in the city of Kremenchuk.

In the city of Kramatorsk, two rockets hit a building housing a Hesed welfare centre, but did not explode. There were no injuries or casualties. The attack was part of a barrage that landed near the city centre, reportedly killing five and wounding 26. American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee CEO Alan Gill said "this latest development is another stark reminder of the harsh conditions on the ground that impact the lives of the most vulnerable in Ukraine every day. We remain vigilant and dedicated to delivering humanitarian aid to the thousands in Ukraine who are facing violence, scarcity of food and medicine, and the harsh winter months." The Hesed centre in Kramatorsk provides services to more than 560 elderly and poor Jews. In Donetsk, a Jewish woman was killed when a rocket



hit her house, just hours before another rocket hit close to the city's synagogue. Shelkaeva Irina Grigorievna, had worked for the local Jewish community for eight years, both as a guard and a designer of educational materials at the local kindergarten.

- [Separatist leader says 'miserable Jews' running Ukraine](#) (The Jerusalem Post, February 3, 2015)
- [Swastikas again deface Babi Yar monument](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 3, 2015)
- [Eastern Ukraine Jews to get \\$650,000 in emergency funding](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 9, 2015)
- [Chief Rabbi calls on separatists to cease fighting as Ukrainian Jewish center hit by rockets](#) (The Jerusalem Post, February 10, 2015)
- [Jewish woman killed in Ukraine; rocket hits near synagogue](#) (The Jerusalem Post, February 11, 2015)
- [Specter of Antisemitism Hangs Over Ukraine](#) (The Moscow Times, February 18, 2015)
- [Ukrainian Jewish soldier killed in fighting separatists buried in Kiev](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 22, 2015)
- [Ukraine grave of Breslover founder's daughter torched, vandalized](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 22, 2015)

## 5 / REVISITING HOLOCAUST ISSUES

A number of Holocaust-related issues were reported in press articles in February. In Germany, a series of cases against alleged Nazi war criminals were announced. Prosecutors in Lueneburg announced that Oskar Groening, known as the 'bookkeeper of Auschwitz,' will go on trial in April charged with at least 300,000 counts of accessory to murder. The prosecutors allege that as well as counting money, Groening also hid victims' luggage away from new arrivals, to disguise their fate. They also said that the former guard was aware that those deemed unfit to work at the camp "were murdered directly after their arrival." Prosecutors in Hamburg are also investigating a 93-year-old woman for her role as an SS guard during a Nazi death march. Hilde Michnia allegedly helped to evacuate the Gross-Rosen camp as Allied forces approached, forcing 2,000 female prisoners on a death march. The march killed around 1,400 of the women. Michnia could face charges as an accessory to murder. Another, as yet unnamed 93-year-old man, has been charged as an accessory to the murder of 170,000 people at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. The former SS-member reportedly has admitted being stationed at the camp from early 1942, but he denies having any involvement in murder. Investigators claim that he was involved in murders between January 1943 and June 1944. According to their charge, he also allegedly knew that the systematic murder could not have taken place without assistants like him. The district court of Detmold will now decide whether to allow his prosecution. Another man has also been charged with 3,681 counts of accessory to murder on allegations he served at Auschwitz. Prosecutors said the defendant was a former SS sergeant, who acted as a medical officer at the Nazi concentration camp in 1944.

During February, there were commemorations for non-Jewish rescuers during the Holocaust. In Belarus, the Lukyanovich family was honoured with the Anti-Defamation League's Jan Karski Courage to Care Award. The family helped to hide and protect a Jewish child at great personal risk. In Poland, five finalists were announced for a competition to design a memorial in Warsaw to Poles who risked their lives to save Jews during World War II. An organisation representing rescued Jews plans to build the memorial in the heart of the former Warsaw Ghetto and next to the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. However, there has been criticism over the placement of the monument inside the former ghetto on the grounds that it would be inappropriate to place it on the site where hundreds of thousands of Jews died before any help arrived.

