



EUROPEAN JEWISH DIGEST: LOOKING AT THE HEADLINES ACROSS JEWISH EUROPE

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1 / ISSUES CONCERNING ANTISEMITISM

Violence, Vandalism & Abuse

There were incidents of antisemitic violence, abuse and vandalism in several countries in April. In France at the end of the month, a 53-year old Jewish man was beaten by a group of assailants armed with a knife as he left the Saint-Ouen synagogue in the Seine-Saint-Denis region in Paris. The man said he was pursued by someone who repeatedly calling him a “dirty Jew” and then spat at and head-butted him, before being joined by two other assailants who beat him up. The attackers eventually fled after kicking him in the stomach.

In Denmark, a grocery store and deli in Lyngbyvej in Østerbro was broken into and the racial slur ‘Jødesvin,’ meaning ‘Jewish pigs,’ was scrawled on its walls. In Spain, an attack on Jewish targets was averted when authorities arrested members of a suspected militant Islamist cell. The group of eleven people were allegedly trying to obtain explosives to bomb a Jewish bookshop in Barcelona. Other potential targets included synagogues and public buildings in the Catalonia region.

In Austria, after joining a Palestinian protest, a group of Bosnian football fans was caught on a video waving Palestinian flags while shouting antisemitic slogans such as ‘Kill the Jews,’ prior to a friendly match in Vienna. Shimon Samuels, Director for International Relations at the Simon Wiesenthal Centre urged UEFA “to take the strongest disciplinary measures against the Bosnian Football Association” and expect other European clubs to “take care that such behaviour be banned from any match, by the fans of any team.”

In the Netherlands, fans of FC Utrecht chanted antisemitic slogans about the Holocaust during a match against Ajax of Amsterdam. The chants included: “My father was in the commandos, my mother was in the SS, together they burned Jews because Jews burn the best,” and “Hamas, Hamas, Jews to the gas”. FC Utrecht said that it was investigating the suspected chanters and vowed to punish those identified. Ronny Naftaniel, Executive Vice-Chair of CEJI, a Brussels-based Jewish organisation promoting tolerance through education, asked “when will Ajax players walk off the field? Take action against antisemitism.” The foundation ‘Fighting Antisemitism’ has filed charges against FC Utrecht, claiming the club is complicit in antisemitism as they did nothing to stop the chanting in the stadium. The Dutch football association, the KNVB, has denounced the chants as “reprehensible and disgusting” and said it was currently investigating. FC Utrecht issued an apology and said it was assisting police and the KNVB with the investigation.

In Poland, several tombstones were desecrated at a Jewish cemetery in Olkusz, near Krakow. One gravestone had a pentagram painted on it and dozens of other stones were destroyed. In Hungary, unknown assailants splashed red paint on fourteen portraits of Holocaust survivors in an open-air exhibition set up near the Madach Theatre in Budapest, and, in a separate incident, a swastika was painted in front of a synagogue on Wesselenyi Street, five miles from the theatre.

Neo-Nazis made their presence felt in separate incidents in April. In Austria, a lecture being given by Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman at the Wien Museum was briefly disrupted by Polish nationalists shouting antisemitic and anti-Communist slogans. In Sweden, a group of neo-Nazis marched into a school in Varberg and took pictures of the audience during a lecture given by a Holocaust survivor. According to the school principal Martin Augustsson “the atmosphere was very unpleasant.” Holocaust survivor Mietek Grocher said “I am used to this kind of thing, it’s happened several times before. I don’t feel afraid, but it’s unpleasant. When I came to Sweden I never thought I would experience neo-Nazism, but here they are now.” In response to this incident, members of a local youth movement launched an anti-fascist campaign at the school. SSU youth movement members of the centre-left Swedish Social Democratic Party set up a booth holding signs reading ‘Sieg Heil – Hell No.’

In Germany, police in Berlin questioned a high school music teacher after she made her pupils march up and down a classroom singing the ‘Horst-Wessel-Lied,’ the anthem of the Nazi party. The song includes lyrics such as: “millions full of hope look up at the swastika” and “soon Hitler flags will fly over every street.” It is illegal to sing the song in Germany, and can be punished by up to three years in prison. The teacher reportedly told police she was teaching a well-known parody of the song written by the playwright Bertolt Brecht and that the children were simply asked to hum along and tap their feet.

In France, two men photographed themselves performing the antisemitic ‘quenelle’ gesture whilst on a tour of the French parliament. Comedian Dieudonné congratulated the two men on his Facebook page, whilst French MP Meyer Habib wrote in a letter to Claude Bartolone, president of the National Assembly, that “the fact that this took place in the parliament, which is considered sacred in the eyes of the French people, is a challenge to the Republic. Jews are always the first in line, but as we’ve seen these things never stop there.”

In Bosnia, a man was arrested in connection with an attack on a Jewish community leader. Eli Tauber, an adviser on culture and religious affairs for the Jewish community, was attacked by a man wielding a weighted chain at a café in central Sarajevo whilst being interviewed by journalists from *National Geographic* magazine about the status of Jews in Bosnia and Herzegovina. No motive has yet been established, but some fear it was because he is a prominent member of the Jewish community. Jakob Finci, president of the Jewish community, said that “if he was attacked because he is Jewish and because, as such, he is present in our media, just because he is doing his job, then it would be a very bad sign, both for Sarajevo and for Bosnia and Herzegovina.”

