



EUROPEAN JEWISH DIGEST: LOOKING AT THE HEADLINES ACROSS JEWISH EUROPE

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1 / ISSUES CONCERNING ANTISEMITISM

Violence, Vandalism & Abuse

Instances of antisemitic vandalism and abuse occurred again in Greece in June. The disputed Holocaust memorial in Kevala (as reported in the May digest) was finally dedicated after the mayor agreed that no changes to the memorial were needed and it would be kept in its original location. However in his speech at the dedication, Panagiotis Sgouridis, deputy minister of rural development, was accused of abusing the memory of the Holocaust when he said that atrocities continue today including “the continuation of the extermination of the Assyrians by the jihadists, the invasion and occupation in northern Cyprus, the Kurdish issue, the blockade of Gaza, the genocidal dismemberment of Yugoslavia.” He added that monuments like this one was needed “because unfortunately many times the roles switch and the victims become bullies.” The memorial itself was then desecrated two weeks after its dedication, being covered in blue paint. In Athens, a memorial to the 13,000 Greek Jewish children murdered in the Holocaust was also desecrated with a Nazi swastika and SS insignia. The memorial is located next to a playground built in the children’s memory.

In the UK, two Jewish men were allegedly racially abused and violently threatened. Whilst walking along the River Lea towpath in Hackney in London, a man approached the visibly looking Jewish males and allegedly shouted “f***ing Jews” before walking right up to the victims, saying “I’ll f***ing kill you” and “I’ll f***ing break your neck”. The Metropolitan Police arrested a 27-year-old man on suspicion of threats to kill and a racially aggravated public order offence. In Birmingham, a Jewish monument in Cannon Hill Park was defaced with offensive graffiti and hate slogans by neo-Nazi group National Action. A swastika flag was also draped over the *menorah*. The vandals posted a video of their actions on YouTube which shows them spray-painting a Jewish Star of David onto the park gates with the caption “bankers” and “1%” before they climb on the *menorah*.

In the Jewish neighbourhood of Golders Green, a new group called Golders Green Together was established to promote diversity in the run-up to a planned neo-Nazi protest against “Jewish privilege”, which was expected to take place on July 4. The group was organised by the London Jewish Forum and the anti-fascist group Hope Not Hate, and supported by representatives of the Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Anglican, Methodist and Hindu communities. Anglican vicar Rex Morton of Golders Green Parish Church said “the idea that people would want to come and march against any part of our community is abhorrent.” Towards the end of the month the police ordered the demonstration to be moved from Golders Green to central London following pressure from Jewish groups and local MPs. Jonathan Arkush, president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, said “this sad little gathering of Nazi admirers was rejected by Golders Green Together, and has now been forced out of Golders Green altogether. Our community and many others stood together in unity, pride and strength and we have won.” The Community Security Trust, which advises Jewish communities on safety, said the decision sent “a strong message in support for British Jews at a time when fears of antisemitism remain high.” Also at the end of the month, two unrelated incidents of antisemitism occurred in Hackney. Vandals scrawled antisemitic graffiti on the gates of Simon Marks Jewish primary school and two cars were vandalised outside the Skver Synagogue by a man wielding an axe or a hammer.

In Germany, the newly announced conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic has reportedly stopped giving press interviews after two major German media outlets published comments about him using alleged antisemitic stereotypes. Northern German Radio's (NDR) Sabine Lange described Kirill Petrenko as a mythical, dwarf like figure from Wagner's operas and as a "tiny gnome, the Jewish caricature," whilst calling his fellow contender for the position Christian Thielemann a world-renowned expert in the German sound. A *Welt Online* commentator said that while Petrenko and Thielemann were otherwise comparable, it was "a relief to many" that Petrenko enjoys good interpersonal relations, "as at least one of the female opera singers at this year's Bayreuth Festival can attest." Many readers in response pointed out that this alluded to the antisemitic stereotypes of overly competitive and oversexed Jews. NDR later apologised saying that the editorial staff had failed in its review of the submitted commentary and it should never have published it. *Welt Online* also removed its article. In Munich, police are investigating a graffiti attack on an outdoor exhibit about local Jewish history. The graffiti included Hitler moustaches burned on photographs of rabbis and politicians. The exhibit is located outside the Jewish museum and community centre.

In France, fourteen members of a banned Islamic group 'Forsane Alizza' (The Knights of Pride) stood trial in Paris on terror charges after police found a hit list of Jewish stores marked "Targets" in files belonging to its leader. Several of the stores belonged to the 'Hyper Cacher' chain, similar to the one attacked in Paris in January. Also in France, an anti-terror judge issued international arrest warrants for three suspects implicated in France's most deadly antisemitic attack since World War Two. In 1982, Palestinian terrorists burst into the Goldenberg restaurant in the Jewish quarter of Paris, throwing grenades and spraying machine-gun fire in an attack that killed six people and injured 22. The Paris prosecutor's office said the top suspect in the attack, Souhaur Mouhamad Hassan Khalil Al-Abbassi, had been arrested in Jordan. Towards the end of June the National Bureau for Vigilance Against Antisemitism (BNVCA) urged the mayor of Paris to order the removal of a mosaic floor featuring swastikas that they identified in a residential building. The floor of the entrance of a building in Paris' 6th arrondissement contains dozens of swastikas made of black mosaic and incorporated at regular intervals into the floor's pattern. The BNVCA added that "they do not understand how these illegal symbols have been allowed to exist, probably for a very long time, in this building without being flagged by a single person. BNVCA deplores how the residents of this building seemed to accommodate these symbols when their presence is intolerable."

