



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

### VOLUME 2, ISSUE 3: MARCH 2015

#### 1 / ISSUES CONCERNING ANTISEMITISM

##### *Violence, Vandalism & Abuse*

There were several instances of violent and abusive antisemitism in Europe during March. In France, two Jewish teenagers were robbed and beaten after leaving a synagogue in Marseilles. The two assailants allegedly said to the victims “dirty Jews, we will exterminate all of you.” Both teenagers required medical attention. In Austria, a Jewish man wearing a Star of David necklace was attacked in a shopping centre in St. Pölten. The victim said that he was taunted by a group of men with antisemitic insults, after which one of them attacked him. The police quickly arrested the attacker, who whilst admitting to the attack, denied that it was motivated by antisemitism. In the UK, while carrying out an experiment similar to one undertaken by another reporter in Paris in February, Jewish journalist Jonathan Kalmus was subjected to antisemitic abuse and insults when walking in Manchester and Bradford wearing a kippah. In Bradford, he was stalked by a man who repeatedly took pictures of him and endured shouts of “you Jew,” “fight the Jewish scum” and “you’re a Jew, not a Muslim... Jew, Jew, Jew run!” However, in one positive moment in a coffee shop, a Muslim man, wearing traditional Islamic dress stood up, raised his hand and welcome him with “Shalom, Shalom”. In response to this, Prime Minister David Cameron said “there are no excuses for the shocking antisemitism filmed in Manchester and Bradford. The idea that Jewish people feel unsafe again in Europe strikes at the heart of everything we stand for. We must fight antisemitism with everything we have got and make sure Britain remains a country that our Jewish communities are proud to call home.”

There were instances of antisemitism in several educational institutions in Europe in March. In Belgium, according to a European Jewish Press report, the Union of Belgian Jewish Students (UEJB) “denounced the antisemitic climate of hatred that activists from the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) maintain on the campus under cover ‘anti-Zionism.’” At the Brussels Free University, Jewish students were targets by BDS activists shouting antisemitic slogans whilst observing the setup of a symbolic installation called the ‘Wall of Occupation.’ The League Against Antisemitism said it would file a legal complaint, maintaining that “this is an antisemitic attack. We have the right to disagree with Israeli policies, but by their insults, BDS activists stuck a virtual yellow star on the back of Jewish students, making them a target and delivering them to the mob. We ask the academic authorities of the ULB to take responsibility and to exclude the BDS from the university.” Also in Belgium, a company has refused to keep providing insurance to a Jewish kindergarten in Brussels, claiming the risk of insuring the kindergarten was too high given the rise in antisemitic attacks.

In Germany it was reported that antisemitism is on the rise in schools with the word “Jew” being used increasingly as an insult in schoolyards. One of the findings at a Jewish Youth Congress event in Berlin was that the targeting of Jewish students led many to leave non-Jewish schools and transfer to Jewish ones. In the Netherlands, a roundtable discussion about Holocaust education took place in the parliament in The Hague where teachers and politicians told how a number of schools refrain from teaching about the Holocaust because of resistance from Muslim pupils. Arie Slob, the Christian Union party parliamentary leader said “Holocaust survivor Bloeme Evers does not dare give guest lessons in some schools. I am horrified by this. It is unacceptable that seventy years after the Holocaust,

antisemitism in the Netherlands is growing.” Muslim school teacher Wissam Feriani said “the teacher says Jews, the pupils say Gaza. The teacher says Holocaust, the pupils say it’s all bullshit.” In the classroom he added that “it’s always the Jews’ fault. Some pupils say they [Jews] don’t belong. It’s difficult.”

Also in the Netherlands, antisemitic stickers were discovered on shop windows in the heavily Jewish Amsterdam suburb of Amstelveen. The stickers featured a nose with a red line drawn through it, seemingly referring to racial stereotypes, as well as ‘Jews not allowed’ signs which were visible throughout Western Europe under Nazi occupation. The stickers were also reported to be on sale on a website offering football memorabilia for Rotterdam’s Feyenoord team whose fans often sing antisemitic chants towards Amsterdam’s Ajax fans. In addition, the Center for Information and Documentation on Israel (CIDI) in the Netherlands recorded a 71% increase in antisemitic incidents in 2014 over 2013. The organisation’s annual report on antisemitism also noted “a worrisome phenomenon: police officers’ failure to intervene in cases of evident antisemitism. Some police officers prefer to look the other way. The filing of a complaint was sometimes discouraged, in contradiction with the policy that seeks to enhance reporting.”

In Hungary, some twenty graves were vandalised in a Jewish cemetery. The Jewish community leader, Peter Weisz, called the damage to the graves in Gyongyos, which included the scattering of human remains, “unprecedented.” Prime Minister Viktor Orban’s office condemned the attack as a “barbaric act” and vowed to launch a programme to renovate neglected cemeteries. Also in Hungary, punk rock band Tankcsapda was subjected to antisemitic abuse after they announced that they will perform in Israel. In response to the band’s announcement, Facebook users launched attacks about circumcised penises and posted a picture of a kippah on the band’s logo amongst other profanities about the band’s musicians.

In Germany, the Israel Embassy revealed information about the antisemitism they are subjected to on a daily basis. A video was released of Ambassador Ya'akov Hadas reading to reporters a number of antisemitic letters sent to the embassy, including statements such as: “I’m happy Hitler destroyed you” and “humanity will live in peace when the last Jewish rat is in a grave.” Since Israel’s Gaza operation in the summer of 2014, the embassy has received at least twenty letters and emails of this nature daily. However, the ambassador also mentioned that, in response to seeing the video of him reading the letters, “we received hundreds of response e-mails of support, identification, and expressing shame and contempt for this phenomenon.” Also in Germany, new data presented to the parliament showed that 95% of 1,275 reported antisemitic incidents in Germany in 2013 were committed by right-wing extremists, and only 31 attacks were committed by people of a foreign background. The remainder (26) were attributed to other offenders.

