



EUROPEAN JEWISH DIGEST: LOOKING AT THE HEADLINES ACROSS JEWISH EUROPE

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1 / ISSUES CONCERNING ANTISEMITISM

Violence, Vandalism & Abuse

Instances of violence and abuse put France in the spotlight again this month. Towards the beginning of July, a Jewish boy in Paris was beaten and robbed outside his school. The National Bureau for Vigilance Against Antisemitism (BNVCA) said that six young men attacked the *kippah* wearing 13-year-old, shouting “take that, dirty Jew” whilst hitting him. The victim was taken to a hospital, where he was treated for head injuries and received stitches. A few days later, at least two assailants bound and held a Jewish family hostage in their home in Le Blanc-Mesnil about ten kilometres northeast of Paris. The assailants were clad in balaclavas and tied their victims’ hands and feet with wire and beat them. The family required hospitalisation after the attack with the daughter’s injuries described as “serious.” The family told police that the assailants were from a North African country, and that they stole the family’s car, €2,500 and the keys to their jewellery store. The assailants allegedly told the victims “you are Jewish, so you have money, which is why we decided to attack you.”

Later in the month, burglars wrote an antisemitic slogan on the wall of the home of a Jewish community leader. Using red lipstick the criminals scrawled “dirty Jews, long live Palestine” on the walls of the first-floor apartment in Bondy, in the north-eastern suburbs of Paris. After breaking a window to enter the apartment, the thieves left with jewellery worth \$10,000 and other valuables. Also in July, a Paris court imprisoned fourteen Islamists for planning jihadist attacks on French Jews and other targets. The harshest punishment, a nine-year prison term, was given to the leader of the banned terrorist group ‘Forsane Alizza.’ Among the group’s alleged targets were five Jewish supermarkets of the Hyper Cacher chain and several other Jewish businesses.

Figures released by the SPCJ, the security service of France’s Jewish communities, and the Interior Ministry, counted 508 antisemitic acts recorded between January and May, an increase of 84% compared to the same period of 2014 and 161% compared to 2013. “Violent actions” are up 59% compared to 2014 and by 124% compared to 2013. CRIF, the umbrella body representing Jewish organisations in France, said that “nothing seems to stop the dramatic increase of antisemitism in France which today has reached appalling levels,” and that these figures “represent only part of the reality of antisemitism on the ground.”

In Russia, Sergey Ustinov, a prominent member of the Russian Jewish Congress (RJC), was severely wounded in Moscow in what may have been an armed antisemitic attack. Ustinov, an RJC board member who in 2011 founded the Museum of the History of Jews in Russia, was shot by a lone assailant who then fled. In a statement, the RJC said that whilst it was too early to draw any firm conclusions about the motives “the demonstrative nature of the attack and its proximity to Jewish Museum, next to which it was committed, may indicate nationalist underpinnings.” They called on Russia’s Minister of Internal Affairs, Vladimir Kolokolov, to “give special attention to the investigation of the attack on one of the leading figures of the Jewish community in Russia.”

In Switzerland, an Orthodox Jewish man in Zurich was assaulted by a group of twenty men making the Hitler salute and shouting antisemitic slogans. Two leaders of the group spat in the victim's face and pushed him around before police, alerted by passers-by, intervened and told them to leave the victim alone. The unnamed victim was on his way home from a local synagogue when the attack happened.

In the Netherlands, more than 100 people chanted antisemitic slogans during riots that broke out in a predominantly-Muslim neighbourhood of The Hague over the slaying of a suspect by police. The chanting of "Jewish murderers" was heard in the Schilderswijk, a neighbourhood where a handful of Jews live in a Jewish-owned enclave surrounded by project apartments populated by low-income families.

In the UK, a neo-Nazi rally, which was originally planned for the densely Jewish-populated London suburb of Golders Green, took place in Westminster. The twenty neo-Nazi demonstrators who turned up were challenged by hundreds of anti-fascist counter-protesters whose chants drowned out speeches made by the neo-Nazis from behind police lines. In Liverpool, more than 2,100 people have signed a petition asking the police to protect the Jewish community from a neo-Nazi rally due to take place in the city centre in August.

Later in the month, antisemitic graffiti was sprayed on walls in Stamford Hill, another London neighbourhood home to a large population of *haredi* Jews. According to the Campaign Against Antisemitism, the graffiti was in Polish and included a Star of David. The letters "RTS," a reference to football club RTS Widzew Łódź SA, and the words "Zydzew Zdychaj" also appeared. "Zydzew" is a combination of the name of the club with the Polish word for Jew and "Zdychaj" means dies. Nearby, a 21-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of a racially aggravated assault on an Orthodox Jewish man outside a synagogue. According to police he was attacked and antisemitic remarks were made towards him, but he was not injured.