In the UK, the *Daily Mail* newspaper exposed a gathering of Holocaust deniers and Nazi sympathisers being held in London’s Grosvenor Hotel. The newspaper sent an undercover team to the event, which was attended by over 100 speakers and participants and included many veterans of the British far-right scene, former leaders of the British National Party and both former and current leading members of the neo-Nazi National Front. Also present were Holocaust deniers and fascist ideologues from mainland Europe, the US and Canada. They included the event’s keynote speaker, Spaniard Pedro Varela, who has openly spoken of his admiration for Adolf Hitler, and was arrested in 1992 for praising Hitler in Austria and for denying the existence of Nazi gas chambers at a Madrid rally marking the Nazi leader’s birthday. According to the *Daily Mail* journalists, the event focused mainly on denying the Holocaust and propagating antisemitism, whilst other forms of racism and prejudice were also openly aired. The hotel claimed to be unaware of the nature of the event at the time of booking and the newspaper passed on its report to the police.

The United Nations has agreed to review the book selection at its official bookstore at the Palais des Nations, after UN Watch protested the existence of several books attacking Israel and Jews. Books on display included ‘How I Stopped Being a Jew,’ ‘Israel’s War Against the Palestinians’ and ‘Genocidal Yahwestic Tradition.’ In response to UN Watch, the U.N. Office at Geneva wrote that it would conduct

an “administrative review” of its concession agreement with the bookstore and its products, and that it “has reaffirmed to the vendor the requirement that varied viewpoints be presented on the shop’s bookshelves.”

In Germany, a Cologne city court shut down an anti-Israel exhibit on Cathedral Square. The exhibit showed fifteen pictures of dead and injured Gazan children who were allegedly hurt during the Israeli offensive against Hamas last summer. Andreas Hupke, the mayor of the downtown Cologne City district, said “the agitation is completely one-sided, antisemitic and only disgusting.” Organiser Walter Hermann has protested for years against Israel on Cathedral Square with his exhibit. The official name of his protest is ‘Peace Demonstration,’ but the exhibit had been termed the ‘Cologne Wailing Wall’ to draw attention to Israeli policies. All major political parties, as well as churches, strongly criticised Hermann for his project.

Rabbi Menachem Margolin, Director General of the European Jewish Association, has launched a new campaign which calls on Europeans to wear a *kippah* and other Jewish symbols to fight rising antisemitism. Rabbi Margolin said that “the idea is to get as many non-Jews as possible to wear Jewish symbols and show solidarity, and that they are a part of the silent majority that is not antisemitic. The idea is to do like the ice bucket challenge and get thousands to publish the videos on Facebook and Twitter.”

A report released by the Kantor Centre for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry at Tel Aviv University, maintained that antisemitic violence rose by nearly forty percent in 2014 over the previous year. According to the European Jewish Congress (EJC), 766 violent incidents were recorded worldwide, which constituted a “sharp increase” over the 554 recorded in 2013. EJC President Dr. Moshe Kantor said “some are choosing to leave the continent, many are afraid to walk the streets and even more are retreating behind high walls and barbed wire. This has become the new reality of Jewish life in Europe. Many streets in our European cities have become hunting grounds for Jews, and some Jews are now forced to avoid community institutions and synagogues as a result.”

- [Jewish man beaten near synagogue in France](#) (The Local, April 29, 2015)
- [Jewish store vandalised in Copenhagen](#) (The Local, April 9, 2015)
- ['Jewish bookshop in Barcelona targeted for bombing by Islamists'](#) (The Jerusalem Post, April 10, 2015)
- [Bosnian fans chant antisemitic slogans](#) (The Local, April 5, 2015)
- [Dutch police investigate 'burn the Jews' antisemitic chants at FC Utrecht vs Ajax football match](#) (The Independent, April 7, 2015)
- [Jewish graves vandalised in Polish town](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 7, 2015)
- [Budapest street exhibition on Holocaust survivors defaced](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 8, 2015)
- [Hungary Suffers Two Antisemitic Attacks in Less Than a Week](#) (Arutz Sheva, April 9, 2015)
- [Neo-Nazis disrupt lecture in Vienna museum](#) (The Local, April 9, 2015)
- [Neo-Nazis spread unrest at school Holocaust talk](#) (The Local, April 21, 2015)
- [Swedish teens confront neo-Nazis' presence in schools](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, May 1, 2015)
- [German school teacher 'made children sing Nazi propaganda song'](#) (The Telegraph, April 15, 2015)
- [Two men perform antisemitic 'quenelle' gesture in French parliament](#) (i24 News, April 29, 2015)
- [Arrest made in attack on Bosnian Jewish leader](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 6, 2015)
- [Nazi invasion of London EXPOSED: World's top Holocaust deniers... filmed at secret race hate rally where Jews are referred to as the 'enemy'](#) (Mail Online, April 18, 2015)

- [UN Probes Bookstore Over Claims of Books Targeting Jews and Israel](#) (The Algemeiner, April 30, 2015)
- [German court rules against anti-Israel 'Cologne Wailing Wall' exhibit](#) (i24 News, April 12, 2015)
- [New campaign calls on Europeans to don kippot to fight antisemitism](#) (The Jerusalem Post, April 8, 2015)
- [Holland's chief rabbi: Being called a dirty Jew is normal these days](#) (The Jerusalem Post, April 13, 2015)
- [Violent antisemitism surged 40 percent in 2014, study finds](#) (The Jerusalem Post, April 15, 2015)

Politics

Far right political parties made the news for differing reasons in April. In Greece, on the anniversary of Adolf Hitler's birthday, leaders of the extreme-right Golden Dawn party were among 69 people who went on trial on charges including murder and being in a criminal group. All eighteen of Golden Dawn's MPs in the previous Greek parliament are among the defendants. Witnesses were reportedly attacked by Golden Dawn supporters outside of the courthouse, despite the high level of security.