In Spain, a 28-year-old foreign national female was arrested for uploading a number of videos calling for the maiming and "extermination" of Jews and Zionists. An arrest warrant was issued for the woman due to the "brutality of the content" and she is expected to be tried on several counts of inciting hatred and violence using audio-visual material on various social networks. Also in Spain, sports commentator Xavier Bosch wrote a column claiming a "Jewish lobby" and the Mossad were influencing the Barcelona football club. In an op-ed for *Mundo Deportivo*, Bosch accused lobbyists with "unlimited money and inordinate influence" of trying to "control the world and its international institutions." He warned against allowing a "Jewish lobby" to put pressure on Barcelona to end its \$200 million shirt sponsorship deal with the Qatar Foundation. In a letter to the UEFA President Michel Platini calling on him to investigate, Dr. Shimon Samuels, Wiesenthal Centre Director for International Relations, wrote "one wonders which is more dangerous? The columnist's expressions deemed 'antisemitic' under the European Union's definition or the antisemitism of indifference of the editor?" This followed *Mundo Deportivo's* editor, Fernando Polo, claiming that "there is no antisemitism in [the Bosch] article. He is simply concerned about the external pressure [FC Barcelona] and its board are receiving against the Qatar sponsorship... Bosch just wants what's best for the club, without opposition from outside. There is no antisemitism in his article. He is against any kind of lobby: French, German, Jewish."

There were again football-related antisemitic incidents in June. In Croatia, the Football Federation apologised after a swastika symbol was marked on to the pitch ahead of their Euro 2016 home

qualifier against Italy. Tomislav Pacak, Croatian Football Federation (HNS) spokesman said “this is sabotage and a felony. We expect police to identify the perpetrators. This is a disgrace not just for the HNS but for the whole of Croatia. Once again, we express regret and condemn this act, and we apologise to all the viewers, guests and players from both teams.” The game was being played behind closed doors after Croatia were punished for racist chants by fans against Norway in March. The swastika was seen during the first half and although ground staff tried to cover it up at half-time they were not successful. UEFA has begun disciplinary proceedings against the Croatian Football Federation. In Bosnia, it was alleged that Bosnian fans chanted anti-Israel and anti-Jewish slogans during a football match between Bosnia and Israel in the Euro 2016 qualifiers.

In Bulgaria, the US state department annual report on human rights noted that antisemitic rhetoric continued to appear commonly on social networking sites and as comments under online media articles. It also claimed that Jewish organisations remained concerned about the government’s inaction in addressing hate crimes, particularly hate speech, and that website administrators no longer deleted antisemitic comments.

- [Greek official slammed for saying ‘victims become bullies’ in Holocaust speech](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 18, 2015)
- [Disputed Greek Holocaust memorial vandalized 2 weeks after its dedication](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 22, 2015)
- [Memorial to Greek Jewish children killed in Holocaust vandalized](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 10, 2015)
- [Greek lawmaker under fire for trivializing Holocaust](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 25, 2015)
- [‘I’ll f***ing kill you, f***ing Jews’: Men ‘subjected to shocking antisemitic tirade’ in east London](#) (London Evening Standard, June 5, 2015)
- [Neo-Nazis attack Cannon Hill park’s Jewish memorial and unfurl swastika flag](#) (Birmingham Mail, June 10, 2015)
- [Groups unite to combat hate rally](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, June 11, 2015)
- [London neo-Nazi rally moved after outcry from Jewish leaders and MPs](#) (The Guardian, June 30, 2015)
- [‘F*** the Jews’ scrawled outside Jewish primary school in Hackney... hours before car is vandalised at synagogue](#) (London Evening Standard, June 30, 2015)
- [Berlin Philharmonic conductor stops talking to media following commentaries seen as antisemitic](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 28, 2015)
- [Jewish history exhibit defaced in Munich](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 30, 2015)
- [French Islamists had Jewish store ‘hit list’ and nuclear bomb manual](#) (The Telegraph, June 8, 2015)
- [French judge issues arrest warrants for 3 suspects 32 years after antisemitic terror attack](#) (European Jewish Press, June 19, 2015)
- [Paris mayor urged to remove swastikas from building’s floor](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 26, 2015)
- [Woman arrested in Spain for posting ‘kill the Jews’ videos](#) (The Times of Israel, June 4, 2015)
- [Spanish Sports Writer Claims ‘Jewish Lobby’ Pressuring Barcelona to Ditch Qatar Sponsorship](#) (The Algemeiner, June 18, 2015)
- [Croatia swastika: Uefa open disciplinary action over symbol](#) (BBC News, June 15, 2015)
- [Anti-Jewish and anti-Israel slogans chanted by Bosnian fans at match against Israel](#) (European Jewish Press, June 15, 2015)
- [Rights report notes antisemitic rhetoric, prejudice against Roma in Bulgaria](#) (The Sofia Globe, June 26, 2015)

Politics

Across Europe, antisemitic comments by politicians led to them either losing their jobs or being convicted in June. In Hungary, former Member of Parliament Imre Sisák was fired from his position as head of department at the Nógrád county government bureau after a video surfaced of him calling Jews a “nefarious, dirty folk.” The video, in which he also talks of how “foreign trade companies are all run by dirty Jews” was posted on YouTube in late April, and believed to have been recorded between 2006 and 2010 when Sisák was mayor of Pásztó in northern Hungary. Following this incident, Vince Szalay-Bobrovniczky, Deputy State Secretary for EU Affairs of the Prime Minister’s Office, reiterated that the Hungarian Government takes categorical and decisive action against all manifestations of antisemitism based on the principle and practice of zero tolerance.