Incidents related to football once again reached the press in July. In Bulgaria, fans attacked players and coaches from the Israeli team Ashdod during an exhibition match in Sofia. Players were chased to the empty stands and then out of the stadium after fans ran on the field throwing bottles and attacking the players. Antisemitic epithets were allegedly shouted at Israeli players during the game. The Ashdod coach Eyal Lahman was hit in the face with a broken bottle and some players reportedly received light injuries as well. In Croatia, the national football team has been docked a point after a swastika was displayed on the pitch before a European Championship qualifier in June. UEFA also fined Croatia €100,000 and ordered the team to play their remaining home game without any fans present. The penalty is thought to be the most serious ever imposed by UEFA. In the Netherlands, Utrecht football club have been ordered to play their next home match against Ajax Amsterdam with one empty stand after their fans were found guilty of singing antisemitic chants in April. The Dutch FA also announced that Utrecht will be fined €10,000. In Russia, the woman crowned 'Miss Charming' in a beauty pageant held by Russia's football Premier League has been stripped of the title over alleged neo-Nazism, racism and antisemitism. Olga Kuzkova, nominated by CSKA Moscow, was found to have posted on social media websites pictures showing her giving a Nazi salute in front of neo-Nazi graffiti. One photo on her social media profile showed a woman in a French maid costume standing smiling in front of two fiery ovens and was captioned with text calling for the burning of Jews and people from the Caucasus. According to press reports, her page was littered with posts containing white supremacist views.

In Germany, a few incidents of antisemitism occurred whilst the European Maccabi Games were taking place in Berlin. In the district of Neukölln, two youths mocked six Jewish men with antisemitic insults and tossed an object at the group, according to police. The attackers who fled are being sought for alleged attempted assault and hate crimes. In another incident, police arrested "a man with an Arab background" for yelling antisemitic insults at two security guards at the Hotel Estrel, where 2,000

people and athletes associated with the European Maccabi Games are staying. Also antisemitic slogans were found scrawled on a section of the former Berlin Wall. The graffiti was written on the city's iconic East Side Gallery on a mural that depicted a painting of the Israeli flag superimposed over a German flag.

In Cyprus, a Hezbollah operative was sentenced to six years in prison for planning to attack Jewish and Israeli targets with explosives. Hussein Bassam Abdallah, a dual Lebanese-Canadian citizen, told police that he planned to use fertilizer in a bombing attack on Jewish and Israeli targets on the island.

In July, Twitter unveiled a new 'safety centre' to help users report antisemitic tweets. The new service will help users keep accounts secure, control what others can see and report tweets that violate Twitter's rules.

- [Jewish boy beaten and robbed in Paris antisemitic attack](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 10, 2015)
- [Report: Assailants Hold French Jewish Family Hostage at Home, Beat Victims](#) (The Algemeiner, July 15, 2015)
- [Robbers leave pro-Palestine expletive at French Jewish leader's home](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 31, 2015)
- [14 French Islamists sentenced for targeting kosher shops](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 10, 2015)
- [CRIF: 'Antisemitism in France reaches appalling levels', 84% increase in antisemitic acts since January](#) (European Jewish Press, July 13, 2015)
- [Jewish Leader Calls for Urgent Online Campaign to Combat Antisemitism in France](#) (The Algemeiner, July 13, 2015)
- [Prominent Russian Jew shot near Moscow Jewish museum](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 17, 2015)
- [Neo-Nazis attack Orthodox Jewish man on Zurich street](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 30, 2015)
- [Rioters chant against 'Jewish murderers' in Muslim Dutch neighbourhood](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 3, 2015)
- [Neo-Nazis outnumbered by counter-protesters at central London rally](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, July 4, 2015)
- [London antisemitism: Racist graffiti daubed near UK's Orthodox Jewish capital Stamford Hill](#) (International Business Times, July 15, 2015)
- [Liverpool Jews ask police for protection as extremists plan rally](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, July 29, 2015)
- [Man arrested for assault outside shul and antisemitic slurs](#) (Jewish News, July 31, 2015)
- [Bulgarian soccer fans attack Israeli players during match](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 3, 2015)
- [Croatia deducted Euro 2016 point for pitch swastika](#) (BBC News, July 23, 2015)
- [Belgian Soccer Team Faces Punishment Over Fans' Antisemitism](#) (Arutz Sheva, July 22, 2015)
- [Utrecht punished by FA over Ajax antisemitic chants](#) (SBS, July 11, 2015)
- [Woman crowned 'Miss Charming' by Russian football league stripped of title for neo-Nazism](#) (The Independent, July 22, 2015)
- [Euro Maccabi games marred by antisemitism in Berlin](#) (The Jerusalem Post, August 1, 2018)
- [Mural on remnants of Berlin Wall hit with antisemitic graffiti](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 3, 2015)
- [Hezbollah operative planning attacks on Jewish targets sentenced in Cyprus](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 1, 2015)