In Sweden, the far-right Sweden Democrats party announced it had expelled seven members, including the head of the party's youth wing, for having contacts with openly racist or antisemitic movements. Party Secretary Richard Jomshof said that some of the expelled members expressed "antisemitic opinions" or spoke in support of Adolf Hitler. The anti-immigration party had previously declared a zero tolerance policy toward racist actions and affiliations in an attempt to bring the party into the mainstream.

In France, major divisions within the National Front party became public after a row between current leader Marine Le Pen and her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the former leader. Following Jean-Marie Le Pen's comments in an interview in which he again minimised the Holocaust and defended Nazi collaborator Marshal Pétain, Marine Le Pen accused her father of trying to destroy the party with antisemitic and homophobic remarks, and said that he would be barred from standing as the Front's candidate for the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region in elections later this year. Jean-Marie then stated he would not run, but at the same time, in what was understood to be another swipe at his daughter, said that those who agreed with his views should look to his granddaughter Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, as the best candidate to serve in his place.

In Belarus, President Alexander Lukashenko criticised a Jewish regional governor for not keeping the country's Jewish population "under control." During a three-hour televised address, Lukashenko blamed Semyon Shapiro, governor of the Minsk region, for not controlling Yuri Zisser, the Jewish head of the *Tut.by* website. In pointed remarks to Shapiro he said "I told you a year ago to take all the Jews of Belarus under control." Lukashenko also called Belarusian Jews "white boned," meaning they do not enjoy menial work, but also praised them for their role in resisting Nazi occupation during World War II.

Leading politicians in several countries announced increased action to combat antisemitism. In France, Prime Minister Manuel Valls pledged €100 million to finance a plan to fight racism and antisemitism, calling the increase in prejudice in France "insufferable." The money, to be spent over three years, will fund the government's forty-point action plan, which includes: the inclusion of hate speech in penal law; the establishment of racism or antisemitism as an "aggravating factor" that can lead to tougher sentences for a related crime; permission for class action suits over alleged discrimination; the creation of a national police unit to combat hatred on the internet; the obligation of internet providers

to have a legal identity in France; and a clampdown on racism and antisemitism in schools. According to Valls: “French Jews should not be afraid of being Jewish, and French Muslims should not be ashamed of being Muslims.”

In Spain, a revised penal code came into effect at the end of March and will now punish those convicted of inciting hatred, discrimination or violence against Jews, and those who deny or trivialise the crime of genocide. The code also applies to the promotion of hatred towards others on the basis of gender, religion, disability or sexual orientation and anyone convicted could face imprisonment of up to fifteen years. In Belgium, Prime Minister Charles Michel outlined his renewed commitment to provide adequate funding for security measures at Jewish institutions and to adopt a zero-tolerance law enforcement policy on antisemitic incidents. Michel said it was “unacceptable” that some Belgian citizens are in danger because of their religion and added that he was “very sensitive to the fact that authors of antisemitic acts are not always prosecuted. This creates a climate and a sentiment that everything is permitted.” He added that he found it “unacceptable that one of the country’s communities must pay for its own safety,” and said that he was “happy and proud as Prime Minister to be able to announce that we have found budgetary resources for this purpose.” Abraham Foxman, ADL National Director, responded that “for too long, Belgian leaders have paid lip service to concerns of the Belgian Jewish community in the critical areas of security and prosecution of antisemitic incidents. We look forward to the quick fulfilment of the Prime Minister’s commitments.”

In the Czech Republic, at the twelfth annual event called ‘A March of Good Will,’ organised by the Czech branch of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, hundreds of people marched in Prague to protest against the rising levels of antisemitism in Europe. In the gardens of the Czech Senate, the rally was addressed by Holocaust survivors, Israeli ambassador Gary Koren, Prague councillor Jan Wolf, Senate deputy chairman Premysl Sobotka and Culture Minister Daniel Herman.

In the Vatican, Pope Francis met a delegation from the Conference of European Rabbis to discuss growing antisemitism in Europe, as well as the recent attacks by Islamist radicals on Christian communities in Africa and the Middle East. Pope Francis said that “the antisemitic trend as well as certain acts of hatred and violence in Europe are alarming. Every Christian must be firm in condemning all forms of antisemitism.”

In the UK, Amnesty International rejected a motion to tackle the rise in antisemitic attacks in Britain at its annual conference. The motion was defeated at the International AGM on Sunday by 468 votes to 461. It was the only resolution to be defeated during the whole conference. In Brussels, Jewish organisations expressed dismay following the announcement that the EU’s Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) is planning to hold a conference that implies an equivalence between antisemitism and Islamophobia. The conference, to be held in October, will be called ‘Tolerance and respect: Preventing and combating antisemitic and anti-Muslim hatred in Europe Jewish community leaders in Europe said that despite being largely supportive of the FRA’s work, they believed it inappropriate for it to juxtapose hate directed against Muslims with antisemitism as if both were one and the same.