In Sweden, police officers were posted to a Jewish cemetery in Malmö after mourners complained that they had been intimidated by several teenagers. A 59-year old man called the police after he feared some of the teenagers trying to break into the room where he was preparing a body of burial.

In a visit to Malmö, Ira Forman, President Obama's special envoy against antisemitism, said that whilst the situation for Jews in Sweden had improved, there was still cause for concern. Forman’s predecessor Hannah Rosenthal had criticised former Malmö mayor, Ilmar Reepalu, on a previous visit. The new Social Democrat mayor, Katrin Stjernfeldt Jammeh, said “a lot has happened since the previous visit. I find that there is a knowledge of the problem and an awareness of it that unfortunately did not exist then.”

In France, comedian Dieudonne M'bala M'bala was fined \$24,000 for violating laws banning hate speech when referring to gas chambers in connection with Jewish journalist Patrick Cohen. In 2013, Radio France’s Patrick Cohen asked on air whether the media should pay so much attention to

Dieudonne. In response, Dieudonne said “when I hear Patrick Cohen speaking, I say to myself, you see, the gas chambers... too bad.” Dieudonne’s fine came just a day after a Paris court gave the comedian a suspended two-month jail sentence for social media posts sympathising with the Islamist gunman who killed four Jews at kosher supermarket in Paris in January. In Toulouse, the chief rabbi of the city, Avraham Weill, filed a complaint with police for discrimination after an election inspector demanded he remove his kippah in order to vote. A volunteer inspector affiliated with the Community Party told him that he needed to remove his kippah in order to uphold “the [voting] station’s neutrality.” The rabbi was eventually allowed to vote at the insistence of other inspectors who intervened after Weill’s complaint. The local branch of the Communist Party claimed in a statement that “far from an altercation or incident, this is a case of incorrect interpretation of the law on voting.”

In the UK, police launched an investigation after neo-Nazi graffiti was painted in Borehamwood. The words ‘Sigurd Legion,’ a reference to a British white supremacist group, was daubed in Aberford Park and other areas. A Hertfordshire police spokesperson said “officers have visited the park and are liaising with the council in order to arrange its removal. Patrols have also been increased locally and the Hertsmer Safer Neighbourhood Team is working with the local community to offer reassurance. Hertfordshire Constabulary takes reports of hate-related crime very seriously and the matter is being fully investigated.”

- [2 Jewish teens attacked in southern France](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 29, 2015)
- [Jewish man attacked in St. Pölten supermarket](#) (The Local, March 18, 2015)
- ['Fight the Jewish scum!' Shocking antisemitism on streets of Britain as Jewish journalist is spat at, abused and even stalked... and the same happens in Copenhagen](#) (Mail Online, March 6, 2015)
- [First Paris, Now Britain: Journalist Wearing Kippah Faces Shocking Antisemitism; Abuse Started Within 1 Minute](#) (The Algemeiner, March 6, 2015)
- [Jewish students in Belgium denounce climate of antisemitic hatred on Brussels university campus](#) (European Jewish Press, March 6, 2015)
- [Jewish Kindergarten's Insurance Cancelled Due to its 'High Risk'](#) (Arutz Sheva, April 2, 2015)
- [Antisemitism Is On The Rise In German Schools](#) (Huffington Post, 4 March, 2015)
- [Many Muslim pupils resist Holocaust education, Dutch lawmakers hear](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 6, 2015)
- [Hungary: Jewish graves vandalised, human remains scattered](#) (i24 News, March 23, 2015)
- [Hungarian rockers keeping Israel date despite profane objections](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 29, 2015)
- ['German Verdict Allows Attacks on Jews Based on Anti-Zionism'](#) (Arutz Sheva, March 5, 2015)
- ['Jew stickers' found in heavily Jewish Amsterdam suburb](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 12, 2015)
- [Noting 71% rise in Dutch antisemitism, watchdog says cops part of problem](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 1, 2015)
- ['Bury Last Jew Rat'; Israel Embassy Reveals German Antisemitism](#) (Arutz Sheva, March 6, 2015)
- [Neo-Nazi attacks on German Jews far outnumber those by Islamists](#) (i24 News, March 15, 2015)
- [Frightened mourners at Malmö Jewish cemetery get police protection](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 16, 2015)
- [Sweden's Jews still face threat says Obama team](#) (The Local, March 16, 2015)
- [French comic Dieudonne fined for antisemitic comments](#) (i24 News, March 19, 2015)
- [Toulouse rabbi told to remove kippah at voting station](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 27, 2015)
- [Neo-Nazi symbols daubed in Borehamwood](#) (Jewish News, March 17, 2015)

## Politics

In the political sphere, there have been calls for more concerted international action against antisemitism. Following months of appeals by Jewish leaders, European Commission President and High Representative of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, has endorsed the idea of the creation of a European Union task force on antisemitism. Mogherini announced she had now passed on a policy recommendation to the EU commissioner dealing with issues of fundamental rights, Frans Timmermans. She said “I transferred the idea to Frans Timmermans, who has the formal authority in this issue, and we are already working on various initiatives.” European Jewish Congress President Moshe Kantor said he was “delighted with the momentum on this issue since we first raised it many months ago.” He had previously insisted that “we need a pan-EU body that will coordinate intelligence efforts between member states... This wave of antisemitic terror is a pan-European problem and should be dealt as such in a united and coordinated manner.”