- [Twitter unveils new 'safety centre' to help report antisemitism online](#) (Jewish News, July 21, 2015)

Politics

In the UK, Prime Minister David Cameron made a landmark speech in which he pledged to tackle antisemitism as a vital first stage of the government's five year strategy to defeat Islamist extremism. He said "ideas also based on conspiracy that Jews exercise malevolent power or that Western powers, in concert with Israel, are deliberately humiliating Muslims, because they aim to destroy Islam, are to be challenged." He added that as well as terrorists, the UK would target those with an extremist ideology, but who do not advocate violence, using as an example "those who condemn bomb attacks in London, but say bombs in Israel are a different matter." World Jewish Congress (WJC) President Ronald S. Lauder hailed Prime Minister Cameron for his proposal to counter the growth of antisemitic conspiracy theories and rhetoric, saying "we congratulate Prime Minister Cameron for his strong stand against antisemitism and Muslim fanaticism. The resurgence of antisemitism and the spread of Islamic extremism across Europe is particularly troubling and Mr. Cameron's plan takes a vital step toward combating these destructive forces."

In France, far-right French politician Jean-Marie Le Pen will appear in court following comments made in April in which he repeated that "gas chambers were a detail" of World War II. It is thought he will be charged with denying crimes against humanity. The date of his appearance before a Paris court has not yet been set.

In Brussels, more than thirty members of the European Parliament supported the appeal by the European Jewish Association (EJA) to the European Commission to establish an EU Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism. In a letter written by the MEPS to Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the European Commission, they wrote that "we feel duty-bound to speak out against the threat to our European values of tolerance and respect for all nations, ethnicities and religious denominations which a form part of our common society... In the name of the values which we were elected to uphold, we willingly add our name to the EJA calls to the European Commission to create a full-time Special Envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism, because, as you yourself, First Vice-President Frans Timmermans, said 'if there is no future for Jews in Europe, there is no future for Europe.'"

In Russia, a district court judge from the Udmurt Republic was dismissed from his job for posting an antisemitic remark on Facebook two years ago. Ivan Orsinin posted a picture of a burning mosque with the caption "you can look endlessly at three things: flowing water, sparkling stars and a burning mosque." In a comment below the picture, the judge added "and the Jews burning." Following an investigation from Russia's General Security Service, Judge Orsinin expressed regret for his actions. Prosecutors decided not to indict Orsinin because of his apology, but he was still forced to step down as a judge for Udmurtia's district court.

In Ukraine, an antisemitic demonstration was held outside of the regional administration building in Lviv with an estimated 100 to 150 protesters. Some of the placards held by the demonstrators featured antisemitic slogans aimed at the administration of President Petro Poroshenko. One of the placards had printed the assumed 'authentic' Jewish names of a dozen of Ukraine's political leaders and another accused the "Jewish fraternity of selling off Ukraine" and cautioned against "Jews in power." However, it is being assumed by many that this was a fake demonstration used as the latest attempt to "weaponise accusations of antisemitism in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine." Aleksander Suslenskyi, president of the Ukrainian Jewish Council, believed it to be a Russian sponsored attempt at the potential destabilisation of mainstream pro-Ukrainian political parties. Many in Lviv's

political establishment also reacted strongly against the demonstration, claiming it was outsiders fabricating claims of antisemitism. Oleh Bereziuk, a Member of Parliament, said “this was an absolute provocation as these same people a week ago also held a similarly paid up meeting here. Yesterday that situation was repeated. We know these people, whether they are from Lviv or from elsewhere or whether they know what they are doing. They are most likely manipulated by someone who wants to destabilise Western Ukraine.”

In Germany, the newly renovated museum in Bayreuth devoted to Richard Wagner addresses his antisemitism and his family’s ties to Hitler for the first time. Opened originally in 1976, the museum includes Wagner’s home and the home of his son, and now displays his antisemitic essays on video monitors. There also is a temporary exhibition showing the Wagner family’s Nazi ties.