In Spain, Guillermo Zapata resigned as Madrid’s cultural councillor just 48 hours after accepting the role amid a row over antisemitic ‘jokes’ that he tweeted back in 2011. In a reference to the Nazis’ use of ovens to exterminate European Jews Zapata tweeted “how would you fit five million Jews in a Seat 600? In the ashtray.” Zapata apologised saying his jokes had been prompted by a debate on “the limits of humour” and that he did not identify with the content of his own tweets. It was the first casualty of Madrid’s newly formed left wing city administration.

In Belgium, the government announced that it will provide more than \$4 million to upgrade security at Jewish institutions throughout the country. In a television interview Jan Jambon, Interior Minister, said that the grant will be for surveillance cameras, alarms, secure windows and armoured doors and other security improvements.

Also in Belgium, Laurent Louis, Member of Parliament for four years until 2014, was given a suspended six-month prison sentence for downplaying the importance of the Holocaust. Whilst in parliament, Louis was responsible for a number of provocative actions, including arguing in parliament that “the Holocaust was set up and financed by the pioneers of Zionism.”

In France, following his suspension from the National Front (FN) party, founder Jean-Marie Le Pen is taking legal action to overturn the decision. Amidst a feud with her father over the direction of the party, FN leader Marine Le Pen said “perhaps... he considers that the National Front is his property and doesn’t want the National Front to outlive him.” At the same time, Marine Le Pen announced the formation of a political group of far-right parties in the European Parliament. The new anti-EU Europe of Nations and Freedoms bloc includes Hungary’s Jobbik party and Geert Wilders’s Dutch Freedom Party. To form the group, Le Pen needed the inclusion of 25 MEPs from at least seven different nationalities, and her success means that they will now have access to millions of Euros in extra funding as well as more staff and speaking time.

In Scotland, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon called the level of antisemitism “unacceptable” in her first formal meeting with representatives of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC). She has pledged to hold a series of public meetings with the country’s Jewish community to discuss concerns. SCoJeC director Ephraim Borowski said that “we look forward to working with her and her government to make sure that Scotland is a place where Jewish people can feel welcome and at home, and above all safe and secure.”

In Germany, Josef Schuster, head of the Central Council of Jews, called on the Protestant Church to confront and condemn the anti-Jewish teachings of Martin Luther. In his 1543 text “On the Jews and their Lies,” Luther called Jews a “base” people and urged faithful Protestants to burn down synagogues and drive Jews from their homes. Nikolaus Schneider, former council president of the Protestant Church in Germany, told Schuster during a public discussion that the church has begun to confront

Luther's anti-Jewish sentiments, adding he was he was fairly sure the council would issue a declaration on the matter in time for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

In the Netherlands, the government indefinitely postponed the release of a survey suggesting that antisemitism is more prevalent among Muslim youths than Christian ones. The Verwey Jonker Institute submitted its synopsis for the government-commissioned report on antisemitism among youths last month for publication to the Dutch Social Affairs Ministry. According to *De Telegraaf*, the ministry has kept it under wraps past the May deadline and ordered a review of the data. The newspaper claimed to have seen a copy of the synopsis, which said that 12% of Muslim respondents expressed a "not positive" view of Dutch Jews compared to 2% among Christian respondents. The ministry told the newspaper that it had not yet released the report as it needs "clarification, for example, on how to explain some results."

There were calls to pass more legislation to combat antisemitism in June. After quitting as the Quartet's Middle East envoy, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair will take on the role of chairman of the European Council on Tolerance and Reconciliation (ECTR). One of his main tasks will be to campaign for countries to criminalise Holocaust denial and create clearer definitions of antisemitism and other racism. He will also lobby governments to pay for increased security at synagogues and Jewish schools.

In Spain, the Council of Europe called on the government to pass "new and comprehensive anti-discrimination laws" to combat prejudices against Jews, Roma and other minority groups. In its report, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities said "prejudice and intolerance against Roma, as well as islamophobia, antisemitism and intolerance against migrants, continue to be expressed, notably in the print and audio-visual media and on the Internet, as well as in political life." Spain should "ensure that all alleged cases of hate speech, including those committed on the internet and in the print and audio-visual media, are effectively investigated, prosecuted and sanctioned."

Whilst addressing the Israeli parliament in Jerusalem, Norbert Lammert, Speaker of the German parliament, announced that Germany will host an international conference on antisemitism in 2016. The conference will take place in Berlin and will be organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Coalition for Combating Antisemitism (ICCA), a grouping of parliamentarians from around the world. Lammert called the recent increase in antisemitism unacceptable and that "in Germany it is unbearable. The fact that there are still antisemitic outbursts all over Europe is therefore all the more shameful and we must fight these outbursts decisively." He added that "we are especially grateful for the fact that after the Nazi dictatorship and the Holocaust the Jews can again build their lives in Germany. This is the finest declaration of trust granted to the second German democracy."