Towards the end of April, US Senator Ben Cardin, the special representative on antisemitism for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), visited the sites of recent fatal antisemitic attacks. He met with local leaders and government officials in Paris and Copenhagen to discuss Jewish security, as well as ways to combat prejudice and discrimination. Cardin said that as “I stood at the sites of these heinous attacks on people simply going about their daily routines...I was struck by the enormous responsibility we have to use all means necessary to combat the growing antisemitism and racism in our communities. We must stop this latest rise in intolerance before it takes root in the next generation.”

- [Greece's neo-Nazis go on trial on Hitler's birthday](#) (The Times, April 20, 2015)
- [Witnesses attacked as neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party trial opens](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 20, 2015)
- [Swedish Far-Right Expels Youth Leader for Antisemitism, Racism](#) (JP Updates, April 27, 2015)
- [Marine Le Pen in political attack on her father after he belittles Holocaust](#) (The Guardian, April 8, 2015)
- [France's Jean-Marie Le Pen 'pulls out of poll'](#) (BBC News, April 13, 2015)
- [Belarus president pans Minsk governor for not taking Jews 'under control'](#) (The Jerusalem Post, April 29, 2015)
- [French PM launches action plan against antisemitism, racism](#) (The Times of Israel, April 17, 2015)
- [Spain toughens laws against antisemitism](#) (San Diego Jewish World, April 1, 2015)
- [Belgium Vows to Combat Antisemitism, Provide Security Funds for Jewish Sites](#) (Jspace News, May 1, 2015)
- [Hundreds march in Prague against antisemitism](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 19, 2015)
- [Pope Francis, European Rabbis Discuss Antisemitism, Radical Islamist Attacks Against Christians](#) (International Business Times, April 22, 2015)
- [Amnesty International Rejects Motion to Fight Antisemitism](#) (Arutz Sheva, April 21, 2015)
- [EU rights conference to give equal billing to antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred](#) (The Jerusalem Post, April 5, 2015)
- [Int'l group's antisemitism rep visits sites of deadly European attacks](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 28, 2015)

Spotlight on Jobbik in Hungary

In the wake of the extreme-right wing Jobbik party winning its first ever individual constituency seat in the Hungarian parliament, a variety of articles have been published looking at its attempt to soften its extreme and often racist rhetoric in its efforts to appear more mainstream in its push for power.

- [Hungary's Jobbik seeks to shun racist image ahead of poll](#) (The Times of Israel, April 11, 2015)
- [Hungarian far right pushes moderate image - and wins](#) (Deutsche Welle, April 13, 2015)
- [Lauder slams Jobbik at March of Living in Budapest](#) (The Jerusalem Post, April 13, 2015)
- [Hungarian far-right leader rejects antisemitism charge](#) (Reuters, April 13, 2015)
- [Hungary's Jobbik drops some hardline policies in push for power](#) (Euronews, April 14, 2015)
- [After by-election win, Hungary's far-right Jobbik vows to prune racism](#) (The Times of Israel, April 14, 2015)

UK General Election Campaign

The campaign leading up to the UK's general election scheduled for May 7, saw several antisemitic incidents in April. Towards the end of the month, a Conservative council candidate was suspended by her party after she wrote on Facebook that she would never support "the Jew" – an apparent reference to Labour party leader Ed Miliband. The BBC apologised after writing in its general election guide of the Blackley and Broughton constituency that the area's Jewish community is concentrated in a wealthy pocket of large detached houses in the Higher Crumpsall and Broughton Park areas. The constituency's Labour MP Graham Stringer, in his complaint to the BBC, said the description was a "racist distortion," as it made references to other groups within the constituency but described only the Jewish community in terms of its wealth. He said that "it's a view of the Jewish community as

being rich, whereas in actual fact, the hasidic Jewish community has intense poverty. Jewish social services are regularly trying to help that community.” He added that not only was the description not fair, but “as offensive as Charles Dickens’s caricature of Jewish people in *Oliver Twist* in the character of Fagin.”

A UKIP parliamentary candidate was suspended after making antisemitic comments regarding Jewish shadow health minister Luciana Berger on his Twitter account. Jack Sen wrote that “you’re about authentic Labour as Ed Miliband. Protect child benefits? If you had it your way you’d send the £ to Poland/Israel,” and, in another tweet, wrote: “Britain’s youngest Jewish MP, Luciana Berger, is facing criticism over her record of... “loyalties.” In another incident, antisemitic graffiti was found daubed on a poster promoting parliamentary Conservative candidate Simon Marcus in Queen’s Park. Conservative agent David Douglas said “I’ve never actually seen an antisemitic daubing and the last place I expected to see any was in Hampstead and Kilburn at the general election, especially in a place like Queen’s Park which prides itself on being BBC-leaning and so liberal. It’s completely out of character with the area and disturbing.”

- [Calls for Tory council candidate Gulzabeen Afsar to quit after 'Jew Miliband' Facebook post](#) (International Business Times, April 26, 2015)
- [Tory council candidate suspended for remark about Ed Miliband 'The Jew'](#) (Jewish News, April 27, 2015)
- [BBC accused of antisemitism in General Election online profile for Blackley and Broughton](#) (BBC News, April 27, 2015)
- [UKIP election candidate suspended after abusing Jewish Labour MP on Twitter](#) (London Evening Standard, May 1, 2015)
- [Swastika Scribbled on Jewish Tory Candidate Election Poster](#) (JP Updates, May 1, 2015)

Antisemitism in the UK

In the run up to the general election, Tablet magazine completed a five-part series about antisemitism in the UK called ‘A Polite Hatred.’ Written by London-based journalists Ben Judah and Josh Glancy, the articles take a deep look into the past, present, and future of British Jewry.