- [David Cameron: We can’t fight the Islamist threat until we’ve tackled Jew-hate](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, July 23, 2015)
- [Jean-Marie Le Pen must stand trial for gas chamber description](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 26, 2015)
- [More than 30 MEPs support EJA’s appeal to establish an EU Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism](#) (European Jewish Press, July 22, 2015)
- [Russian Judge Dismissed for Antisemitic Post](#) (Arutz Sheva, July 23, 2015)
- [In Lviv, a Dubious Antisemitic Demonstration](#) (Tablet Magazine, July 27, 2015)
- [Wagner Museum Takes Hard Look at Composer's Nazi Ties](#) (The Forward, July 25, 2015)

Spotlight on the British Jewish Community

At the beginning of the month, the London Metropolitan Police reported a large surge in hate crimes against London’s Jewish and Muslim communities. The police said that total number of racist and religious hate crimes across London rose by almost 28% in 2014, from 9,965 reported incidents to 12,749. Antisemitic crimes were up 138% from 208 to 495, with the boroughs of Brent and Hackney experiencing the biggest increases. Mark Gardner, spokesman for the Community Security Trust, said “these figures will come no surprise to London’s Jewish community, especially with the surge in attacks we witnessed during Israel’s Operation Protective Shield. We need to find a way of preventing conflicts overseas from spilling over into our diverse communities.”

A few days later, the Greater Manchester Police urged members of the Jewish community to report any hate crime. This call followed a survey carried out by AntiSemitismWatch.com which claimed that the majority of antisemitic hate crimes and incidents towards Strictly Orthodox Jews are never reported. Greater Manchester Police assistant chief constable Garry Shewan said tackling “this form of abhorrent abuse” was a priority for the force. He added that “the under-reporting of antisemitic incidents and crimes is a problem we have been aware of for some time, and we have been working very hard to address it... Just as importantly, we know that people’s perceptions of antisemitism are that it is escalating. I have said many times that hate crimes threaten community cohesion and the only way to defeat antisemitism if it is reported to us. We can’t take action if we don’t know what is happening.”

Towards the end of the month, the Community Security Trust (CST) issued figures demonstrating that the number of antisemitic incidents in the UK reported to the organisation had increased by more than 50%. There were 473 recorded antisemitic incidents between January and June 2015, a 53% rise from the equivalent period in 2014. The CST said the main explanation for the rise was a greater willingness to report incidents. David Delew, CST Chief Executive, said “the terrorist attacks on European Jews earlier this year, following the high levels of antisemitism in 2014, were a difficult and

unsettling experience for our Jewish community. We welcome the apparent increase in reporting of antisemitic incidents, but regret the concern and anxiety about antisemitism that this reflects.”

- [Met Police: London Sees 138% Increase in Antisemitic Incidents](#) (JP Updates, July 2, 2015)
- [Greater Manchester Police plea to Manchester's Jewish community to report hate crimes in the region](#) (Manchester Evening News, July 6, 2015)
- [Poll: Haredi Communities in London See Biggest Increase in Antisemitic Attacks](#) (JP Updates, July 5, 2015)
- [Sharp rise in antisemitic incidents in UK, figures suggest](#) (BBC News, July 30, 2015)
- [‘Vile and unacceptable’: Jews face 38% rise in antisemitic attacks across Manchester](#) (Mancunian Matters, July 30, 2015)
- [Paris attack fuelled increase in reporting of hate crimes in UK, says CST](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, July 30, 2015)

2 / REVISITING HOLOCAUST ISSUES

There were many Holocaust-related issues reported in July, particularly concerning memorials. In Ukraine, the American Jewish Committee, together with hundreds of Ukrainians, took part in three days of ceremonies marking new memorials for sites of mass graves. The ‘Protecting Memory’ project seeks to raise awareness about thousands of forgotten and neglected mass graves of Holocaust victims. Diplomats, politicians, historians, clergy, Jewish community leaders, journalists and families of survivors attended the ceremonies.

In Poland, representatives of the Jewish community and local residents attended a ceremony in Jedwabne to remember the hundreds of Jews who were killed by local neighbours in July 1941. Anna Azari, Israel’s ambassador to Poland, said at the commemoration “I’m lucky to meet in Poland very good people, the righteous and those who do a lot for Jewish history and culture. We need to look in the mirror of history and remember what is good and what is bad. Some say that the book by Jan Tomasz Gross, ‘Neighbours,’ or movies such as ‘Ida’ and ‘Aftermath’ are bad for the image of Poland. I think that it is not true. Authors like them are an honour for good and democratic Poland.”