In the US, eight members of the House of Representatives announced the formation of a task-force aimed at combating antisemitism. Called the ‘Bipartisan Taskforce for Combating Antisemitism,’ it is being designed to help Congress to fight antisemitism around the world and to promote tolerance and remembrance of the Holocaust. It will also educate congressional members on the “distinct form of intolerance” that is antisemitism and will work with foreign leaders, civil society groups and the executive branch to share ways to reduce acts of hate and antisemitism worldwide. Testifying in front of Congress, Ronald Lauder, president of the World Jewish Congress said that “for the first few decades following World War II, we mistakenly believed that antisemitism – the age-old hatred of Jews – had finally disappeared from Europe and everywhere else. I now tell you with the greatest sadness that, seventy years later, the age-old virus of antisemitism has returned in all its evil and ugliness. Antisemitism has returned to streets of Paris and Toulouse, to the streets of Brussels and Copenhagen. It has even returned to Berlin.”

In another development, U.S. Senator Ben Cardin was named as special representative on antisemitism and intolerance for the 57-nation Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly. This newly-created position aims to raise awareness about prejudice and discrimination, including antisemitism and race-based intolerance. Cardin will report to OSCE’s 325-member parliamentary assembly on the records of the participating states, and advise the assembly on how best to protect individuals and communities. The OSCE was created by the United Nations charter.

During his aforementioned visit to Sweden, Ira Forman, the US State Department’s special envoy on antisemitism, said that Jewish communities are being made bankrupt by increasing security costs, and he called for more support by European governments. He said that “every Jewish community in western Europe certainly needs security support. Many of them are being bankrupted by the money they have to spend to protect their institutions. If current trends continue, and they’re not good... we have to worry about small Jewish communities in Europe and their very viability.”

In France, there was a sense of relief that the far-right National Front did not become the largest party in the first round of local elections. Marine le Pen’s party came second with 25% of the votes, behind the right-wing UMP which scored 30%. However Tours University researcher Sylvain Crepon, an expert in political science and the French far right, issued a note of caution. He said that “many polls predicted that the National Front would become the biggest party in France and that they would secure at least 30% of the vote. That did not happen. But it is important to examine the results on a larger scale. The far right party had good results at the European elections; it had good results at the municipal elections, and now it is in second place at the local elections. I expect this tendency to continue at the December regional elections.”

Also in France, Gilles Platret, the mayor of Chalonsur-Saône, caused controversy by introducing a “pork or nothing” policy in the town’s school canteens. Platret said he was ending all alternative dishes in the name of France’s secular values, infuriating both Muslim and Jewish communities. Until now, as in most French towns and cities, there has always been a second meat on the menu for those with religious dietary restrictions. Platret said “it is indispensable to return to the firm principle of living together. The food on offer in (school canteens) cannot take account of religious considerations. Offering substitute menus when pork is served is to install a form of discrimination between children.” Critics said that the ruling would force Muslim and Jewish children to eat at home or go vegetarian.

At a memorial evening for the victims murdered at a Jewish school in Toulouse in 2012, French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve urged Jews not to leave France because it “would provide an unbearable posthumous victory to murderers.” He said that “through you, France is attacked, and if you leave, it is France who kneels. We do not intend to give in to terror and we will remain standing.” At the event, former president Nicolas Sarkozy said “you belong to the history of France. France would not be France without the presence of Judaism and the Jews of France.”

In Greece, it was announced that the trial of 72 people linked to Greece's neo-Nazi Golden Dawn Party and accused of crimes including murder and participation in a criminal organisation, will begin on April 20. The trial follows a fifteen month long investigation initiated by the fatal stabbing of a Greek rapper by a Golden Dawn supporter in September 2013. The defendants at the trial include party leader Nikos Michaloliakos and around a dozen Golden Dawn parliamentary lawmakers. Most face charges of membership of a criminal organisation, whilst others are accused of murder, conspiracy to murder, possession of weapons and racist violence.

A delegation of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), led by Executive Director David Harris, visited both Bulgaria and Greece in March. In Bulgaria, the delegation met with President Rosen Plevneliev and Foreign Minister Daniel Mitov. At the meeting President Plevneliev highlighted the need to have an honest discussion about hate speech. He said that “it is worse to deny that we have problems and problems have to be identified to be solved” and that the Bulgarian state and its society always react strongly to acts of intolerance. In Greece, the AJC delegation met with Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras where he underscored his strong commitment to denouncing all forms of antisemitism.

In the UK, Prime Minister David Cameron announced extra funding for security for Jewish communal buildings. At the annual Community Security Trust dinner, Cameron promised financial support for security at Jewish schools and synagogues as well as a grant for the CST to build a new control centre for its operations. He said that “over generations we have built something incredible in our country: a multi-ethnic, multi-faith democracy – and we are not going to let anyone destroy it. At a time when once again the Jewish communities of Europe feel vulnerable, and when antisemitism is at record levels here in Britain, I will not stand by. It is a measure of the health of our democracy and of the vigour of our institutions that the Jewish community feels safe to live and flourish here. It is about the strength of the values that we stand for.”

Also in the UK, politicians from Labour, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party announced that they would not support a ban on *shechita*. Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Sajid Javid, ruled out any ban saying “a civilised society is judged by how it treats its minorities. The Jewish people for centuries in many ways have been a model of integration, but that does not mean that they need to give up their deeply held religious principles in any way whatsoever. I have no time for any ban on it. It would not happen under the Conservatives.” Labour MP Stephen Twigg agreed adding “there is no question of the Labour party supporting such a ban. It is an unacceptable proposal which we reject.”