- [The Jewish Jane Austen, or England’s Jeremiah?](#) (Tablet Magazine, February 25, 2015)
- [Is Bradford’s ‘Israel-free Zone’ the New Face of Banlieue Britain?](#) (Tablet Magazine, March 6, 2015)
- [Manchester’s New Jewish Ghetto](#) (Tablet Magazine, March 18, 2015)
- [Can You Still Be Jewish on the British Left?](#) (Tablet Magazine, March 25, 2015)
- [We Are All Zionists Now](#) (Tablet Magazine, April 30, 2015)

2 / MONITORING DEVELOPMENTS IN UKRAINE

In Ukraine, the country’s parliament extended official recognition to a nationalist militia that collaborated with the Germans during World War Two. The Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), an ultra-nationalist faction that fought for an independent Ukrainian state, is now eligible for official government commemoration. The insurgents collaborated with Germany and took part in actions against local Jews. The Simon Wiesenthal Centre condemned Ukraine’s recognition of the group. Later in April, Eduard Dolinsky, director of the Ukrainian Jewish Committee, accused Valentyn Nalyvaichenko, the head of the Security Service of Ukraine, of further legitimising the UPA after saying his organisation needed to base its work on UPA methods.

Also in April, the Ministry of Defence announced that Dmitri Yarosh, the founder of Pravy Sektor (Right Sector), will advise Ukrainian Chief of Staff Viktor Muzhenko. Right Sector, a far right nationalist movement, has a history of antisemitism, but has worked hard recently to distance itself from its antisemitic reputation.

For the fourth time in recent months, the Babi Yar memorial was covered with graffiti. A swastika was sprayed on the monument, possibly timed to coincide with Hitler's birthday on April 20th.

The European Jewish Congress has donated \$100,000 to the Kiev Jewish community in order to strengthen its security. Ukrainian Chief Rabbi Rabbi Yaakov Dov Bleich said the money was used to install surveillance cameras, a high perimeter fence, shatter-proof windows, place a professional security guard at the day school, and to install a video surveillance system at the synagogue. It was also announced that *aliyah* from Ukraine to Israel increased in the first quarter of 2015 by 215 percent over the corresponding period last year. This comprised 1,971 individuals, compared to 625 in the first three months of 2014.

- [Ukrainian parliament recognizes militia that collaborated with Nazis](#) (The Jerusalem Post, April 13, 2015)
- [Far right group to join Ukrainian military](#) (The Jerusalem Post, April 7, 2015)
- [Ukrainian Jewish leader slams security boss for praising antisemitic militia](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 16, 2015)
- [Swastika returns to Kiev Holocaust memorial](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 24, 2015)
- [European Jewish Congress gives Kiev Jews \\$100,000 for security](#) (The Jerusalem Post, April 27, 2015)
- [Ukrainian aliyah triples in first quarter of 2015](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, May 1, 2015)

3 / REVISITING HOLOCAUST ISSUES

Once again a number of different Holocaust-related issues were reported in the media in April. Across Europe, many rescuers of Jews during the war were commemorated. In the Czech Republic, a Czech couple was posthumously recognised as Righteous Among the Nations for saving a Jewish girl in Ukraine during the Holocaust. A daughter of the Bohatas received the honour from the Israeli ambassador to the Czech Republic, Gary Koren, at the Israeli Embassy in Prague. Ruzena Stehlikova, daughter of Mindla Svarc who was saved by the Bohatas said "it's a wonderful feeling. We always knew the family accepted us as their own, and they loved my mother very much." In Lithuania, six Lithuanian families were awarded the status of Righteous Among the Nations at a ceremony held in the Government's Office of the Republic of Lithuania. The awards were accepted by the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the rescuers. Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevicius said "in Lithuania where there are various signs of memory, monuments, memorials, we still fail to show due respect and attention to the Righteous Among the Nations. It is a duty for us all to seek that the world hears the pain of the victims and to know the names of the heroes. Today we are bowing our heads before the people of Lithuania who risked their lives and the lives of their families to save Jews from the hands of executioner."

In Austria, Yad Vashem confirmed that a housekeeper who abandoned her own son to save a Jewish child from the Nazis is to be named as one of the Righteous Among the Nations. Maria Turnsek worked as housekeeper for a prominent Jewish family in Vienna when her employers begged her to flee the country with their six-year-old son Franz. She agreed, although it meant leaving her own son behind. Having reached the safety of Paris, Franz was reunited with his family, but Maria was unable to return

to Austria after the Nazis were alerted to what she had done, and she was forced to live out the war in England. Similarly, in Portugal, deceased priest Joaquim Carreira was posthumously awarded Righteous Among the Nations from Yad Vashem for saving dozens of Jews during the Holocaust. Portugal's parliament also passed a resolution in Joaquim Carreira's honour.

In the Netherlands, a street sign and bicycle path was unveiled to commemorate Jewish resistance fighter Maurits Kiek in April. Kiek was a member of the Dutch resistance during the Second World War and an agent for the British Secret Service. He was betrayed and arrested in 1943 and sentenced to death. However, he was kept alive because German intelligence agents still wanted to interrogate him. After being tortured and taken from prison to prison he was finally liberated in Czechoslovakia in April 1945.