Also in Poland, officials registered a rare hideout used by Jews during the Holocaust as a national monument. The hideout in Rekowka, a village ninety miles south of Warsaw, was used by two non-Jewish families, the Skoczylas and Kosioróws, for sheltering several Jews in 1942. The underground hideout, which is connected by a trapdoor to the house that the two families shared, was home to six Jews, who were absent when German troops showed up at the house in 1942 to search the premises. Upon discovering the trapdoor and finding a book written in Yiddish, the Nazis rounded up ten members of the two families, including children, took them to a barn, locked them inside and set fire to it, shooting a child who managed to escape. Only four survived, and they sealed the hideout and left it untouched for 72 years.

In Germany, the Munich City Council voted to keep the ban on the Stumbling Blocks memorials (Stolpersteine), ignoring a petition signed by 100,000 people calling for a lifting of the prohibition. Some local Jewish groups have joined the council in opposing the memorials, which are set into the street, saying they are disrespectful because they can be stepped on. The council voted to allow plaques to be hung on the walls of houses where Holocaust victims once lived and is planning to create a city monument with the names of Munich victims.

In Lithuania, a radar survey has found that significant pieces of Vilnius' largest synagogue, which was damaged by the Nazis and destroyed by the Soviets, still exist but are buried underground. The survey will help guide an archaeological excavation of the Great Synagogue due to take place in 2016.

In Germany, in what may be the last Nazi war crimes trial, Oskar Gröning, a 94-year-old former SS guard, known as the book-keeper of Auschwitz, was sentenced to four years in prison for his role at the camp. Gröning was found guilty of aiding and abetting the murder of 300,000 Jews from Hungary in 1944. Franz Kompisch, the judge, said that he was a "cog in the machine of mass extermination." On the same day Gröning was sentenced, Germany charged a 92-year-old man who served as a guard at Auschwitz with complicity in murder.

At the end of the month, German prosecutors abandoned their Nazi war crimes investigation of a retired Minnesota carpenter whom the Associated Press exposed as a former commander in an SS-led unit, saying that the 96-year-old is not fit for trial. Peter Preuss, the Munich prosecutor, said that Michael Karkoc's attorney had refused to allow him to be examined by a medical expert from Germany, and that his office's decision was instead based on "comprehensive medical documentation" from doctors at the geriatric hospital in the US where he is being treated.

In Denmark, Efraim Zuroff, Israel director of the Wiesenthal Centre, has called on the Danish government to arrest 90-year-old suspected war criminal Helmuth Leif Rasmussen. Zuroff called for his arrest after finding a book which claimed that Rasmussen was in the "inner circle" of an SS group running a death camp in Belarus.

In France, the German ambassador awarded Nazi-hunting couple, Beate and Serge Klarsfeld, the Federal Order of Merit at the German Embassy in Paris. Ambassador Susanne Wasum-Rainer praised their "courageous" work in hunting former Nazi officials who had either gone into hiding or even continued to work in public life after World War II. She said that "their extraordinary dedication spanning over decades has been extremely valuable for Germany, for its standing in the world and for German-French relations."

In Romania, President Klaus Iohannis signed a new law that punishes Holocaust denial and the promotion of the fascist Legionnaires' Movement with prison sentences of up to three years. Ronald Lauder, President of the World Jewish Congress congratulated Iohannis "for his strong stand against fascism, antisemitism and racism." He added that "only by fighting Holocaust denial and fascism at the highest levels can a nation effectively counter the troubling spread of antisemitism across Europe." Romania already had a law prohibiting Holocaust denial, dating from 2002. However, far-right elements interpreted the 2002 law as relating only to actions in Germany, so the new law was drafted with a wider scope.

In France, the University of Strasbourg handed over to the city's Jewish community the remains of Holocaust victims that had been preserved as anatomy specimens. The remains were discovered in July at the university's Institute of Forensic Medicine by historian Raphael Toledano. This followed years of research and denials of their existence by the university's administration. The remains are to be buried at the Cronenbourg Jewish cemetery.

In Poland, fragments of about 100 tombstones from a Jewish cemetery destroyed by the Nazis were removed from a river in Poland. The fragments were found in the Warta River by a team of archaeologists from the University of Lodz and will be cleaned and catalogued. In Warsaw, Jewish leaders honoured nearly fifty elderly Christian Poles who saved Jews during World War II. The oldest rescuer was 100 years-old, and others were in their 80s and 90s, some in wheelchairs or on crutches. At a lunch organised in their honour, the rescuers were praised as heroes.