- [EU's Mogherini supports the idea of an EU task force to combat anti-Semitism](#) (European Jewish Press, March 11, 2015)
- [Italian politicians call on EU to establish anti-Semitism task force](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 10, 2015)
- [U.S. Lawmakers Launch Task Force to Combat Global Anti-Semitism](#) (Newsweek, March 24, 2015)
- [Jewish leaders urge Washington to lead global fight against anti-semitism](#) (Euronews, March 25, 2015)
- [Sen. Ben Cardin named anti-Semitism watchdog for OSCE](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 9, 2015)
- [Envoy: European Jews 'Bankrupted' by Security Costs](#) (Arutz Sheva, March 13, 2015)
- [French Jews breathe sigh of relief - sort of - over far-right's election result](#) (The Jerusalem Report, March 24, 2015)
- [French journalist reprimanded for asking politician if PM under 'Jewish influence'](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 11, 2015)
- ['Pork or nothing' for school dinner](#) (The Times, March 18, 2015)
- [Minister Cazeneuve urges Jews not to leave France](#) (World Bulletin, March 21, 2015)
- [Socialists and Democrats strongly condemn anti-Semitic attacks by Jobbik Party in Hungary](#) (Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament, March 17, 2015)
- [Greek neo-Nazi party trial to begin April 20](#) (i24 News, March 9, 2015)
- [American Jewish Committee Delegation Visits Sofia](#) (BTA Bulgarian News Agency, March 9, 2015)
- [Greece's PM speaks out against anti-Semitism](#) (San Diego Jewish World, March 12, 2015)
- [Shechita is safe with us say Tories, Labour, Lib Dems and Greens](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, March 15, 2015)
- [Cameron gives £3m for shul security after JC campaign](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, March 19, 2015)
- [Jewish schools and synagogues to be handed £10 million a year to protect against anti-Semitic attacks after Cameron promises not to turn 'a blind eye'](#) (Mail Online, March 19, 2015)

## Surveys on Antisemitism

The results of a few surveys on Jews and antisemitism were published in Europe in March. In Hungary, Medián, one of the country's leading polling firms, published the results of a comprehensive study of the scope and nature of antisemitism in Hungary. The poll shows a significant rise in antisemitism, with the number of Hungarians who are seen as rejecting Jews on a 'purely emotional' level increasing from 9% in 2003 to 23% in 2014. The report claims that much of the increase began in 2009 when Jobbik came to national prominence, with proportions increasing from 10% to 28% in one year. According to the poll, 38% belonged to the category of moderate-to-strong antisemites in 2013, although this dropped to 32% in 2014. There was no significant connection found between antisemitism and education attainment, social status or income level, but a correlation was seen in terms of political sympathy: two-thirds of Jobbik supporters were antisemitic, and most were strongly so. People on the right wing were slightly more susceptible to feeling a dislike for Jews. Among socialist supporters, strong antisemitism is present among 16% of voters. Antisemitism was discovered to be particularly high in Budapest: 49% of Budapest respondents were found to be antisemites, while in rural Hungarian towns this proportion is, on average, 24%.

In the Czech Republic, a new survey by the CVVM agency showed that attitudes of Czechs towards Arabs and Jews living in the country deteriorated over the past year, as did their attitudes towards Greeks and Serbs. The Slovaks remain the most popular and Romanies the least popular ethnicities.

The poll surveyed people's attitudes to seventeen ethnic groups and although their attitudes towards Jews declined, they still remain among the five most popular groups among Czech inhabitants. Jews are liked by 31 percent and disliked by 17 percent.

In Greece, the results of a survey were presented at the British Ambassador's Residence in Athens under the title "Perceptions about the Holocaust and Anti-Semitism in Greece". The survey was carried out by researchers at the University of Macedonia, Oxford University and the International Hellenic University with the support of the embassies of the United Kingdom, Canada and Romania. The results showed that a large number of Greeks hold antisemitic views and that this prejudice against the Jews cuts across the country's left-right political spectrum. Among the report's more shocking findings was that 65% of all recipients agreed with the statement "the Jews treat Palestinians in the same way they were treated by the Germans in WWII." Over 90% of the Greeks questioned believed that Jewish people hold too much power in international business and media. One of the report's authors, Dr Giorgos Antoniou, said that "some of the data we collected was devastating. The Greeks love conspiracy theories, so we expected a high response to the question that Jewish people hold too much power. I would say that the close ties between conspiracy theories and antisemitism account for that." The report concluded that the roots of these attitudes can be attributed to a sense of 'victimisation' among the Greeks, indicated by the fact that 70% of recipients agreed with the statement that Greeks have suffered worse genocides than the Jews. Antoniou added that "the Greeks feel like victims of history, but that was still a surprise for us. The survey indicates that antisemitic attitudes and negative perceptions of the Holocaust are worryingly high among Greek public opinion and that they largely cut across classic partisan and ideological lines." The survey results were presented at two one-day seminars in Athens and Thessaloniki. Representatives of JPR were invited by the British and Foreign Commonwealth to speak at both seminars.

- [Half of Budapest residents are anti-Semites? The dramatic spread of Hungarian antisemitism](#) (Hungarian Free Press, April 1, 2015)
- [People's liking for Arabs, Jews declining](#) (Prague Post, March 6, 2015)
- [Victimhood culture spawns Greek anti-Semitism, study finds](#) (Kathimerini, March 19, 2015)
- [Addressing antisemitism in Greece](#) (Institute for Jewish Policy Research, March 20, 2015)

## 2 / IN THE WAKE OF THE COPENHAGEN ATTACKS

Following the shooting of volunteer Jewish security Dan Uzan in February, more than 1000 people formed a 'ring of peace' around Copenhagen's Krystalgade synagogue, imitating a similar initiative in Oslo. Muslim, Jewish and Christian participants held hands and called for peace during the display of solidarity. Participants included Uzan's father, as well as Denmark's chief rabbi, Jair Melchior, and government ministers Morten Ostergaard and Sofie Carsten-Nielsen. The attack occurred during the bat mitzvah celebrations of Hannah Bentow. A group of philanthropists paid for Bentow and her family to fly to Israel to hold another bat mitzvah party there, as well as a week-long vacation. In Eilat, the family spent time at the dolphin reef in a programme designed specifically for victims of trauma. Mita Bentow, Hannah's mother, called the gesture "overwhelming and fantastic" and added that "for ever, everyone will remember Hannah's bat mitzvah not for something good, not for what she said in her speech, not for the fun presents or the speeches, but for that event. For our family there is no getting over, there is getting on. We will do our best to live up to the memory of Dan, who died protecting us."

