

1 / Issues concerning antisemitism

Violence, vandalism and abuse

Incidents of violence, vandalism and abuse were again reported in the media in October. In France, a Jewish university director, who, earlier this year was subjected to an antisemitic campaign of intimidation, was assaulted outside his Paris home. Samuel Mayol, director of the Technical University Institution, was attacked while walking his dog in Saint-Denis. The attacker smashed his head against a wall three times, causing concussion and multiple lacerations. In Marseilles, a rabbi and his son were attacked outside Minhat Chalom synagogue. Farid Adouche, an Arab-Frenchman, assaulted Rabbi Acher Amoyal and his 19-year-

old son after stabbing another congregant in the abdomen. Countering some incorrect media reports, the rabbi said “because my son and I have beards and wear hats, we were attacked.” The rabbi added that the words Adouche uttered were not clear but resembled “Allahu Akbar.” He also said that despite being attacked next to a cafe, none of the patrons made any move to help. Farid Adouche was arrested and charged with aggravated assault.

In October there was a spate of Jewish cemetery desecrations. In the Czech Republic, twenty tombstones were knocked over in the Jewish cemetery of Safov. However, the mayor of Safov, Milan Kubes, expressed doubt that this was motivated by antisemitism, saying that “I think it must have been done by some teenagers who did not realise what they were doing.” In Austria, both a Jewish and Muslim cemetery in Hohenems were desecrated with racist slogans and Nazi swastikas. Police have linked the incidents to xenophobic graffiti that appeared on eight buildings in the town earlier in October. Also in Hohenems several memorial cobblestones outside the former residences of Jewish Holocaust victims were removed from the old Jewish Quarter.

In Poland, residents of the village Głowaczów have reportedly been digging up graves in the Jewish cemetery looking for buried gold. Jonny Daniels, executive director of *From The Depths* organisation, confirmed that graves had been dug up, saying that “this horrific disregard for a place of Jewish burial is something that we plan to deal with strongly, [as] in Poland there are laws protecting sites of religious importance with jail sentences of up to seven years for desecrating such sites. If the local municipality isn’t able to help protect the final [resting] places of our loved ones, we will demand the Polish government do so.” Also in Poland, nine tombstones were damaged at the Jewish cemetery in Bielsko-Biala. This was the second attack on the cemetery in the last two months.

In Greece, the main Jewish cemetery in Athens was vandalised with a swastika sprayed on a wall as well as the words “F*** Jews” and the tag C-18. C-18 refers to Combat 18 Hellas, a small neo-Nazi group operating in Greece. The

/ ABOUT EUROPEAN JEWISH DIGEST

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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.

/ ABOUT JPR

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group claimed responsibility for what it called the “beautiful artistic intervention at the Jewish cemetery.” In a statement, the Central Board of Jewish Communities said that they express “the repudiation of Greek Jewry and condemn the vandalism of the Jewish cemetery of the Athens Jewish Community. The racists without any shame provoke with their announcement by saying that they will continue their barbaric actions We also expect the representatives of the State and Civil Society to prove in practice once again, that in our country racism and antisemitism are not tolerated.”

In the Netherlands, nine headstones were knocked down at the Jewish cemetery in Oud-Beijerland near Rotterdam. The vandals also appeared to have brought down blunt objects on some of the damaged headstones to cause further damage.

Football fans made the news in October. In the Netherlands, fans from the Vitesse club from Arnhem held up a sign during a match with Ajax with the initials of the phrase “Jews have cancer.” Club chairman Paul Koster said that they would have intervened to stop or punish the fans but “we unfortunately did not discover the sign until after the game.” It is believed that the abuse was aimed at legendary Dutch footballer Johan Cruyff, who had recently announced he has been diagnosed with lung cancer. Fans of Ajax are often called Jews because of the historical Jewish presence in Amsterdam. Vitesse added in a statement that “we will do our utmost to identify the perpetrators of this banner. We call on other supporters to help us identify that person because such behaviour is not appropriate for a club like Vitesse.” Fans of another Dutch club, Feyenoord, greeted Ajax’s team bus with antisemitic chants on arrival at the De Kuip in Rotterdam. The Ajax players were subjected to chants of ‘Gas the Jews olé olé’ and ‘Hamas, Hamas, gas the Jews’ by close to 2000 home supporters.