In Ukraine, President Petro Poroshenko praised the actions of Andrey Sheptytsky, a priest who saved Jews during the Holocaust, but who has not been recognised in Israel because of his apparent sympathy for Nazi Germany. Poroshenko spoke in favour of Sheptytsky at the unveiling day of a monument in the priest's honour in Lviv. Sheptytsky and his brother, Clement, hid Jews in monasteries and organised groups to aid them in escaping to Hungary. Clement was recognised as a Righteous Among the Nations by the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum in 1995. However, the museum denied requests to give his brother the same distinction due to his initial support of Nazi soldiers, whom he welcomed into present-day Ukraine during their invasion, and due to his support for the UPA militia, whose troops carried out massacres of Jews.

In Austria, a cemetery plot owner in Linz has been told to remove Nazi symbols from two tombstones after complaints from visitors. The graves of SS second lieutenant Gisbert Katzwendel, and a clerical worker for the Nazi party, Friedrich Katzwendel, have SS runes carved into their tombstones. Under an Austrian law enacted in 1947, Nazi regalia and symbols may not be publicly displayed. Robert Eiter, spokesman for the Upper Austrian network against right-wing extremism said "these runes are Nazi symbols and therefore forbidden by law." He added that it was "incomprehensible that the grave owners had not had them removed, and the cemetery administration should not have ignored this. We're now demanding that they be removed as soon as possible." Karin Weilguny, head of the cemeteries and burials department in Linz, said that the city's legal team has written to the owner of the plot, requesting that the banned symbols be removed by no later than July 27.

In the Netherlands, a builder in the village of Bilthoven uncovered a desperate message left by a Jewish couple hiding from the Nazis during the Holocaust. The hidden note was discovered scrawled on the wall after wooden panels were taken off a bathroom door in a house in the village. The message, written in Dutch, said "Look on the roof and find my last personal things and try after the war to find family of ours. Give them my things and you will become something. Oh God of Israel, have mercy on your humiliated brothers. Signed, Levie Sajet, born on 1-8-1881 in Nijmegen, and his housewife, Ester Zilberstein, born in Stettin on 28-7-1899." Jelle Kapitein, the builder who discovered the message, is now trying to find any relatives of the Dutch couple with the help of museums and archives including Yad Vashem.

Also in the Netherlands, lawmakers have called on the government to spare six Holocaust survivors whose assistance would be slashed by cutbacks. It was reported in July that the survivors were among approximately 2,000 elderly and disabled people whose eligibility for care at government-funded facilities has been revoked. Instead, they were offered a plan that gives financial compensation to relatives willing to step in and act as caretakers. However, these survivors have almost no family. Politicians from the ruling VVD party, as well as opposition lawmakers from the Christian Democratic Appeal and GreenLeft, have called on the government not to change the survivors' aid package.

Sir Nicholas Winton, the British rescuer who saved hundreds of children from Nazi persecution during the Second World War, has died at the age of 106. Thought of as the 'British Schindler,' Sir Nicholas was responsible for rescuing 669 Czech-Jewish children at the outbreak of the war in 1939, and organising for British families to take them in instead of letting them be sent to concentration camps. Home Secretary Theresa May called Sir Nicholas "a hero of the 20th century," and Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis said "Sir Nicholas Winton was one of the greatest people I have ever met – his loss will be deeply felt across the Jewish world." In 2003 Winton was knighted by the Queen, and in 2014 he was awarded the Order of the White Lion, the Czech Republic's highest honour, from President Milos Zeman at a ceremony at Prague Castle. In Prague, mayoral candidate and politician Jan Cizinsky has requested the Czech government change the name of the city's main railway station in honour of Winton.

- [AJC Concludes Dedication of Holocaust Memorials in Western Ukraine](#) (AJC Berlin, July 3, 2015)
- [Polish pogrom marked at site of '41 massacre](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 12, 2015)
- [Basement used to hide Jews during Holocaust is listed as heritage site](#) (Jewish News, July 10, 2015)
- [Munich upholds ban on Holocaust street memorials](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 29, 2015)
- [Radar survey uncovers Great Synagogue of Vilna remains](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 29, 2015)
- ['Auschwitz book-keeper' Oskar Groening sentenced to four years](#) (BBC News, July 15, 2015)
- [Germany charges another Auschwitz guard, 92, with murder](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 16, 2015)
- [96-year-old former Nazi deemed unfit to stand trial](#) (World Jewish Congress, July 31, 2015)
- [Nazi-hunter calls for arrest of Danish 90-year-old who was 'SS member'](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, July 22, 2015)
- [Germany honours Nazi-hunter couple Beate and Serge Klarsfeld](#) (Deutsche Well, July 20, 2015)
- [Why Romania had to ban Holocaust denial twice](#) (The Washington Post, July 27, 2015)
- [Nazi victims' remains found at French institute](#) (The Local, July 19, 2015)
- [Fragments of Jewish tombstones removed from Polish river](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 7, 2015)
- [Christian Polish 'heroes' honoured for rescuing Jews during Shoah](#) (The Times of Israel, July 12, 2015)
- [Ukraine president honours priest with checkered Holocaust-era record](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 1, 2015)
- [Nazi symbols 'must be removed from graves'](#) (The Local, July 16, 2015)
- ['Oh God of Israel, have mercy on your humiliated brothers': Desperate message left by Jews forced out of their Netherlands home during the Holocaust is discovered scrawled on back of bathroom door 73 years later by builder](#) (Mail Online, July 17, 2015)
- [Dutch lawmakers oppose slashing aid to Holocaust survivors](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 3, 2015)
- [Nicholas Winton, Rescuer of 669 Children From Holocaust, Dies at 106](#) (New York Times, July 1, 2015)
- [Holocaust hero Sir Nicholas Winton dies aged 106](#) (The Jewish Chronicle, July 1, 2015)
- [Prague rail station 'to be re-named after British Schindler' who saved 700 Jewish children](#) (Daily Express, July 7, 2015)