In the wake of the attack, the Genesis Philanthropy Group donated €100,000 to the Danish Jewish community to increase security at its institutions. Mikhail Fridman, a co-founder of the group said "under siege after recent terrorist attacks, the Danish community has rallied together in solidarity.

This strong, vibrant community needs our support to ensure that its members know that the global Jewish community is behind it.”

- [Interfaith peace ring brings over 1,000 to Copenhagen synagogue](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 15, 2015)
- [After the tragedy, a new simchah for Hannah](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, March 19, 2015)
- [International Jewish philanthropists donate funds to secure Danish Jewish institutions](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 31, 2015)

### 3/ MONITORING DEVELOPMENTS IN UKRAINE

Articles looking both at antisemitism in Ukraine, and how the situation there was affecting Jewish celebrations of Purim and preparations for Pesach, made headlines in March. In Cherkasy, the phrase “Death to the Jewish rule” was daubed on a wall near the offices of the Hessed Jewish charity. The police have launched an investigation but, as yet, no one knows who is responsible. In Kharkiv, a chief paediatric neurosurgeon, Oleksandr Dukhovskoi, was severely beaten by three men on the street shouting “Jew face, get out of town and out of the country.” His skull was fractured in the attack and one of his kidneys was ruptured. Dukhovskoi commented afterwards: “This is blatant antisemitism. I told this to local journalists, but nobody wanted mention this aspect of the attack.” He was flown to Jerusalem for treatment. Oleksander Feldman, a Ukrainian-Jewish lawmaker and founder of the Ukrainian Jewish Committee, said he is following the investigation into the assault. Also in March, vandals drew a swastika and the initials of the Nazi party on a monument for Holocaust victims in the southern Ukrainian city of Mykolaiv. It is the fifth time the monument has been defaced since it was built in 2011.

- [Op-Ed: For Ukraine Jews, Purim holiday merely a respite](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 5, 2015)
- [Jewish charities strive to prepare for Passover amid war-torn Ukraine](#) (The Jerusalem Post, April 1, 2015)
- [In Ukraine, thousands of Jews will spend Pesach as refugees - or under fire](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, April 1, 2015)
- [Ukrainian Jewish leader stands his ground](#) (The Toronto Star, March 15, 2015)
- [Ukraine: Antisemitic Graffiti, Death Threats in Cherkasy](#) (Arutz Sheva, March 26, 2015)
- [Ukrainian Jewish surgeon claims attackers shouted antisemitic epithets](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 27, 2015)
- [Jewish refugees safe from war, but facing economic crisis in Kiev](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 30, 2015)

### 4 / REVISITING HOLOCAUST ISSUES

A number of different Holocaust-related issues were reported in March. In Thessaloniki, a memorial took place marking the 72<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the roundup and deportation of the town’s Jewish community. Participants placed flowers on train tracks where the Jews were taken away in cattle cars headed for Auschwitz-Birkenau. Nearly 49,000 of the city’s pre-war Jewish population of 55,000 were deported with fewer than 2,000 surviving. Despite this memorial, the survey on ‘Perceptions about the Holocaust and Antisemitism in Greece’ mentioned above, showed very low levels of knowledge and awareness about the Holocaust in the country. More than 90% of respondents agreed that subjects such as the 1922 Asia Minor disaster and the 1946-49 Greek civil war should be taught at school, and less than 60% agreed that the Holocaust should be on the curriculum. Under a third of

respondents knew the correct number of Jews estimated to have perished during World War II and 45% of recipients agreed with the statement that Jews exploit the memory of the Holocaust for their own interests.

The leader of the Jewish community in Thessaloniki is reported to be seeking €20 million from Germany to compensate Greek Jews for having been forced to pay their own train fare to Nazi death camps in 1943. David Saltiel is hoping the compensation will fund a Holocaust memorial project that would include a monument, an educational facility and a human rights centre. Saltiel has obtained seven cheques from the Bank of Greece archives, which detail the payment of more than one billion drachmas between November 1942 and January 1943. He said that the community originally applied for the reparations back in the 1990s but the application was rejected. However, now the claim has been registered with the Greek government and will be included as part of any renegotiation of the reparations resettlement.

In Bulgaria, the Chairwoman of the National Assembly, Tsetska Tsacheva, as well as members of parliament, ambassadors and dozens of citizens participated in a memorial of the 72<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the rescue of Bulgaria's Jews from deportation to Nazi concentration camps during World War II. Maxim Benvenisti, Chairman of the Shalom Organisation of Jews in Bulgaria, expressed his gratitude to the Bulgarian people for supporting their fellow Jewish citizens, and to Bulgarian public figures and politicians for having the strength to oppose demands for the deportation of Bulgarian Jews. Shaul Kamisa Raz, Israel's Ambassador, noted that the saving of Bulgarian Jews was an act of humanity, tolerance, love and friendship between the two peoples.

In the Czech Republic, the Bubny Railway Station in Prague is to become the site of a new Holocaust memorial. The station was the place where tens of thousands of Czech Jews were deported to Terezin. A sculpture called "the Gate of No Return" was unveiled at the site by Czech Minister of Culture, Daniel Herman, during a ceremony attended by two dozen Holocaust survivors alongside Czech officials and several ambassadors. The complex of buildings at the site will host a permanent exhibition, temporary exhibits and educational programmes, and will be a place for people to meet.