In the UK, police were looking for a group of West Ham fans who allegedly started singing antisemitic songs on a first-class train carriage. The men refused to stop their chanting even after being challenged by a fellow passenger. PC Michael Botterill of British Transport Police said that “this sort of casual racism has gone unchallenged for too long. We know the vast majority of football fans are decent people, but for those who continue

to make life unpleasant for the travelling public, our message is clear: we will not tolerate your yobbish behaviour.”

In Sweden, Isaac Bachman, Israel’s ambassador to Sweden posted on Facebook a video of hundreds of protesters in Malmö chanting in Arabic about slaughtering Jews and stabbing Israeli soldiers. At a pro-Palestinian rally chants of ‘slaughter the Jews, stab soldiers’ were heard. Bachman wrote that “these are extremely troubling instances of a grotesque but nevertheless very real – and murderous – incitement which must be dealt with by the full force of the law.”

A series of antisemitic incidents took place in the UK. At the Conservative Party conference in Manchester, a delegate said he was subjected to antisemitic abuse from protestors. Stephen Woods, chairman of the Conservative Sale East and Wythenshawe Association, said the abuse started as he left the centre with a group of Jewish friends who were wearing *kippot*. He added that the “abuse we had to endure was despicable, with a number of protestors screaming ‘Jewish Tory scum, get back to Auschwitz.’ I have never heard such vile language. The whole incident left us all shaken up.”

In South Tottenham, a man was arrested after shouting antisemitic abuse at Jewish pedestrians earlier in the month. According to Jewish volunteer neighbourhood watch group Shomrim “the suspect was shouting ‘kill the f***ing Jews’ amongst other abuse. The suspect was shouting the abuse at visibly Jewish pedestrians including women and children.” In Stamford Hill, a series of events took place over the course of one day. Firstly, some “young Asian men” shouted antisemitic abuse at a school bus driver with young children on board his bus. Soon after, a black man shouted “we need to kill all the Jews” at a Jewish man as he left a synagogue and proceeded to follow him and smash in the driver’s side window of his car. Following this incident, two women were verbally abused and threatened. Later in the month, antisemitic graffiti was found daubed on a building in Stamford Hill. The graffiti read “death to da Jew.”

Also in London, a teacher, Mahmudul Choudhury, aged 36, was banned from the classroom for life, by a panel ruling on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education, after being convicted of posting an

antisemitic message on social media. The ban came after Mr Choudhury was fined £465 for posting an image of Adolf Hitler on his Facebook page with the caption “I could have killed all the Jews but I left some of them to let you know why I was killing them.” Finally, a well-known nightclub in London was closed owing to a mass brawl sparked by antisemitic abuse. Kensington club Boujis was ordered to close its doors for two weekends after sixteen people were involved in a fight outside the venue. Mobile phone footage showed one person being thrown across the bonnet of a car as others traded punches. The images include the voice of one person shouting “f***ing Jews.”

Politics

Once again, some leading politicians and religious leaders have strongly expressed their condemnation of antisemitism. At the Vatican, Pope Francis and Jewish leaders celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* (Latin for “In Our Times”), a document that significantly altered the language and attitudes of the church toward Jews. It was written during the Second Vatican Council, adopted on October 28, 1965 and it updated the Church’s ideology and teachings about the Jews. It most significantly repudiated the charge that all Jews should be held responsible for the death of Jesus. The document further stated that “the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God,” and insisted that Christians should decry “hatred, persecutions, displays of antisemitism directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.” At the commemoration the Pope said that with the document “a real transformation has taken place in these fifty years in the relationship between Christians and Jews. From enemies and strangers, we have become friends.” Ronald Lauder, World Jewish Congress president, said that “what has happened since ‘Nostra Aetate’ is nothing short of a miracle. Relations between Catholics and Jews on many levels, not just the highest, are now better than ever.” In a private audience with Ronald Lauder, Pope Francis also said that an outright attack on the State of Israel is just as ‘antisemitic’ as attacks against Jews. He said that “to attack Jews is antisemitism, but an outright attack on the State of Israel is also antisemitism. There may be political disagreements between governments and on political issues, but the State of Israel has every right to exist in safety and prosperity.”