- [Government Official Fired After Footage Of Antisemitic Comments Emerges](#) (Hungary Today, June 9, 2015)
- [The Hungarian Government maintains a stance of zero tolerance against antisemitism](#) (Website of the Hungarian Government, June 19, 2015)
- [Madrid official resigns over antisemitic tweet](#) (The Local, June 15, 2015)
- [Belgium to provide \\$4 million in security funding to Jewish institutions](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 24, 2015)
- [Former Belgian lawmaker convicted for downplaying Holocaust](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 24, 2015)
- [Ejected from the FN, Jean-Marie Le Pen sues party he founded](#) (Deutsche Welle, June 12, 2015)
- [France's Le Pen announces far-right bloc of anti-EU MEPs](#) (BBC News, June 16, 2015)

- [Nicola Sturgeon says level of antisemitism in Scotland is 'unacceptable'](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, June 5, 2015)
- [German Jewish leader asks Protestants to condemn Luther's antisemitism](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 18, 2015)
- [Dutch gov't postpones release of survey showing antisemitism among Muslim youth](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 15, 2015)
- [Tony Blair to tackle European antisemitism in new role](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, June 4, 2015)
- [Council of Europe Calls on Spain to Introduce Laws to Combat Antisemitism](#) (The Algemeiner, June 30, 2015)
- [Germany to host antisemitism conference next year](#) (The Times of Israel, June 24, 2015)

Research on Jewish Communities

Three different research studies were published in June. The Pew Research Centre found that a large majority of Europeans hold favourable views about Jews, in spite of constant media reports about increased antisemitism. In France, 92 percent of French adults were found to hold favourable views about Jews (up from 89 percent in 2014 and 72 percent in 1991) and 39 percent said that they were very favourably disposed toward Jews. Results were similar in Britain, where 86 percent of British adults also reported holding a positive attitude toward Jews. In Germany, 80 percent of German adults hold favourable views about Jews; in Spain and Italy, the equivalent counts for Spanish and Italian adults were 75 percent and 71 percent. Polish adults in Poland came off worst in the Pew survey, but even there, a majority of 59 percent reported a favourable attitude toward Jews. The report stated that “the economic downturn in Europe that followed the euro crisis raised concerns that economic stress would turn Europeans against each other, as many severe economic downturns have done throughout history, sparking xenophobia and antisemitism. And Europe has seen a number of hostile actions against Muslims, Jews, Roma and other minorities in recent years. But the activities of a few are not necessarily reflected in the views of the general public.”

A survey carried by the European Jewish Association (EJA) claimed that just one quarter of Germans believe the European Union should do more to eradicate antisemitism. It further showed that nearly 40 percent of Germans believe that the authorities are doing an adequate job of combating antisemitism, while 15 percent said that the government should be doing less. Rabbi Menachem Margolin, director of the EJA, said that “the German public is simply unaware of the rising tide of attacks motivated by antisemitism,” and argued that the findings indicate that Germans have failed to sufficiently understand the lessons of the Holocaust.

A third survey, conducted by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), found some shocking results regarding Greek views of Jews. The poll found that 90 percent of Greeks agreed with the statement that “Jews have too much power in the business world” and 85 percent agreed “Jews have too much power in international finance markets.” 70 percent said that “Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust” and 51 percent said “Jews don't care about what happens to anyone but their own kind.” More than 25 percent said they believe the number of Jews reported to have died in the Holocaust has been “greatly exaggerated”, one-third said Jews are “responsible for most of the world's wars” and 41 percent agreed that “people hate Jews because of the way Jews behave.” According to the researchers, Greece surpasses Iran and falls just slightly behind Turkey in the percentage of its residents who hold antisemitic views.

The ADL survey also found that antisemitic attitudes in France have fallen from 37 percent to 17 percent over the year between March 2014 and March 2015, from 27 percent to 21 percent in Belgium and from 27 percent to 16 percent in Germany. Drops in antisemitic views were also found in Poland

(from 45 percent to 37 percent), Russia (30 percent to 23 percent) and Ukraine (38 percent to 32 percent). However, the poll registered increases in Romania from 35 percent to 47 percent, Italy from 20 percent to 29 percent and the Netherlands from 5 percent to 11 percent. The survey also found that among Western European Muslims, an average of 55 percent harbour antisemitic attitudes.

- [Jews still highly regarded in Europe, despite reports to the contrary](#) (Haaretz, June 3, 2015)
- [France more positive to Jews, Muslims than UK](#) (The Local, June 3 2015)
- [More Germans worried about Islamophobia than antisemitism, new poll finds](#) (The Jerusalem Post, June 24, 2015)
- [German public 'unconcerned' over antisemitism: survey](#) (i24 News, June 28, 2015)
- [Poll: 85% of Greeks Believe the Jews Have Too Much Power Over Global Finance](#) (The Washington Free Beacon. June 30, 2015)
- [New ADL Poll Finds Dramatic Decline in Antisemitic Attitudes in France; Significant Drops in Germany and Belgium](#) (PR Newswire, June 30, 2015)

2 / MONITORING DEVELOPMENTS IN UKRAINE

In Ukraine, Holocaust memorials were again vandalised. In Nikopol, an eastern Ukrainian city located 60 miles from Dnepropetrovsk, a Holocaust monument was vandalised with a red swastika that was painted over a Star of David symbol. In Kiev, the monument commemorating Jewish victims of the Babi Yar massacre was desecrated for the fifth time in a year. A delegation from the Shorashim organisation, which helps Israeli immigrants from the former Soviet Union to clarify their Jewish status in dealing with the Chief Rabbinate, discovered swastikas drawn on the monument.