In Hungary, the construction of a new Holocaust museum in Budapest was criticised by local Jewish leaders for omitting the culpability of Hungarians. The exhibition for the nearly complete 'House of Fates' only concentrates on the very last period of the Holocaust in Hungary, and fails to deal with earlier persecution of the Jews. Judit Molnar, a well-known Hungarian Holocaust historian, said "the responsibility for what happened here during the Holocaust, according to the new Holocaust exhibition concept, were only the German Nazis and the members of the Hungarian Nazi party, the Arrow Cross Party – excluding the responsibility of the then-Hungarian Horthy regime." In response, government minister, János Lázár, said that the exhibition will not be completed without approval of the Jewish community. Community leaders said that they had not yet been consulted.

In Poland, three different Holocaust-related memorials were reported in the media in March. The creation of a special long-term programme for the financing of a new exhibition at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Site was announced by Minister of Culture and National Heritage Prof. Małgorzata Omilanowska. She said that "the creation of the exhibition, which tells the story of Auschwitz in a modern, accessible, wise and balanced way, will be a key educational tool in the formation of a new generation of Poles, and will enable them to understand what the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp was, what the Holocaust was and what was the sacrifice of Poles imprisoned at this camp." Project costs are estimated at about PLN 100 million. Also in Poland it was announced that the first museum dedicated to 'righteous gentiles' who aided Jews during World War II will open in December 2015. The museum will explore the stories of those who helped Jews and the dilemmas they faced, as well as presenting pre-war Polish-Jewish relations and how the occupation affected the status quo. In Warsaw, another museum will be opened next month to commemorate the survival of 300 Jews

hiding in Warsaw Zoo. Their lives were saved by the heroism of zoo director Jan Zabinski and his wife Antonina, who sheltered Jews in the underground pathways connecting the animal cages.

Issues of restitution were also reported in March. In Romania, in a meeting with officials from the World Jewish Restitution Organisation (WJRO), Prime Minister Victor Ponta addressed criticism of the country's restitution process for Jewish property. He appointed staff from his office to sit on a joint working group and provide recommendations on a new process within ninety days. Gideon Taylor, WJRO's chair of operations, said "this is a very important step forward in the restitution process. There has been a lot of progress in Romania, but there is much work ahead. Time is against us and, as survivors age, we need to finish quickly."

Actual acts of restitution of artwork looted by the Nazis took place in other parts of Europe. After more than sixty years, El Greco's 'Portrait of a Gentleman,' a masterpiece seized by the Gestapo during World War Two, has been returned to its rightful owners – the heirs of Julius Priester, a Jewish industrialist who fled Vienna in 1938 after Austria's unification with Nazi Germany. In Germany, two other paintings were also returned to their rightful heirs. First, a restitution agreement was signed for the painting 'Two Riders on the Beach,' by Max Liebermann, which was discovered among the artworks in the apartment of the late German art collector Cornelius Gurlitt. Its provenance was traced back to Jewish businessman David Friedmann, who kept a valuable art collection in his home in Breslau before World War Two. The deal reportedly was the first restitution agreement to be signed for a piece from Gurlitt's collection and must first be approved by a Munich court. A second painting from the Gurlitt collection, 'Seated Woman' by Henri Matisse which was looted from collector Paul Rosenberg, was also due to be returned.

In the Netherlands, the Dutch royal family agreed to return a painting from its collection thought to have been stolen by the Nazis during World War Two. Following an investigation which looked at tens of thousands of art works in the royal collection, a painting by Joris van der Haagen had been deemed to have been forcibly taken from a Jewish collector in 1942. Palace officials have contacted the heirs of the original owner, who was not named, to arrange its return. However in Austria, a government advisory board recommended against returning a 112-foot artwork by Gustav Klimt to the heirs of the Jewish art dealer who sold it. The board unanimously recommended against returning 'The Beethoven Frieze' to the heirs of the Lederer family, because, according to the panel's members, it had been lawfully sold to the state.

In Poland, two pre-World War Two Torah scrolls from Zamość and Zwierzyniec will be preserved by the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage. Following restoration, the Zamość scroll will be exhibited in the Zamość Synagogue, and the Zwierzyniec scroll will be displayed in the synagogue building in Leczna. The renovation will be carried out at the National Library in Warsaw and the Department of Paper and Leather Restoration of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun.

New research has revealed that two famous Holocaust victims were killed earlier than previously thought. Using the archives of the Red Cross, the International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen and the Bergen-Belsen Memorial, as well as many eyewitness testimonies of survivors, researchers from the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam concluded that Anne died in February 1945, rather than March 1945 which the Red Cross had concluded at the end of World War II. The exact date of Anne Frank's death from typhus in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp is unknown. In Poland, the Lublin District Court officially changed the date of death of Janusz Korczak to reflect that he was killed in the Treblinka death camp in August 1942, rather than May 1946 as a post-war court had ruled. Korczak was a well-known children's author, paediatrician and child pedagogue who, as the director of Jewish orphanage in the Warsaw ghetto, chose to stay with his charges as they were transported to Treblinka. The date of death was changed at the request of the Modern Poland Foundation in a case that has been ongoing since 2012.

In the UK, Holocaust survivors who have not previously recorded their testimonies are being urged to come forward. The UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation is conducting an international audit of testimony in the hope of identifying gaps in archive material. Sir Peter Bazalgette, chairman of the Foundation, said there was an urgent need to ensure ageing survivors' stories were saved to help teach future generations. He added "we urgently want to hear from survivors who have never told their story but would like the opportunity to do so. Survivor testimony is our most powerful educational tool. It is essential to Britain's leading academic work and our best defence against prejudice and denial."