Other Holocaust-related memorials made the press in February. In Moldova, the mayor of Chisinau said he would restore a landmark structure, largely destroyed during the Holocaust, as a monument to local Jews who died in the genocide. He said that the city would restore the Jewish cemetery chapel to commemorate this year's 70th anniversary of Nazi Germany's defeat. The structure was built at the end of the nineteenth century and was used to prepare bodies for burial at the Sculeni cemetery, but it – and the cemetery as a whole – fell into serious disrepair after the Holocaust. At Sobibor death camp in Poland, Israel archaeologist Yoram Haimi uncovered the path walked by Jewish victims to the gas chambers, but he has expressed concern that the planned new museum and monument at the camp will endanger his discoveries. Whilst Polish officials dismissed his concerns, Yad Vashem and another influential member of the Sobibor committee are now calling for the plan to be reviewed. In Paris, politicians, resistance veterans, Communist Party activists and Jewish leaders unveiled a statue of Jewish resistance fighter Marcel Rajman. Rajman, together with his Polish Jewish friends, initiated several bold and spectacular attacks against the Germans during the war. He was eventually captured and executed by the Nazis in February 1944.

In Estonia, a museum has apologised for exhibiting works which critics accused of making light of the Holocaust. One of the video installations at the Tartu Art Museum featured nude men and women playing tag in a gas chamber, while a second showed a 'Holocaust survivor' having his concentration camp tattoo re-inked. They were both part of an exhibit entitled 'My Poland: On Recalling and Forgetting.' Museum director Rael Artel apologised to visitors who were distressed by the videos and said it was not the goal of the museum. He said "the topic is complicated and emotionally difficult. Without intending to, we offended the Jewish community by displaying these works. We ask for forgiveness. The time is not ripe to treat these historically painful themes by way of provocative artworks."

In Lithuania, about 500 ultra-nationalists, some wearing Nazi swastikas, marched through Kaunas in the eighth annual event organised by the Lithuanian Nationalist Youth Union. The marchers were confronted by about twenty protesters from the local Jewish community and anti-fascist groups. In Poland, Holocaust commemoration group 'From the Depths' rescued a drum made out of a Torah scroll from the estate of a Nazi sympathiser. The drum was found in the basement of a man who lived in a village near Lodz. The drum was flown to Israel and will be incorporated it into a travelling exhibition that the group is preparing this year.

In Germany, the heirs of four Jewish art collectors filed a lawsuit to regain a medieval gold treasure they claim was forcibly sold to the Nazis in 1935. They filed their claim against Germany and the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. They are demanding the return of a collection known as the *Welfenschatz*, or 'Guelph Treasure,' whose value they estimate at approximately \$227 million. The collection, which a consortium of collectors bought in 1929 as an investment, originally included 82 pieces. The plaintiffs are seeking the return of the portion sold to Hermann Goering in 1935. However, the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation President Hermann Parzinger said he was "astonished by this step," especially as his foundation had done extensive research that he believed showed "the property at issue was not confiscated by the Nazis. Nor was it part of a forced sale or transfer under duress or coercion by the Nazis."

In Luxembourg, a report released by historians at the University of Luxembourg was published in February and showed that the country's World War Two rulers willingly cooperated with the Germans in the persecution of Jews. The report stated that the "Luxembourg administrations under occupation were not forced to participate in Nazi antisemitic persecution under threat... they collaborated once they were invited to by the occupier and often fulfilled their task with diligence, zeal even — certain heads of the administration did not hesitate to take the initiative."

In the Netherlands, Allseas, the shipping giant that built the world's biggest ship and named it the 'Pieter Schelte' after a prominent Nazi industrialist and Waffen-SS officer, announced that it would change the name. Allseas said in a statement, "it has never been the intention to offend anyone. The new name will be announced within a few days." In Amsterdam, Jet Bussemaker, Minister of Education, attended the first lesson that teaches school pupils about the Holocaust in a replica of the house where Anne Frank and her family hid from the Nazis. The lesson took place at a 1,100-seat theatre in the centre of the city which is devoted to a new play about the life of Anne Frank, the young Jewish diarist who died at the age of fifteen in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Bussemaker said "I want everyone to know and never forget the story of Anne Frank. This educational project can help make people think about how we should get along with one another today."