Also in June, issues surrounding the political misuse of antisemitism were reported with the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group accusing Russia of trying to incite antisemitism throughout Ukraine. On its website the group accused the Kremlin of “cynical attempts to use or arouse antisemitism for political gain” in Ukraine, citing a string of incidents since last year’s revolution. As an example it quoted the distribution of a counterfeit letter attributed to Rabbi Menachem Margolin, the founder of the European Jewish Association, in which he supposedly pleaded with European Commission President Jean- Claude Juncker to respond to the “outrageous revival of Nazi Germany traditions” in Ukraine.

The Euro-Asian Jewish Congress said that separatist leader Igor Plotnitsky made antisemitic statements during a public address in Russia when he linked Ukrainian Jews to last year’s revolution. At N.A. Nekrasov Kostroma State University in Kirovsk, Plotnitsky said the popular name of that revolution, “Euro-Maidan” betrayed the involvement of Jews. He said “why ‘Euro-Maidan?’ Where did the actual name come from? The territory? Or, perhaps, from the nation which is now in the majority of leadership in Ukraine? I have nothing against the Jews as a nation, as a chosen people, we will talk about this separately if the opportunity presents itself. But the question is what is going on? In the name Euro Maidan lies the essence – namely that it was headed by the representatives of that nation which suffered most from the Nazis.”

- [Ukrainian Holocaust monument vandalised with swastika](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 19, 2015)
- [Kiev Holocaust memorial defaced again with swastikas](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 28, 2015)
- [Ukrainian rights group blasts Russia for faking antisemitic news](#) (The Jerusalem Post, June 10, 2015)

- [Top rebel leader accuses Jews of masterminding Ukrainian revolution](#) (The Jerusalem Post, June 22, 2015)

3 / REVISITING HOLOCAUST ISSUES

Once again there were many Holocaust-related issues reported in June, particularly concerning camps and memorials. In Poland, authorities have suspended the planned construction of a memorial at the former Sobibor Nazi death camp over concerns that the building work would destroy archaeological findings and disturb human remains. Yoram Haimi, an Israeli archaeologist whose team discovered the foundations of the gas chambers in September, said that “in the end, it was decided to suspend and rethink the planned construction. We are waiting for new plans to be drawn up and brought for approval in Warsaw. Maybe the monument will remain unchanged, but for its construction outside the camp instead of on it.” Also in Poland, two British teenagers were arrested after police found items believed to be stolen from the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum in their backpacks. The Polish police was called after buttons, a fragment of a hair clipper and a piece of a spoon that belonged to prisoners in Birkenau were found in their bags. The teenagers were on a trip with the Perse School from Cambridge and were fined 1,000 zloty (about £170) and given one-year probation, suspended for three years. A school spokesman said “we understand they have explained that they picked up the items without thinking, and they have apologised unreservedly for the offence they have given, and expressed real remorse for their action.”

In Germany, the Queen of the UK and the Commonwealth, Elizabeth II, visited Bergen-Belsen, her first visit to a World War Two concentration camp. Accompanied by her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, she laid a wreath at a memorial, talked with British veterans who liberated the camp, and listened to their stories of the horrific scenes that greeted them. She also met with survivors who told of their experiences as prisoners in the camp. More than 50,000 prisoners from all over Europe, including Anne Frank, were killed at Bergen-Belsen or died later as a result of their treatment in the camp. Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis also accompanied the Queen and said “this was a very special day, and a historic occasion. I told the Queen of the appreciation that is felt around the Jewish world and for her showing solidarity and sending the message that we have to remember what happened and that it will never be forgotten.”

In the Netherlands, local residents are objecting to the construction of a Holocaust memorial in Amsterdam’s Wertheim Park. The reasons given by the community group for opposing it include the fact that they do not want to be confronted with the victims’ names every time they go to the park and that they do not wish the park to be overwhelmed by the 200,000 tourists expected to visit the memorial each year. A final decision on the memorial is unlikely to be made before 2016. At present there is no memorial in the Netherlands that lists the names of the 102,000 Dutch Holocaust victims.

In Spain, the province of Llieda is opening up the mountain routes used by thousands of Jews as they fled across the Pyrenees to escape France’s pro-Nazi Vichy regime during World War Two. During the war, residents of Lleida worked with allied secret services and Jewish resistance organisations to set up a network of pathways and volunteers for the escaping families. Around 20,000 Jews crossed the mountains from France during the war. Four routes used by the refugees have now been signposted, with information boards and maps placed at key sites along the way.

In Lithuania, the 74th anniversary of the Kaunas pogrom was commemorated in the presence of the Israeli Ambassador to Lithuania Amir Maimon. The most infamous incident occurred at the Lietūkis garage where several dozen Jewish men were publicly tortured and executed. The ambassador

commented that “it’s hard to believe that in this place, here, not somewhere deep in the forest but here, in the centre of the city, over 60 Jewish people were brutally murdered. It’s hard to believe that the people of this place, this city, were the ones who brutally murdered the Jewish people. It’s also hard to believe that only a few weeks ago this place was restored. For so many years this place looked not like a respectful memorial place.”

In Luxembourg, the government issued a formal apology for the country’s involvement in persecuting Jews during World War Two. The apology was part of a symbolic resolution for the official recognition of the suffering inflicted on members of the Jewish community while the country was occupied by the Nazis. The resolution came months after historian Vincent Artuso published a report that showed Luxembourg authorities were not “forced to participate in Nazi antisemitic persecution under threat,” and the then administration and other institutions “collaborated once they were invited to by the occupier and often fulfilled their task with diligence, zeal even – certain heads of the administration did not hesitate to take the initiative.” The resolution received unanimous support from the sixty-member chamber of deputies and Prime Minister Xavier Bettel said “we must accept responsibility together for this. The fact is that 1,300 Jews were deported from here, Belgium or France and they were all killed. It is a reality for which I apologise directly to today’s Jewish community but also to the families.”