In Germany, a Danish former Nazi officer and the fifth most wanted war criminal on the Simon Wiesenthal Centre's most wanted list, died. 93-year-old Soren Kam had been a volunteer officer in the SS-Viking division and was judged to have been involved in the murder of Danish anti-Nazi newspaper editor Carl Henrik Clemmensen. A post-war Danish court case convicted him in absentia of the murder, together with another man who was executed. However Kam had fled to Germany where he obtained citizenship in 1956. Germany had refused to extradite him to Denmark several times. The Wiesenthal Centre's Dr. Efraim Zuroff said "the fact that Soren Kam, a totally unrepentant Nazi murderer, died a free man in Kempton (Germany), is a terrible failure of the Bavarian judicial authorities. Kam should have finished his miserable life in jail, whether in Denmark or Germany. The failure to hold him accountable will only inspire the contemporary heirs of the Nazis to consider following in his footsteps."

Meanwhile, in Latvia, local citizens who fought in the country's unit of the Waffen SS held their annual parade. Around 1,500 veterans marched through Riga's old town, monitored by hundreds of police officers. In Lithuania, about 1,500 people marched through the centre of Vilnius carrying a black-and-white flags with swastikas and the inscription "Skinhead Lietuva" (Skinhead Lithuania) with the lightning-bolt SS symbol. Witnesses reported that the marchers used the slogan 'Lithuania for Lithuanians' as they marched up the main street.

- [Greek Jews commemorate Auschwitz deportations](#) (Business Insider, March 15, 2015)
- [Greeks Have 'Devastating' Lack of Awareness About the Holocaust, Study Finds](#) (Newsweek, March 20, 2015)
- [Jewish leaders in Greece want Germany to pay more in reparations – with 7 decades of interest](#) (Kathimerini, March 19, 2015)
- [Parliament Chair, MPs and Ambassadors Observe Anniversary of Bulgarian Jews' Rescue](#) (BTA Bulgarian News Agency, March 10, 2015)
- [Latvian Nazi SS Veterans March in Annual Riga Parade](#) (The Jewish Daily Forward, March 16, 2015)
- [Stepping back in time](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, March 19, 2015)
- [Vilnius Neo-Nazi March 2015](#) (The Jewish Community of Lithuania, March 14, 2015)
- [Sculpture installed in nascent Prague Holocaust victims memorial](#) (Prague Daily Monitor, March 7, 2015)
- [Prague takes first step towards Holocaust memorial](#) (Radio Praha, March 10, 2015)
- [New Budapest Holocaust museum omits culpability of Hungarians](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 5, 2015)
- [Long-term ministerial program for financing creation of the new main exhibition](#) (Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, March 6, 2015)
- [Museum for Polish WWII saviours of Jews advances](#) (Radio Poland, March 19, 2015)
- [When 300 Jews escaped the Nazi camps by hiding in the Warsaw Zoo](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 23, 2015)

- [Romania pledges to resolve restitution issues on Jewish property](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 8, 2015)
- [Old Master looted by Nazis given back to Jewish family](#) (The Times, March 25, 2015)
- [Germany returning Nazi-looted painting to heirs](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 22, 2015)
- [2 Nazi-looted paintings going back to owners' heirs](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 25, 2015)
- [Dutch royal family to return Nazi looted art](#) (BBC News, March 31, 2015)
- [Austria will not return Klimt painting to heir of Jewish owners](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 6, 2015)
- [Two pre-WWII Polish Torah scrolls to be restored](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 5, 2015)
- [Changed date of death shows Janusz Korczak was killed in Treblinka](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 30, 2015)
- [New research shows Anne Frank died earlier than believed](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 31, 2015)
- [Shoah survival stories will be saved](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, March 12, 2015)
- [Danish Most-Wanted Nazi Dies a Free Man in Germany](#) (Newsweek, March 30, 2015)

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

In France, the kosher supermarket in Paris that was the site of a deadly hostage situation in January reopened. Hyper Cacher, which was badly damaged in the attack, has been renovated and re-staffed. At the re-opening, Bernard Cazeneuve, French Interior Minister, said “this food store reopens bravely to show that life is stronger than everything.” The management of the store said “with this re-opening, we once again reaffirm that life will always be stronger than barbarity.”

Restoration efforts are taking place in two synagogues in Italy and Slovakia. In Italy, the city of Trani celebrated the reopening of the medieval Scolanova Synagogue. The shul, which was built in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, was later confiscated by the Catholic Church and turned into a church. Following seven months of recent restoration work, the synagogue reopened during the ‘Lech Lecha’ Jewish culture festival in southern Italy’s Apulia region. In Slovakia, the Central Association of Jewish Communities received grants from the government as well as from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway to restore the Old Synagogue in Bardejov. The synagogue, which dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, lies in the middle of a complex of Jewish ritual buildings and is inscribed on the UNESCO List of World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Martin Kornfeld, manager of the project of reconstruction, said “the main goal of this project is to return life to the most important part of local Jewish cultural heritage – the Old Synagogue. The complex reconstruction enables a multi-functional use of the space which has the potential to be used for cultural, social, representative and educational events.”

Issues of funding arose in Jewish communities in Estonia and the Netherlands in March. In Estonia, the Ministry of the Interior rejected a request by the Estonian Jewish Centre for €40,000 to strengthen security. The ministry agreed to increase police presence, but stopped short of stationing permanent officers around the school and the synagogue. The Ministry has also promised to advise the centre on security matters. However, in the Netherlands, pro-Israel Christians donated \$21,000 towards improving security at two Dutch Jewish schools. ‘Christians for Israel’ allocated \$10,500 each to the Cheder, an Orthodox school near Amsterdam, and the JBO Association for special education for Jewish students. Chief Rabbi Binyomin Jacobs, who is also a member of the Cheder’s board, said that the gift will help show pupils that “there are not only enemies outside the school, but also friends like Christian for Israel.”