Violence, vandalism and abuse links

- / Jewish academic assaulted near Paris following antisemitic threats (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 12, 2015)
- / Arab-Frenchman who attacked Jews in Marseilles jailed (Telegraphic Agency, November 1, 2015)
- / Gravestones toppled at Czech Jewish cemetery (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 20, 2015)
- / Jewish, Muslim cemeteries vandalised in Austrian town (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 20, 2015)
- / Jewish cemetery in Poland dug up in quest for gold, says NGO (*The Jerusalem Post*, October 11, 2015)
- / Jewish cemetery vandalised in Poland for second time (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, November 2, 2015)
- / Athens Jewish cemetery vandalised, neo-Nazi group claims responsibility (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 22, 2015)
- / Dutch Jewish headstones knocked down (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 30, 2015)
- / Johan Cruyff victim of antisemitic abuse following lung cancer diagnosis (*International Business Times*, October 28, 2015)
- / Feyenoord supporters aim antisemitic chants at Ajax players (Goal.com, October 28, 2015)
- / West Ham fans ‘sang antisemitic songs’ while travelling first class on train (*Evening Standard*, October 12, 2015)
- / Protesters in Sweden chant ‘slaughter the Jews’ (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 20, 2015)
- / Jewish Tory delegate abused by protesters outside party conference (*The Jewish Chronicle*, October 8, 2015)
- / London: Antisemitism wave ends in window smashing (*Arutz Sheva News*, October 14, 2015)
- / Jewish man’s car window smashed in following antisemitic abuse (*Jewish News*, October 14, 2015)
- / Police investigating as “death to da Jew” daubed in Stamford Hill (*Jewish News*, October 27, 2015)
- / London teacher banned from classroom ‘indefinitely’ after antisemitic Facebook post (*The Jewish Chronicle*, October 19, 2015)
- / Mass brawl outside stars’ London nightclub ‘sparked by antisemitic abuse’ (*The Jewish Chronicle*, October 30, 2015)

In Poland, the Polish Episcopate declared that antisemitism is a sin and stressed the importance to the church of Catholic-Jewish dialogue. In a special pastoral letter entitled ‘*The shared spiritual heritage of Christians and Jews*,’ the Episcopate stressed that “antisemitism and anti-Judaism are sins against the love of thy neighbour.” It further added that the Church organises an annual ‘Day of Judaism,’

reasserting that “Christian-Jewish dialogue must never be treated as ‘the religious hobby’ of a small group of enthusiasts, but it should increasingly become part of the mainstream of pastoral work.” The letter also admitted that the Nazi genocide of Jews in Poland was “sometimes met with indifference among certain Christians” and that “if Christians and Jews had practised religious brotherhood in the past, more Jews would have found help and support from Christians.”

In France, the mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, became the first mayor in Europe to sign up to the American Jewish Committee’s initiative *Mayors United Against Antisemitism*, which calls on municipal leaders across Europe to publicly address and take concrete actions against rising antisemitism. Hidalgo said that “the City has a responsibility to fight antisemitism, otherwise it will develop in the midst of it. Paris, which is home to the biggest Jewish community of Europe, needs to be a pioneer in the fight against hate so that other cities can benefit from its expertise and commitment.”

In Germany, representatives of Chancellor Angela Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU) said in a meeting with the country’s top Jewish leaders that Muslim leaders in Germany must help fight antisemitism within their ranks. In a statement about the meeting, the CDU said that they made it clear that Muslim associations in Germany bear some responsibility for fighting antisemitism within the Muslim population. They also emphasised that “every form of antisemitism must be forcefully challenged. Israel’s right to exist is part of German identity.”

At a European Union colloquium on antisemitism and Islamophobia, Frans Timmermans, first vice-president of the European Commission, said that “the importance we attach to fighting antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred also means that we do not just want to listen to you and your concerns today... Antisemitism is not just terrible for the Jewish community, it is like a fever in an infected body; it points at a much wider problem. Antisemitism left unchallenged will create a much, much bigger problem in any society. That is what European history teaches us. So tackling antisemitism is an essential operation to save what we cherish in our society... I want to be in direct control of this. I will be your envoy if you want to call it that.”