In Hungary, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance conference was hosted in Budapest with nearly 200 delegates representing 31 countries attending the inaugural klezmer concert in the Dohany Street Synagogue. Janos Lazar, Hungary’s state secretary, said that Hungary “could not achieve what it did in the past centuries without our Jewish brothers” and pledged to find the names of the 600,000 Hungarians who perished in the Holocaust and place the names on the “memorial tree” in the synagogue’s courtyard or on the Memorial Wall at the Budapest Holocaust Memorial Centre. However at the same time as the conference was being held, the Simon Wiesenthal Centre (SWC) criticised the proposed government funded statue to World War Two antisemite and Nazi collaborator Balint Homan. Mark Weitzman, SWC’s Director of Government Affairs, said “the proposed erection of a government funded statue to a World War II era antisemite and Nazi collaborator Balint Homan is directly in contradiction to Hungary’s role as current Chair of the of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). It also is incompatible with the public statements by Minister Janos Lazar and State Secretary Szabolcs Takacs who called the Holocaust in Hungary ‘an act of treason’ and condemned antisemitism.”

In Poland, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Kraków has resumed displaying an art installation featuring a video of naked men and women playing tag in a gas chamber. This is the second time it has presented the installation, called ‘Game of Tag.’ The same video also was shown at an art museum in Estonia before being withdrawn following protests. The Kraków museum had also previously stopped showing the video after complaints by Jewish groups. After discovering the video was once again being shown, Efraim Zuroff from the Simon Wiesenthal Centre said “it is the most disgusting thing I’ve seen in a long time. They lied about it. It is just revolting and a total insult to the victims and anyone with any sense of morality or integrity.” The museum said that the video is “presented in a discrete enclosure bearing the warning: ‘A controversial work, only for adults,’ and director Maria Anna Potocka sent the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem a letter saying that “to read this film as an insult to the victims of the concentration camps we feel is to misinterpret it.”

In France, the National Assembly voted to approve the creation of a \$60 million fund to compensate Holocaust victims transported to Nazi camps by the state railroad SNCF. The fund, to be administered by the United States, will compensate foreign nationals, protect France against lawsuits filed in the United States and redresses longstanding claims by survivors who were otherwise unable to obtain reparations limited to French nationals through the French pension system. SNCF trains transported 76,000 Jews and other prisoners from the suburbs of Paris to the German border from 1942 to 1944.

In Germany, Ingeborg Syllm-Rapoport, a Jewish-German woman who was barred from receiving her doctorate under the Nazis, finally completed her degree at the age of 102. Syllm-Rapoport accepted her doctorate to loud applause at the University of Hamburg. The paediatrician had written a doctoral thesis on diphtheria as a 25-year-old student at the university's medical school in 1938, but because her mother was Jewish she was never allowed to take the final step of defending her work before a board of examiners. Burkhard Göke, the medical director of the university's hospital, said "after almost 80 years, it was possible to restore some extent of justice. We cannot undo injustices that have been committed, but our insights into the past shape our perspective for the future."

Also in Germany, district court of Neubrandenburg announced that it will not put on trial a 94-year-old man who was charged as an accomplice in thousands of murders at Auschwitz-Birkenau, saying he was mentally unfit to stand trial. The court said that the defendant, Hubert Z., suffers from dementia and his mental state is worsening with no chance of improvement. He had been charged as an accomplice in the murders of 3,681 people at Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944.

In Italy, the Jewish Community of Rome has compiled a list of the names of people who sold or denounced Jews to German and Italian persecutors during World War Two. It covers the period from October 16, 1943, when more than 1,000 Roman Jews were caught and deported to Nazi concentration camps. The list is not being published. The research also uncovered the exact number of Jews deported from Rome. Claudio Procaccia, director of the Cultural Department of the Jewish Community, said "the gravestones show the number at 2,091 deportees, but the exact number is 1,769... Previously there were duplicate names, people who were taken elsewhere, confusion in the surnames."

- [Building of Sobibor memorial said to be suspended following protests](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 3, 2015)
- [Two British public schoolboys freed after arrest on suspicion of stealing items at Auschwitz](#) (The Telegraph, June 23, 2015)
- [Belsen remembered: Seventy years on, the Queen joins German dignitaries and Holocaust survivors at one of the Nazis' most notorious camps](#) (The Independent, June 26, 2015)
- [Chief Rabbi praises Queen for 'moving' visit to Belsen](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, June 26, 2015)
- [Dutch dog-walkers say no to Jewish Holocaust memorial](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, June 4, 2015)
- [Catalans restore Shoah escape routes](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, June 19, 2015)
- [Kaunas commemorates brutal WWII Jewish pogrom](#) (Delfi by The Lithuanian Tribune, June 26, 2015)
- [Luxembourg says sorry to Jews for World War II government collaboration with Nazi occupiers](#) (World Jewish Congress, June 9, 2015)
- [International Holocaust remembrance conference opens in Budapest](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 11, 2015)
- [SWC: Statue to World War II Hungarian Antisemite Contradicts Recent Statements by Government Officials and International Holocaust Remembrance Role](#) (Simon Wiesenthal Centre, June 18, 2015)
- [Polish museum returns controversial gas chamber installation](#) (The Jerusalem Post, July 2, 2015)
- [French National Assembly approves \\$60 million Holocaust reparations fund](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 25, 2015)
- [Jewish woman aged 102 receives PhD denied by the Nazis](#) (Deutsche Welle, June 8, 2015)
- [German court cancels trial for Auschwitz medic, 94](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 23, 2015)
- [Rome's Jews compile blacklist of Nazi collaborators](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 2, 2015)

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

Various leaders in different countries were given awards in June for their work in promoting Jewish and non-Jewish relations and preserving Jewish culture.