In Lithuania, Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius visited Vilnius Sholom Aleichem ORT Gymnasium and was shown around a renovated building which will accommodate 350 students from September. The Lithuanian Government contributed funding to the renovation. Also in March, Israel opened its first Embassy to Lithuania at diplomats emphasised the exceptional importance of Vilnius in Jewish history. At the opening ceremony, Political Director of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs Alon Ushpiz said: “This is a country which is a cornerstone in Jewish heritage, from where some of the great Jewish thinkers came. It is a place which saw the ingathering of Jews since the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, from all over Europe and from all walks of life – religious scholars, academics, artists, farmers and many more. Later, thanks to Lithuanian leaders such as Gediminas and his grandson Vytautas, Jews found a home in Lithuania. In Jewish tradition, as many of you know, Vilnius is nicknamed ‘Jerusalem of Lithuania’... For Israelis and Jews, the connection and relations with Lithuania are more than merely a connection between two friendly countries. This is an emotional connection between two peoples with a shared history (not always rosy), and, from a Jewish angle, a connection with a country with a once thriving Jewish community and a heritage which is widely known and cherished.”

Also in Lithuania Chief Rabbi Chaim Burshtein urged the country’s Evangelical Reformed Church to remove Jewish headstones being used as stairs to a Vilnius Christian house of worship. A 30-foot-long staircase that leads to the main entrance of the church is made out of Jewish headstones. They were installed when Lithuania was part of the Soviet Union. Rabbi Burshtein said “we regret the deplorable state and destruction of the last remnants of the memory of Lithuanian Jewry. Lithuania has many places built out of Jewish headstones. I think the authorities and the Jewish community need to perform thorough research and correct at least this historic wrong.”

In Portugal, following the passing of a law earlier this year allowing descendants of Jews expelled from Portugal in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century to apply for citizenship, more than 5,000 people have contacted Oporto’s Jewish community to enquire about the process. Already, twenty-one applications have been approved, including people from Panama, Australia and China. Applicants need to obtain a certificate confirming their ancestry from one of the country’s two small Jewish communities in Lisbon and Oporto. Spain is close to following Portugal. In March, the Spanish parliament approved the law, which will now go to the Spanish senate for consideration. The law is expected to go into effect in May, with the application process beginning at the end of 2015. In Italy, the Israeli organisation ‘Shavei Israel’ works with descendants of Jews converted to Christianity during the Inquisition and who are now looking to return to their Jewish roots.

Also in Portugal, the Jewish film festival, ‘Judaica,’ was held in March in Lisbon with a total of twenty-three films screened. The festival will also make its first trip outside Lisbon, with screenings and other activities to be held in the town of Belmonte in May. Belmonte is home to 300 descendants of Jews who survived the Inquisition by practicing their religion in secret, and who then converted back to Judaism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

In Greece, the Jewish Museum in Athens, first established in 1977 and housed in a small space next to the city’s synagogue, moved to a renovated neoclassical building in the centre of Athens, near Syntagma Square. The new 800 square-metre space houses more than 8,000 items, including religious and domestic artefacts that record the history and traditions of Greek Jews. The new site will also host temporary exhibitions, a contemporary art gallery, a photographic archive, a conservation laboratory and an area for educational programmes.

In Belgium, 62-year-old engineer Serge Rozen has been elected president of the Coordination Committee of Belgian Jewish Organisations (CCOJB) for the next three years. He succeeds Maurice Sosnowski, who led the CCOJB for the past five years. The General Assembly of CCOJB elected Rozen with 92% of the votes. Rozen said his mission was to unite the Jewish community and to make its case with the political authorities of the country. He added that “the Belgian political world must realise

that there is a Jewish community here that is concerned if it has a future in Belgium. And to relay this message, we must have a frank and constructive dialogue. This cannot be a place for complacency, and we need to fully apply all the laws in the fight against antisemitism.”

In the UK, BBC News ran a feature on the decline of the Jewish community in Wales. Dating back hundreds of years, this once thriving community has dwindled to just over 2,000 members. Stanley Soffa, chairman of the Jewish Representative Council for South Wales, said “at one time every Valley community had their Jewish congregants. Newport, Swansea and Cardiff are the only ones remaining. Newport is small, Swansea is getting smaller, Cardiff is the biggest. When I look to the future I see decline, I see Newport and Swansea virtually ended like Merthyr did a few years ago.”

- [Paris Jewish supermarket reopens after hostage siege](#) (BBC News, March 15, 2015)
- [Italian city celebrates reopening of medieval synagogue](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 3, 2015)
- [Bardejov synagogue is reconstructed, to re-open soon](#) (The Slovak Spectator, March 20, 2015)
- [Jewish community security funding request rejected](#) (Estonian Public Broadcasting, March 16, 2015)
- [Christians donate to better security at Dutch Jewish schools](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 20, 2015)
- [PM congratulates Jewish gymnasium students on Lithuania's independence](#) (Delfi by the Lithuania Tribune, March 9, 2015)
- [Israeli diplomat stresses historic importance of Vilnius to Jews in embassy opening ceremony](#) (Delfi by the Lithuania Tribune, March 12, 2015)
- [Remove Jewish headstones from church stairs, says chief Lithuanian rabbi](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 13, 2015)
- [Portugal: Thousands enquire over Jewish 'return rights'](#) (BBC News, March 4, 2015)
- [From Sicily to Naples, Italian Crypto-Jews are Returning](#) (Arutz Sheva, March 10, 2015)
- [Spain close to granting citizenship to relatives of Jews expelled in 1492](#) (The Jerusalem Report, March 26, 2015)
- [Third Jewish film festival Judaica in Lisbon](#) (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 9, 2015)
- [Jewish Museum of Greece Moved to Downtown Athens](#) (Greek Reporter, March 4, 2015)
- [Serge Rozen elected new head of Belgian Jewish community](#) (World Jewish Congress, March 9, 2015)
- [Jewish community in 'decline' and 'feeling vulnerable'](#) (BBC News, March 11, 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.