In Germany, what is likely to be one of the last ever Nazi war crimes trials began. Defendant Oskar Groening, 93, known as the "accountant of Auschwitz", admitted that "it is without question that I am morally complicit in the murder of millions of Jews through my activities at Auschwitz. Before the victims, I also admit to this moral guilt here, with regret and humility. To the question as to whether I am criminally culpable, that is for you to decide." Groening, charged with being an accessory to the murder of at least 300,000 Jews at the camp, described his role of counting money confiscated from new arrivals and said he witnessed mass killings, but denied any direct role in the genocide. If found guilty he could face three to fifteen years in prison.

Issues concerning Holocaust sites, memorials and museums came to the fore in April. In Austria, the city of Graz is beginning to grapple with the murder of Hungarian Jews in nearby Liebenau labour camp. A conference was held in the city which focused on the deaths of 35 Hungarian Jews who were shot at the camp. They were part of a group of prisoners denied food and medication, and forced to sleep outside despite the cold. Graz's mayor also announced that a memorial would be erected in their honour. In the Netherlands, the Westerbork Holocaust memorial museum installed an audio system that calls out the names of all known inmates of the former camp. The system is installed inside two cargo wagons of the kind used by German Nazi occupation forces and their Dutch collaborators to transport approximately 107,000 Jews to camps in Eastern Europe. Westerbork is where Anne Frank and her family were interned after Nazis arrested them in Amsterdam.

In Germany, a new museum opened on the former site of the Nazi party headquarters in Munich. Museum director Winfried Nerdinger admitted that it had taken Munich too long to face up to its toxic legacy as the birthplace of Hitler's party, a fact long shrouded in shameful silence. He said that "Munich had a harder time with this than all the other cities in Germany because it is also more tainted than any other city. This is where it all began." However, just the day before the opening of the museum, Munich city council rejected a plan to allow the installation of brass pavement plaques throughout the city commemorating victims of the Holocaust. More than 50,000 *Stolpersteine* (stumbling blocks) have been installed across the country, each recording the name of an individual outside their last known address before they were killed or deported during the Holocaust. Every other major German city and a further eighteen countries have allowed the small memorial plaques to be placed in public pavements. Officially, Munich politicians objected to the language used to describe victims on the plaques and the idea of their names being trampled underfoot. Terry Swartzberg, head of the *Stolpersteine* campaign, which has gathered 79,000 signatures said "I am very disappointed. I thought we had shown the city council that the support for the stumbling blocks was overwhelming. It was the most supported petition in the city's history... It is very sad to see that preconceived notions have not changed."

In the Netherlands, the Federated Jewish Netherlands (FJN) protested the commemoration of a soldier who fought for the Nazis on the same monument that bears the names of Holocaust victims. The FJN called the inclusion of the soldier's name on the monument in the town of Geffen "both

shocking and cowardly.” An additional headstone was added to the town’s memorial in December which had the names of Jewish Holocaust victims and another bearing the name of a local man who died while fighting for Germany’s Wehrmacht under Hitler inscribed on it. FJN was only informed about it in April and chair Herman Loonstein said “there can be no reconciliation between perpetrators and victims. Certainly not in one stroke, as was done here with the placing of two adjacent stones.”

In Germany, Goethe University in Frankfurt is to become the first university in the country to appoint a Holocaust professor. The faculty will be located in the former IG Farben building, the company that manufactured Zyklon B, the gas used to kill millions of Jews. The professor will oversee an academic programme which includes the methodology, demography, sociology and psychology of the Nazi extermination programme.

FBI director James Comey stoked controversy for comments he made in an article in the *Washington Post* about the need to educate about the Holocaust. Comey suggested that Poles were accomplices in the Holocaust saying “in their minds, the murderers and accomplices of Germany, and Poland, and Hungary, and so many, many other places didn’t do something evil. They convinced themselves it was the right thing to do, the thing they had to do.” Polish Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz called his words unacceptable and said “to those who are incapable of presenting the historic truth in an honest way, I want to say that Poland was not a perpetrator but a victim of World War Two. I would expect full historical knowledge from officials who speak on the matter.” Comey subsequently apologised for his comments.

In Germany, experts have determined that another painting from the collection owned by Cornelius Gurlitt was stolen from its rightful owner by the Nazis. ‘The Seine Seen from the Pont Neuf, the Louvre in the Background,’ by Camille Pissarro, has been identified, and German Culture Minister Monika Gruetters said that she has been in touch with an heiress of the original owner. Also in Germany, a row has broken out between the estate of Adolf Hitler’s propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels and the publisher of a new biography of Goebbels. The estate is suing publisher Random House for royalties for using extracts from Goebbels’s diaries after the publisher refused to pay, after initially agreeing to do so. Random House now says that it has moral objections to paying a war criminal’s estate.

In Lithuania, a Holocaust education conference took place at Vilnius City Hall which included participants from the United States, Poland, Romania and Israel, as well as a representative of the European Commission’s European Remembrance programme, the Lithuanian Jewish Community chair Faina Kukliansky and Vilnius mayor Artūras Zuokas. Criticism was levelled at the Lithuanian government and society for memorialising and honouring Lithuanians who were complicit in the Holocaust. Lithuanian writer Tomas Venclova said “officially it is agreed that the Holocaust is a great evil, a special day is allocated for remembering it, but at the same time there is the official attempt to justify and even canonise people who were complicit in the Holocaust. Commemorations and memorial plaques are also dedicated to them. So this should properly be called a form of national and state schizophrenia... The attitude spreads among us without utterance: we mark the Holocaust because the international situation demands it, but we mark our Lithuanian heroes of 1941 because our national honour demands it. In my opinion this demonstrates the quite pathetic state of thinking in our society.”