- [Trial date set for 'Auschwitz bookkeeper' Groening](#) (BBC News, February 2, 2015)
- [German man, 93, charged as accessory to murder of 170,000 at Auschwitz](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 17, 2015)
- [Ex-SS medic, 94, charged over Auschwitz deaths](#) (BBC News, February 23, 2015)
- [Belarus family honored for safeguarding Jewish child](#) (Ynet News, February 1, 2015)
- [Five finalists picked for memorial to Poles who saved Jews during WWII](#) (Haaretz, February 5, 2015)
- [Chisinau to restore Jewish cemetery destroyed in World War II](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 13, 2015)
- [Statue unveiled in Paris commemorates Jewish resistance fighter captured, executed by Nazis](#) (The Jerusalem Post, February 16, 2015)
- [Gas chamber discovery at Sobibor spurs calls to review museum project](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 3, 2015)
- [Tartu museum to pull videos by Polish artist after criticism from Jewish community, state institutions](#) (Estonian Public broadcasting, February 12, 2015)
- [Lithuanian fascists march near execution site of 10,000 Jews](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 17, 2015)
- [Nazi drum made of Torah scroll brought from Poland to Israel](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 10, 2015)
- [Jewish heirs sue Germany in U.S. over medieval art](#) (USA Today, February 24, 2015)
- [Study: Luxembourg wartime bosses willingly helped Nazis find Jews](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 13, 2015)
- [Ship named for Nazi war criminal to be rechristened after Jewish groups protest](#) (The Guardian, February 6, 2015)
- [Dutch students get Holocaust lessons at revolving Anne Frank house replica](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 26, 2015)

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

In the UK, some new interfaith work was reported in February. In an initiative borne out of the Paris attacks in January, the first stage of the Coexist Pilgrimage was launched at London's Central Mosque. Alumni of the Cambridge Coexist Leadership Programme, Masorti Senior Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, Christian minister the Rev Margaret Cave and assistant secretary-general of the Muslim Council of Britain, Sheikh Ibrahim Mograbi, came up with the idea of a faith walk for nearly 200 Londoners including Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs and Hindus. Sheikh Ibrahim Mograbi declared "we need to be together to demonstrate coexistence and tolerance," adding that, as a religion, Islam could coexist with every faith and no faith, and that it had more in common with British values than what separated it. He went on to state: "Above our religions, ethnicities, cultures, social and financial standings, is our common humanity and respect for life, and care for God's creation". In Scotland, a group of Jews and

Muslims are forming a joint committee to work together on issues affecting both communities. The first proposals for the group include a joint education project, and collaboration around issues including care for the elderly within both religions, hate crime and animal slaughter according to religious law. Committee member Nabeel Shaikh, general secretary of Glasgow Central Mosque, said “this is a very positive step forward for Jewish and Muslim relations in Scotland and something which we hope will show people throughout the UK and Europe that Muslims can not only live side-by-side with Jews, but we can work and build things together also.”

In Lithuania, in a joint project between the Lithuanian National Library of Martynas Mažvydas and the YIVO Institute, the Lithuanian Central State Archive has started to preserve the documents collected by the Jewish scientific YIVO institute in Vilnius between the two world wars. Nearly 10,000 rare publications and 1.5 million documents related to Jewish life, science, culture, religion and art will eventually be digitised and uploaded onto a special database on Jewish life. This will create the largest digital collection for Yiddish studies in Eastern Europe. February also saw the press publicise some internal disputes taking place within the Lithuanian Jewish community. Faina Kukliansky, chair of the Jewish Community of Lithuania, reported that she was considering dismissing Chief Rabbi Chaim Burshtein in connection with critical statements he made on Facebook. Rabbi Burshtein attacked Kukliansky in a post entitled “Official Statement,” in which he described what he called “the excessive concentration of power in her hands... the community already looks like the Soviet police department in which Ms. Kukliansky used to work as an investigator.” Kukliansky said that “Chaim Burshtein is not worthy of being called a rabbi, as his actions and inaction clearly demonstrated,” and “we are nearing a situation where he will no longer serve this community.” In a separate incident, Efraim Zuroff, director of the Israel office of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, wrote a letter to Kukliansky criticising the community’s decision to cooperate with a state-funded institution during Holocaust commemorations that is accused of hosting antisemitic exhibitions. Zuroff wrote that the Vilnius’ Genocide and Resistance Research Centre’s museum hosts “blatantly antisemitic exhibits overemphasising the role of Jews in Communist crimes” and attempts to rewrite “the accepted and accurate narrative of World War II to the detriment of historical truth.” He called the cooperation between the community and the centre a “disgrace and betrayal.” In response, the community wrote that “while the Jewish Community and Genocide Centre certainly does not agree on some issues, the recent cooperation [...] has brought some positive results.” This included exposing 2,055 Lithuanians to war crimes charges, and the awarding of state pensions to people who saved Jews. It also said that Zuroff’s letter “has deeply hurt Ms. Kukliansky, insulted the memory of her deceased ancestors and therefore should be deemed immoral and slanderous.”