In Austria, Freedom Party MP Susanne Winter was expelled from her party in response to her Facebook post in which she agreed with the comment “Zionist-money Jews are the global problem. Europe, and in particular Germany, are now getting what they deserve from Zionist Jews, particularly rich Zionist Jews in the USA, for the century-long persecution of Jews in Europe. According to the Zionists, Europe, particularly Germany, should be cut off as economic competitors to the US.” Her response to this post was: “It is great. You are taking the words right out of my mouth. There are a lot of things I am not allowed to write. Therefore I’m even more pleased about courageous, independent people.” Freedom Party General Secretary Herbert Kickl said in a statement that Winter’s post was “absolutely unacceptable” and that “the Freedom Party is no place for antisemitism.” Oskar German, president of the Austrian Jewish Community, called Winter “a disgrace to the Austrian Parliament.” She was expelled from the party after refusing to resign.

In Germany and the Netherlands, Jewish community leaders have expressed concern about antisemitism among refugees. In a meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Josef Schuster, President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, expressed his fears of an influx of Muslim refugees with antisemitic attitudes. He raised concern that many of those seeking asylum in Germany come from countries hostile to Israel, and might strengthen antisemitic views among the Arab community. He said that this concern is common among German Jews “and I share this feeling and therefore see a need to integrate the refugees in our community of values as soon as possible.” In the Netherlands, the Central Jewish Board (CJO) expressed “grave concern” over the housing of Syrians and Iraqis at a refugee centre in the heavily Jewish suburb of Amstelveen in Amsterdam. The CJO said in a statement that they had asked authorities to prepare a risk assessment for local Jews and questioned whether this issue was considered before the municipality decided to house refugees in the building. They added that while the Jewish groups it represents do not oppose the arrival of refugees, “at the same time, the groups are pointing out that the location selected, in the heart of Jewish infrastructure, is extremely unfortunate.”

In Greece, during a debate in parliament, Dimitris Giannakopoulos, president of the

Hellenic Association of Pharmaceutical Companies, warned that an upcoming bill to open up the country's drug market to cheaper generic drugs was the result of a conspiracy between Germany and Jewish groups. He added that 11,000 Greek jobs would be lost and claimed the measure was due to pressure from Jewish groups in order to benefit Israeli generic drug makers. Giannakopoulos said that "five years ago we said that Israeli companies are hiding behind all this. Whoever is familiar with the sector of medicines and has not yet understood that they are trying to favour the Israeli companies is either stupid or irrelevant, or manipulated." His accusation was repeated later by Nikos Nikolopoulos, a politician from the right-wing Independent Greek party, a member of the governing coalition. Anti-Defamation League Chief Executive Jonathan A. Greenblatt said he joins the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece in condemning such remarks, which "allude to antisemitic conspiracy theories that Jews benefit at the expense of others. Antisemitic statements in parliament and by Greek members of parliament must always be repudiated by Greek leaders if any progress is to be made against the prevalence of antisemitic attitudes in Greek society."

In the UK, Prime Minister David Cameron announced at the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester that Islamic religious schools (Madrasas) teaching children antisemitic beliefs will be investigated and closed down. In his speech Cameron unveiled plans to open religious schools to inspection. He said that "there is nothing wrong with children learning about their faith, whether it's at madrasas, Sunday schools or Jewish yeshivas. But in some madrasas we've got children being taught that they shouldn't mix with people of other religions; being beaten; swallowing conspiracy theories about Jewish people. These children should be having their minds opened, their horizons broadened, not having their heads filled with poison and their hearts filled with hate. So I can announce this today: If an institution is teaching children intensively, then whatever its religion, we will, like any other school, make it register so it can be inspected. And be in no doubt: if you are teaching intolerance, we will shut you down."