In Lithuania, six people were presented with the Beigel Awards for Tolerance – accolades given by the Jewish community for promoting tolerance in the country. Four members of the Jewish song and dance group Fajerlech as well as Amit Belaitė and Markas Zingeris were rewarded for their work in preserving and disseminating Jewish cultural heritage in Lithuania and beyond. At the ceremony, Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius stressed that every person has the duty to fight antisemitism, xenophobia and racism around them.

In Poland, Chief Rabbi Michael Schudrich, Helise Lieberman, director of the Taube Centre for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland, and Jonathan Ornstein, director of the Krakow Jewish Community Centre, were awarded the Bene Merito medals in recognition of their actions in promoting Poland abroad. The medals of honour were awarded by Polish Foreign Minister Grzegorz Schetynawho who thanked the awardees for their “contribution to Polish-Jewish relations, writing a common history in the new conditions.” Rabbi Schudrich remarked that “this award clearly once again shows the importance and centrality for the Polish government for the growing and deepening relations with the local Jewish community as well as the world Jewish community.”

Also in Poland, four non-Jewish Poles and a group of students were presented with a new award for their involvement in preserving Jewish heritage. The Israeli Embassy, the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland and the Ministry of Culture established the ‘Laurel of Memory’ this year to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the resumption of diplomatic relations between Poland and Israel. The winners included Eugeniusz Gradek, pastor of the Pentecostal Church in Zywiec, who takes care of the Jewish cemetery in the south-central Polish town; Malgorzata Motor of Lezajsk, a journalist who publishes articles on the Jewish heritage of the Podkarpackie region; and a group of students from a school in Strzegom who help preserve the town’s Jewish cemetery.

In France, Moshe Kantor, president of the European Jewish Congress, was awarded the Officier de la Légion d’Honneur (Officer of the Legion of Honour), France’s highest decoration, for fighting antisemitism and promoting interfaith relations. The award was presented by President François Hollande, who told Kantor that he was “an inspiring person in the Jewish world, a great figure of the Jewish people in Europe, heading a major institution, the European Jewish Congress, which today represents 42 communities. You and the EJC are promoting Jewish culture, interfaith dialogue and tolerance, fighting antisemitism and racism and preserving the memory of the Holocaust. Because all of these reasons, all of these values – your fight against antisemitism and for peace, and for your love of France – we honour you here today.”

In Spain, the small Spanish village of Castrillo Matajudios, which means “Camp Kill Jews”, officially changed its name back to Castrillo Mota de Judios (Jews’ Hill Camp) following a referendum and regional government approval. The village of about 50 inhabitants, voted to change the name in 2014 after the mayor argued that the term was offensive and that the village should honour its Jewish origins. Documents show the “Kill Jews” name dates from 1627 and historians believe the village got its name from Jewish residents who converted to Catholicism and wanted to reinforce their repudiation of Judaism to convince Spanish authorities of their loyalty.

In Lithuania, two contrasting stories concerning Jewish heritage were reported in the press in June. Early in the month, the country’s Chief Rabbi announced his opposition to the government’s plan to build a convention centre on what used to be Vilnius’ oldest Jewish cemetery. Rabbi Chaim Burshtein said he opposed the proposed construction on the former grounds of the Snipiskes cemetery because

“it risks massive destruction of human remains.” Under the former communist regime, the Soviet authorities had built a sports centre on the old Jewish cemetery, and in April, Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevicius announced his intention to demolish it and build a modern conference centre in its place. Prime Minister Butkevicius had said he would ensure that the cemetery would be commemorated. It had been previously reported that the Jewish Community of Lithuania and the Committee for the Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries in Europe had agreed to the plan. Later in the month the Simon Wiesenthal Centre and major Litvak rabbis in Israel came out against the proposal.

Also in Lithuania, it was reported that the unique archives about the lives of Jews in Eastern Europe before the Holocaust, which were accumulated by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in Vilnius before World War II, would soon begin to be digitalised in New York. In January, the Lithuanian Central State Archive started preserving the documents and a similar task began in New York. It is a seven year project, after which the documents that were scattered during the Holocaust will be brought together again in a virtual library with descriptions provided in the English and the Lithuanian languages.

A number of articles were published in June in the field of inter-faith relations. In Belgium, the Synagogue D’Arlon received a donation from a local Muslim group to help rebuild the synagogue with a message of ‘Living Together.’ The Association of Muslims of Arlon (AMA) offered the donation of €2,405 which will help to repair the synagogue which has been closed since August 2014. The Synagogue D’Arlon is the oldest Jewish place of worship in Belgium. The AMA does not have a suitable mosque for its own congregation but Mohamed Bouezmarni, the General Secretary of AMA, said that the gesture was part of a bigger movement to remind everybody that Jews and Muslims have lived in peace for centuries.