In Poland, the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland was trying to convince the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage to reverse its decision to refuse a request to help fund the renovation of a historic synagogue in Przysucha. The total estimated cost to renovate the synagogue in southern Poland is \$52,000 of which the foundation had requested \$43,000 from the Ministry of Culture. Also in February the Polish film ‘*Ida*’ won Best Foreign Language Film at the 87<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards. The film tells the story of a young orphaned woman, *Ida*, who is on the verge of taking vows to be a nun in the early 1960s when she discovers that she is Jewish and that her parents were murdered by a Polish peasant during World War II. The film has caused much controversy in Poland with critics claiming that since it only shows Poles who killed Jews during the Holocaust and not Poles who saved Jews, the film is anti-Polish. The film also touches on another controversy – the involvement of Jews in the post-war communist regime.

In Portugal, the government published the application procedure for the country’s new law of return for descendants of Sephardic Jews expelled from the country at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Called the ‘Concession on Portuguese Nationality by Naturalisation to Descendants of Sephardic Jews,’ the new procedure requires that applicants must present a document issued by a Portugal-based Portuguese community attesting as to their Portuguese Sephardic ancestry. The country has two officially

recognised Jewish communities, Lisbon and Porto. In addition, applicants must prove other personal documents through a notary, including proof that they have no criminal record in their country of origin or residence. The equivalent law in Spain has been criticised for getting stuck in committee and for being watered down. Leon Amiras, chairman of the Association of Olim from Latin America, Spain and Portugal said “in all senses, the Portuguese law is much more effective and generous than what the Spanish government is contemplating at the moment. We call on to Spain follow Portugal’s example and avoid disappointing and ultimately deceiving the Jewish world with this project.”

In the UK, the polling group Populus interviewed 1,001 British adults about Jews as part of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism. According to the findings, 21% believe that there are more than five million Jews living in Britain; 62% believe that British Jews are as loyal to the country as any other citizens (7% believe British Jews are more loyal to Israel); 33% believe Jews “always defend the state of Israel whether its actions are right or wrong” (almost exactly the same proportions disagree); and 89% believe that Israel has the right to exist.

In France, it was reported that at least 14% of the country’s Jews are expected to back the National Front in presidential elections in 2017. Roger Cukierman, the chairman of the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France, said that while the National Front still carried toxic baggage, it was no longer violent and that its leader had never used antisemitic language. He said “the National Front is a party for which I would never vote but it's a party which today doesn't commit violent acts. Let us be clear: all the violence (against Jews) is now committed by young Muslims.” He added that Marine Le Pen, leader of the National Front party “cannot be faulted personally” for antisemitism. Serge Klarsfeld, the French Nazi-hunter, responded angrily saying “Ms Le Pen has not broken ties with her father... She leads the National Front, whose debts include the antisemitic positions of her father, who is [its] honorary president.”

- [London’s faithful walk together in show of solidarity](#) (The Times of Israel, February 19, 2015)
- [Scots Muslims and Jews start work on 'mixed' schooling](#) (The Herald, February 22, 2015)
- [Unique Jewish archive from interwar Vilnius to be reassembled in digital library](#) (Delfi, January 30, 2015)
- [Lithuania chief rabbi may be dismissed for criticizing community leader](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 22, 2015)
- [Lithuanian Jews defend cooperation with institution accused of anti-Semitism](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 3, 2015)
- [Polish culture ministry rejects request to renovate historic synagogue](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 22, 2015)
- [Poles say Oscar-winning ‘Ida’ misrepresents Jewish persecution](#) (The Times of Israel, February 27, 2015)
- [Portugal open to citizenship applications by descendants of Sephardic Jews](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 3, 2015)
- [Spanish-speaking Jews urge Spain to follow Portugal’s Jewish law of return](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 27, 2015)
- [Poll reveals public believes five million Jews live in the UK](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, February 12, 2015)
- [French Jews turn to Le Pen after Muslim attacks](#) (The Times, February 24, 2015)
- [Marine Le Pen’s rhetoric is convincing French Jews to trust the Front National](#) (the Spectator, February 24, 2015)
- [CRIF chief Roger Cukierman ripped for defending far right’s Marine Le Pen](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 24, 2015)

## / 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](http://www.jpr.org.uk).

## / ABOUT THE EUROPEAN JEWISH DIGEST

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.