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

Seventy years after the end of the Holocaust, the European Maccabi Games were held in Berlin in stadia built by the Nazis for the 1936 Olympics. More than 2,000 Jewish athletes from 36 countries took part in the competitions. At the opening ceremony German President Joachim Gauck said "I'm glad and I think it is significant that you chose this place, and I am very moved that this country and this city will now see the Jewish games." Minister of Justice Heiko Maas said "I think it's great that the Jewish community in Germany is growing and Jewish life has become so vibrant here again. It's not something we could possibly have ever hoped for after World War Two and the Holocaust. I see this as a stroke of good fortune and gift for our country that we didn't deserve." Ronald S. Lauder, President of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) told athletes "here we are, seventy years since the concentration camps were liberated and the true horror of the Nazis was realised, at the stadium Hitler built, to celebrate the Jewish European Maccabi Games. For those who say this is not the right place to hold these games, I say, to the contrary, this is exactly where these games should be held. This place, this stadium, is where these games should be held. It is said that the best way to overcome

a terrible event is to go back to where it happened, to show yourself that you can return, and to prove to everyone that you can endure and move on.”

Also in Germany, Munich’s Jewish community celebrated the 200th anniversary of its foundation in a ceremony attended by leading politicians, businessmen and celebrities. The Jewish Community of Munich and Upper Bavaria has nearly 10,000 members, making it one of the largest in Germany.

Two annual major Jewish events were highlighted in the press in July. In Hungary, the annual Szarvas summer camp was attended by over 1,700 Jewish youths. The summer camp was created twenty-five years ago by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation and now boasts over 20,000 alumni. In Poland, the 25th Jewish Culture Festival took place in Kraków. The festival takes over the Jewish quarter in Kazimierz and runs over 300 events, including concerts, lectures, workshops, exhibitions, guided tours and film screenings, led by artists and speakers from countries including Israel, the US, Hungary, Germany, Austria and Poland.

Two Jewish communities were reported to be suffering from severe financial crises. In Ukraine, the impact of the conflict in the east has had a major impact on local Jewish charitable giving and caused a return to reliance on foreign assistance from Western Jewish communities. Yaakov Dov Bleich, a chief rabbi of Ukraine, said that before the 2013-14 revolution and the onset of the conflict with Russia “Ukrainian Jewish communities had moved to a situation where forty to sixty percent of their budgets are raised locally.” However he added that the war “wiped out this local donor base, making Ukrainian Jewry once more dependent on charity raised abroad.”

In Greece, due to the economic crisis, the Jewish community of about 5,000 is now grappling with two major concerns – how to provide emergency assistance to Jews in need and how to ensure that Jewish institutions can continue to function. Among those particularly hard hit are the poor and elderly members of the Jewish community, including many Holocaust survivors. A number of them do not have bank cards, so are unable to access their pensions or Holocaust restitution payments.

In the UK, Leicester Hebrew Congregation received an initial grant of £81,700 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for its ‘Sharing Jewish Heritage’ project. The £1.2m project aims to celebrate Leicester’s rich Jewish heritage by turning some of the rooms in the synagogue into a visitors’ centre. The synagogue and *mikveh* will be opened up, and the restored spaces will support activities including hands-on sessions for schools, family activities and heritage days. In London, a theatre group of Jews and Muslims celebrated its tenth anniversary by performing its first major stage production. The MUJU Crew, which aims to bring Muslims and Jews together through a shared passion for creating art, performed a new comedy show called ‘Come In! Sit Down!’ which features a security check-point at Brent Cross shopping centre and terrorists being de-radicalised through yoga. Also in the UK, Jewish communal leaders welcomed the High Court ruling that people who have a faith-based objection to invasive autopsies can request that CT scans be used to determine the cause of death instead. Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis said it was a very significant development “which will give heart to numerous Jews and Muslims for whom the fastest possible burial of a loved one, not subject to an invasive autopsy, is of great importance.” Rabbi Asher Gratt, spokesman for the strictly Orthodox Adath Yisroel Burial Society, said “people in our community, who until now have been living in fear, can, as a result of this landmark ruling, breathe a sigh of relief. Justice has prevailed.”