In the UK, Laura Marks, founder of Mitzvah Day, and Julie Siddiqi, director of the Islamic Society of Britain and the founder of Sadaqa Day, launched the first meeting of a new Jewish-Muslim Women’s Network. Nearly 100 prominent women attended, to support the new network seeking to create projects and events for Jewish and Muslim women. Marks and Siddiqi set up the project to encourage women of the two faiths into driving social action and leadership. The network will focus on four ‘streams’: social action, culture, business and sport and wellbeing. In Manchester, the Muslim Jewish Forum celebrated a decade of bringing people from the two faiths together. Established in 2005, the group holds social events and trips abroad for Jews and Muslims to meet and get to know each other. To celebrate its anniversary, the Forum held a dinner at Manchester Town Hall attended by leaders from both the Muslim and Jewish faiths. Forum co-chair Mohammed Amin said: “Greater Manchester has the second largest Jewish community in the country and one of the largest Muslim communities. These communities have numerous interests in common – one of the first things the Forum does is make it easier for both communities to campaign on these issues of mutual interests... We’ve gone from being strangers to becoming friends and made it normal for Muslims and Jews to have contact with each other.”

In France, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo and Joel Mergui, the president of the Union of Jewish Communities of France, announced the building of a new \$11 million Jewish cultural institution. The European Centre for Judaism will be built in the 17th arrondissement in northern Paris and is set to open in 2017. It will serve as an academic centre as well as a cultural institution, and will include a synagogue, conference halls, and exhibition space and offices. Just over a quarter of the estimated cost will be paid in subsidies by government offices, and the City of Paris will lease the land free of charge. President Hollande said that the centre is “the best answer for those who think that the future of the Jews of France is elsewhere. French Jews deserve to live here, to stay here and to be safe and secure.”

In Germany, the Berlin Jewish community announced that it will not be holding its Jewish Culture Days festival for the first time in 29 years. The board of directors said it decided not to ask for an

annual state subsidy of €255,000 to cover the ten-day festival out of sympathy for the “difficult financial situation of the state of Berlin.” However representatives of the Berlin State Senate, which allocates the funding and had promoted this year’s festival on its website, said they were surprised and sorry to hear the news. A spokesman said “we regret the Jewish community’s decision very much. The Senate has always been happy to support the festival and would have done it this year, too.” Some members of the community are discussing possible alternatives.

In Italy, a woman has been appointed to lead the Jewish community of Rome for the first time. Ruth Dureghello, who has managed a Jewish day school in the city for the past seven years, was named president at the first meeting of the new 27 member Rome community council.

In Spain, the Spanish parliament passed a law allowing descendants of Sephardi Jews expelled from the country in 1492 to seek Spanish nationality without giving up their current citizenship. Rafael Catala, Spain’s Justice Minister, said in parliament “today marks the end of the parliamentary process that, when it comes into force on October 1st 2015, will open the door again to the descendants of those who were unfairly expelled from Spain.” Isaac Qerub Caro, president of the Jewish Community in Spain said that “this is a historical, important and emotional day for the Sephardi world in general. A new era between the Jewish and the Hispanic world opens. Perhaps it was a bit delayed, perhaps 500 years late, but Spain came forth. A date with history.” However some Jewish leaders have complained that the requirements are too burdensome. Leon Amiras, head of an association of immigrants to Israel from Latin countries, said the length of the process and costs involved will deter most Sephardi Jews from applying. He said that “they will have to go through a Via Crucis, a bureaucratic hell, they will say they don’t want it. I am disappointed with the law.”

- [Beigel Awards for Tolerance presented in Lithuania](#) (Delfi by The Lithuanian Tribune, June 6, 2015)
- [Jewish leaders in Poland awarded national medals of honour](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 3, 2015)
- [Polish non-Jews honoured for Jewish heritage efforts](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 22, 2015)
- [EJC head Moshe Kantor honoured by France](#) (The Jerusalem Post, July 2, 2015)
- [Spanish village called ‘Camp Kill Jews’ officially changes name](#) (The Independent, June 23, 2015)
- [Chief Lithuanian rabbi opposes construction over ruined cemetery](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 5, 2015)
- [Jewish archives from Vilnius to be restored in New York](#) (Delfi by The Lithuanian Tribune, June 5, 2015)
- [In an Gesture of Unity, Muslims help Jews to Repair Damaged Synagogue](#) (World Religion News, June 1, 2015)
- [In Britain, Jewish and Muslim women connect over Mitzvah Day](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 16, 2015)
- [Manchester’s Muslim Jewish Forum celebrates its tenth anniversary](#) (Manchester Evening News, June 17, 2015)
- [In Paris, planned Jewish centre touted as proof community is here to stay](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 30, 2015)
- [Berlin Jews cancel culture festival, cite state’s fiscal woes](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 30, 2015)
- [Woman to head Rome Jewish community for first time](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 24, 2015)
- [Spain passes law awarding citizenship to descendants of expelled Jews](#) (The Guardian, June 11, 2015)

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The **Institute for Jewish Policy Research** (JPR) is a UK-based research unit, consultancy and think tank that specialises in contemporary Jewish issues. Formerly the Institute of Jewish Affairs, JPR has stood at the forefront of Jewish community research for several decades and is responsible for much of the data and analysis that exist on Jews in the UK and across Europe.

JPR's research and analysis offers detailed insights into a wide range of issues, including Jewish population size, geographical density, age and gender structure, education, charitable giving, volunteering, antisemitism, Jewish practice, religious outlook and communal participation. All of JPR's publications can be downloaded free of charge from our website: www.jpr.org.uk.

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