In Switzerland, the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) attacked his organisation’s World War II record at a joint event with the World Jewish Congress (WJC) to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps. Peter Maurer, ICRC President, said “the ICRC failed to protect civilians and, most notably, the Jews persecuted and murdered by the Nazi regime. It failed as a humanitarian organisation because it lost its moral compass... The ICRC did not see Nazi Germany for what it was.” The event was attended by 200 senior members of Geneva’s diplomatic corps.

- [Czech couple posthumously honoured as Righteous Among the Nations](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 16, 2015)
- [Lithuanian PM: Rescuers of Jews deserve more respect and attention](#) (Delfi by The Lithuania Tribune, April 16, 2015)
- [Israeli Embassy in Lithuania awarded the Righteous Among the Nations](#) (Delfi by The Lithuania Tribune, April 18, 2015)
- [Yad Vashem honour for heroic housekeeper](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, April 23, 2015)
- [Jewish resistance fighter honoured with cycle path](#) (City of The Hague, April 30, 2015)
- [Israel, Portugal honour 'humble' priest who saved Jews](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 24, 2015)
- ['Accountant of Auschwitz': I am morally complicit in the murder of Jews](#) (The Guardian, April 21, 2015)
- [Gröning tells court he "could not have imagined" survival of Jews at Auschwitz](#) (Deutsche Welle, April 23, 2015)
- [Austrian city faces hidden horrors of Nazi camp](#) (BBC News, April 29, 2015)
- [Holocaust victims' names ring out at Dutch former transit camp](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 17, 2015)
- [Long-delayed Nazi museum to open in Munich](#) (The Times of Israel, April 30, 2015)
- [Munich says no to Holocaust plaques](#) (The Times, May 1, 2015)
- [Dutch Jewish group decries honouring of soldier who fought for Hitler](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 13, 2015)
- [Gas HQ will be base for Germany's first Holocaust professor](#) (The Times, April 9, 2015)
- [FBI chief apologises for Holocaust comment on Poland](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 24, 2015)
- [Germany: Pissarro painting looted by Nazis will be returned to heirs](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 2, 2015)
- [Goebbels' estate sues Random House for diary royalties](#) (BBC News, April 18, 2015)
- [Criticism levelled at Lithuanian government and society at Vilnius Holocaust conference](#) (Delfi by The Lithuania Tribune, April 23, 2015)
- [Joint event of International Committee of the Red Cross, WJC discusses lessons of Holocaust for genocide prevention](#) (World Jewish Congress, April 28, 2015)

March of the Living and other commemorations

There were commemorations throughout Europe remembering the Holocaust. At Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland, the 27th International March of the Living took place on Yom Hashoah with thousands of young people representing at least 45 countries. Yad Vashem chairman, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv-Yaffo and former Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel, led the two-mile march from the Auschwitz concentration camp to the Birkenau extermination camp. In Budapest, thousands turned out for the March of the Living rally, with participants walking from the former Jewish ghetto past some of the capital's landmarks. In Lithuania, over 700 young people from Vilnius, together with the Lithuanian Jewish community, former ghetto prisoners and Holocaust survivors took part in the March of the Living rally in Ponar (Paneriai). It started with the Star of Remembrance event in the former ghetto where participants wearing *kippot* formed a Star of David. After this event they walked to Vilnius railway station and took two special March of the Living trains to the mass massacre site in Ponar for a remembrance ceremony.

Throughout Germany, a series of events took place to mark the 70th anniversary of camp liberations. The first event was held at Buchenwald, the first camp to be liberated, and the largest one on German soil. More than 56,000 people died there from torture, medical experiments and starvation. Nearly 80

camp survivors travelled to the ceremony, as well as US army veterans who helped liberate the camp on April 11, 1945. Martin Schulz, European Parliament President, said: “to honour the victims... we want to fight the return of demons that we thought were overcome but which still show their ugly face – racism, antisemitism, ultra-nationalism and intolerance.” At a similar ceremony commemorating the liberation of Sachsenhausen camp, German Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, said that Germany must remember its past and “stand against injustice, against any form of xenophobia and discrimination...” He went on to ask: “Do we want to live in a country where there is still antisemitism and exclusion? Where asylum homes are set on fire? Where a young man is beaten up on a Berlin subway because he is a Jew?... The crimes of the Nazi regime are without equal. They make us shudder – the murder of millions of Jews in Europe, the crime against humanity that is the Shoah.” And at another ceremony of more than 100 survivors of Bergen-Belsen camp, German President Joachim Gauck paid tribute to the hundreds of thousands of prisoners held at the camp, which was liberated by British Allied forces 70 years ago. He said: “we must look to the past to put an end to injustice. We commit ourselves to the obligation of never denying these crimes, or relativising them, and of preserving the memories of the victims.”