In France, at least five Jewish high schools achieved a 100% pass rate in this year’s matriculation exam. The schools belong to the ORT Jewish educational network of schools, Chabad-Lubavitch and Alliance. The national pass rate was 91.5%. As a whole, the ORT network, which has six schools across France, had a pass rate of 92%. Its two schools with a perfect score are in Villiers-le-Bel near Paris and in Toulouse. The Chabad-affiliated Ozar Hatorah network, which has six schools in the Paris region, had a 98% pass rate.

In the Czech Republic, the Jewish Museum in Prague has launched a new permanent exhibition in the historic Maisel Synagogue. The exhibition, which opened after a year-long renovation of the synagogue, focuses on the history of the Jewish people in Bohemia and Moravia. It also features an aerial projection of the former Prague Jewish quarter, which was largely destroyed in the late nineteenth century.

In Lithuania, the excavation of a mass grave of Holocaust victims in Lithuania was halted following an appeal by the Jewish community and the Chief Rabbi. Rabbi Chaim Burshtein had issued a statement calling for a halt to the removal of the bones in the mass grave discovered during road construction work in Siauliai. Martynas Siurkus, a municipal official in Siauliai, announced that the work would be halted “until the appropriate respect is guaranteed for the human remains of the people murdered and buried in the mass grave.” Faina Kukliansky, Chair of the Jewish Community praised the municipal government for its cooperation with the Jewish community and for “responding quickly and helping solve the problem.”

In the Netherlands, the Chief Rabbi of Amsterdam announced that he will resign in September. Rabbi Aryeh Rabbag cited his “inability to combine other work in the United States and Israel with tasks in Amsterdam.”

In Rome, the Vatican Museum opened an exhibit dedicated to the strong relationship between Pope John Paul II and the Jewish community. The exhibit, called “A Blessing to One Another: Pope John Paul II and the Jewish People,” featured photos, video footage, documents and artefacts. The exhibit was presented originally in 2005 as a gift to John Paul II for his 85th birthday, and was dedicated to his contribution to inter-religious dialogue.

- [Jewish Games to be held at site of ‘Nazi Olympics’](#) (The Local, July 26, 2015)
- [German President and Justice Minister welcome Jewish Maccabi Games to Berlin](#) (Deutsche Welle, July 29, 2015)
- [German President Joachim Gauck opens the European Maccabi Games in Berlin: ‘I am very moved that this country and this city now see the Jewish games’](#) (European Jewish Press, July 30, 2015)
- [Munich’s Jewish community celebrates its 200th anniversary](#) (World Jewish Congress, July 17, 2015)
- [Building Europe’s Jewish future at summer camp](#) (Fox News, July 15, 2015)
- [25th Jewish Culture Festival celebrates Jewish quarters around the world](#) (Krakow Post, June 28, 2015)
- [Ukraine fiscal crisis leads to major setback for homegrown Jewish philanthropy](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 29, 2015)
- [Amid their country’s financial crisis, Greek Jews struggle and brace for more turmoil](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 6, 2015)
- [Leicester Synagogue given Lottery funding for Jewish heritage project](#) (Leicester Mercury, July 3, 2015)
- [Jewish-Muslim theatre group celebrate 10-years with first major stage production](#) (Jewish News, July 15, 2015)
- [UK Jewish community expresses relief as High Court orders end to invasive autopsies](#) (The Jerusalem Post, August 3, 2015)
- [French Jewish schools shine on matriculation exams](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 17, 2015)
- [Prague’s Jewish museum launches new permanent exhibit](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 1, 2015)

- [Excavation of WWII mass grave in Lithuania halted over Jewish concerns](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 16, 2015)
- [Amsterdam chief rabbi to resign](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, July 1, 2015)
- [Vatican Exhibition Celebrates John Paul II's Outreach to Jews](#) (The Jewish Press.com, July 30, 2015)

/ ABOUT JPR

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

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

/ ABOUT THE EUROPEAN JEWISH DIGEST

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