- [Thousands march at Auschwitz to remember the Holocaust](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 16, 2015)
- [Celebrating life the Nazis couldn't kill](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, April 23, 2015)
- [In Budapest, thousands mark the Holocaust at March of the Living](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 12, 2015)
- [March of the Living honours Holocaust victims in Paneriai, Lithuania](#) (Delfi by The Lithuania Tribune, April 16, 2015)
- [Star of Remembrance to commemorate Holocaust in Vilnius](#) (Delfi by The Lithuania Tribune, April 22, 2015)
- [Buchenwald camp survivors mark 70 years since liberation](#) (BBC News, April 11, 2015)
- [Fight racist demons, top EU lawmaker says at Nazi camp ceremony](#) (Yahoo News, April 12, 2015)
- [Through the gates of hell: Horror of Belsen is captured in never-before-seen photos taken by British troops as they liberated infamous death camp 70 years ago](#) (Mail Online, April 14, 2015)
- [German FM Warns Against Antisemitism at Ceremony Marking Nazi Camp Liberation](#) (JP Updates, April 19, 2015)
- [German President Gauck marks 70th anniversary of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp liberation by the British forces](#) (European Jewish Press, April 26, 2015)
- [Bergen-Belsen survivors warn of rising antisemitism on 70th anniversary of liberation](#) (Deutsche Welle, April 26, 2015)
- [Jews worldwide mark Yom HaShoah](#) (The Jerusalem Post, April 16, 2015)

In Memoriam

Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, former Auschwitz prisoner and member of Poland’s WWII underground resistance who helped save Jews, recipient of Yad Vashem’s “Righteous Among the Nations”, honorary citizen of Israel, prisoner of Poland’s post-war communist regime, twice Poland’s Foreign Minister, historian and journalist, passed away on April 24, 2015.

- [Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, former Polish Foreign Minister, Righteous Among the Nations, dies at 93](#) (The Jerusalem Post, April 26, 2015)
- [Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, 93, Dies; Polish Auschwitz Survivor Aided Jews](#) (New York Times, April 27, 2015)
- [The legend that was Wladyslaw Bartoszewski](#) (i24 News, May 2, 2015)

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

In France, Jewish schools came top in two of the annual lists compiled by the French media of 4,300 high schools. Lubavitch Beth Hanna high school came first on the list compiled by *Le Parisien* daily and the Lycée Alliance Seine Saint-Denis in Paris topped the list drawn up by *France.tv.info*, the France Television's public broadcaster.

In Lithuania, Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevicius met with members of the Committee for the Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries in Europe in connection with the plans to renovate the former Sports Palace building built on an old Jewish cemetery. Rabbi Herschel Gluck from the commission said after the meeting, "this is a very important day for the Jewish community in Lithuania and its relations with the Lithuanian authorities and the Lithuanian people. It shows that we can work together in a way that is positive for all parties concerned. This is a new chapter in the relationship between the Jewish community and the Lithuanian government." Faina Kukliansky, the leader of the Jewish Community of Lithuania said that conversations are underway with the government about the construction of a specific memorial to the Jews buried in the cemetery.

In Russia, the world's second largest Limmud conference took place in Moscow with nearly 1,500 participants. Limmud FSU founder Chaim Chesler said "it's an amazing achievement considering that nine years ago nobody had heard about Limmud here, and that thirty years ago Jewish life was completely underground."

In Italy, Elio Toaff, the Chief Rabbi of Rome for 51 years, died just before his 100th birthday. Toaff served as chief rabbi from 1951 to 2002, and famously welcomed Pope John Paul II on his historic April 1986 visit to the Great Synagogue, the first known visit by a pope to a synagogue in 2,000 years. During World War II, Toaff fought the Nazis with the Italian partisans and after the war helped rebuild the Jewish community in Rome. Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi said "we have lost a giant." Renzo Gattegna, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities remarked "we mourn at this time the loss of an extraordinary man. A towering figure, a leader, a spiritual guide who marked his time and the time of generations to come." Riccardo Pacifici, president of Rome's Jewish community, added "he was a man of reconstruction, a giant of the past century? who also fought in the Resistance. He led the Jewish revival in Rome after the Shoah, and restored dignity and grandeur that we thought we had lost forever."

In Portugal, the country's oldest synagogue was rededicated on the island of Sao Miguel in the Atlantic Ocean. Renovations at the Sahar Hassamain synagogue, founded in the early 19th century, began last year. The building was restored to function as an Orthodox synagogue even though Sao Miguel has only one Jew living there. Religious leaders, political representatives, dignitaries and private citizens attended the rededication in Ponta Delgada. The event was the culmination of a thirty-year struggle to save the synagogue from ruin and preserve the Jewish legacy in the Azores. The synagogue, whose name means 'Gates of Heaven' in Hebrew, now includes a museum and library memorialising centuries of Jewish-Azorean cultural life. Lisbon's Jewish community, which owns the property, has leased it to the municipality for 99 years.

The Jewish community of Sarajevo is featured in an article in *Aljazeera America*. Hope for the future is expressed by members of the Sephardi community especially after an unprecedented mini baby-boom last year.

- [Some good news coming out of France's Jewish community: top-ranked schools](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 13, 2015)
- [Jewish organisations and Lithuanian government agree on sensitive renovation in central Vilnius](#) (Delfi by The Lithuania Tribune, April 15, 2015)
- [Moscow has world's second-largest Limmud](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 27, 2015)
- [Hundreds flock to Moscow for international Jewish celebration](#) (The Jerusalem Post, April 28, 2015)
- ['Shining light of Italian Jewry': WJC mourns passing of Rome's former chief rabbi](#) (World Jewish Congress, April 20, 2015)
- [Portugal's oldest standing shul reopened on remote island](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 23, 2015)
- [Born again: Jews of Sarajevo welcome baby boom](#) (Aljazeera America, April 26, 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.

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The **European Jewish Digest** is a monthly publication that summarises some of the key Jewish-interest stories in Europe, and provides links to articles about various newsworthy items. Its purpose is to provide the reader with an overview of incidents and activities that have occurred across Europe in the previous month. Note that all details come exclusively from press reports, and have not been verified by JPR researchers.