Politics links

- / Vatican marks historic end to official antisemitism (*Global Post*, October 28, 2015)
- / Pope Francis says 'attacks on Jews are antisemitic, as are attacks on Israel' (*Catholic Herald*, October 29, 2015)
- / As Vatican celebrates fifty years since *Nostra Aetate*, Polish Episcopate declares that antisemitism 'is a sin' (European Jewish Press, October 30, 2015)
- / Polish Episcopate condemns antisemitism as 'a sin' (Radio Poland, October 20, 2015)
- / Mayor of Paris joins AJC campaign against antisemitism (PR Newswire, October 7, 2015)
- / German officials: Muslim leaders must help fight antisemitism (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 28, 2015)
- / European Union steps up fight against growing hate against Jews and Muslims (World Jewish Congress, October 1, 2015)
- / Frans Timmermans: 'The fact that many Jews are leaving Europe is most alarming' (European Jewish Press, October 30, 2015)
- / FPÖ MP expelled for antisemitic remarks (*The Local*, November 2, 2015)
- / UK Jewish lawmaker blasted for 'Jewish money' quote (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 28, 2015)
- / German Jews to Merkel: Concerned over antisemitism among refugees (i24 News, October 4, 2015)
- / Dutch Jews express 'grave concern' over refugee centre in heavily Jewish town (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 14, 2015)
- / Greek drug firms' rep warns parliament of Jewish conspiracy (*The Times of Israel*, October 16, 2015)
- / Cameron vows to investigate Islamic schools teaching antisemitism (*Jewish News*, October 7, 2015)

2 / Revisiting Holocaust issues

In the Czech Republic, hundreds of people gathered at the former Bubny (Drums) train station in Prague, to mark the 74th anniversary of the first Czech Jews sent to Nazi death camps during World War Two. The transports began on October 16, 1941, with the first of the five trains heading for Lodz in Poland. There are plans to turn the Buny station into a Holocaust museum. Also in Prague, Karel Weirich, a non-Jewish journalist stationed at the Vatican during World War Two, was posthumously awarded the Czech Republic's Medal of Merit for helping to save 200 Jews in wartime Italy. Weirich organised a network that provided food, medicine and counterfeit documents to hundreds of mostly Czech Jewish refugees, trapped in Italian detention

camps. President Milos Zeman handed the award to Weirich's nephew, Pavel Weirich, at a ceremony at Prague Castle.

At a ceremony in Vilnius, Lithuania, eighty Lithuanians who saved Jews during World War Two were granted the status of freedom fighters. Gintaras Šidlauskas, senior specialist at the Lithuanian Genocide and Resistance Research Centre, expressed regret at the ceremony that during four years of delayed decision-making many rescuers had died of old age. As a result of the change in their legal status, the remaining rescuers will now be allocated a monthly state pension of 400 litas (EUR 115.9).

Also in Lithuania, about fifty people gathered in a forest at the mass grave at Poligón, outside Švenčionėliai, to commemorate the murder of 8,000 Jews on 7th and 8th October 1941. Some of the speakers at the ceremony referred to the brutality of the killings, noting that the volunteer shooters were local 'patriots' and most of the children were killed by being smashed against trees to save ammunition. In the town of Šeduva, a monument was unveiled to all its former Jewish residents. At the ceremony, Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius said that "Šeduva should be proud of the long history of its Jewish community that dates back to the fifteenth century. Jews lived here, created, traded [and] the Jewish community of Šeduva has always put great emphasis on culture and active social life." Schoolchildren from Vilnius Sholom Aleichem Gymnasium and Seduva Gymnasium took part in the ceremony. In Vilnius, Mantvydas Bekešius, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, attended events commemorating Japanese Consul Chiune Sugihara, who, in 1940 issued "Visas for Life" for thousands of Lithuanian and Polish Jews that enabled them to leave Lithuania. The Embassy of Japan held an unveiling ceremony for two commemorative plaques, which were mounted at the Metropolis Hotel and at the Kaunas railway station. At an event at Vilnius University, Linas Linkevičius, Minister of Foreign Affairs, attended the première of *Persona Non Grata*, a film about the rescue efforts of Sugihara.

In Poland, the city of Warsaw honoured Polish-Israeli poet and writer, Halina Birenbaum, with the Medal of Merit, the city's highest honour. Birenbaum, a Holocaust survivor, was awarded the medal for "documenting and commemorating

the history of the Warsaw Ghetto, where she was imprisoned with her family."

In Germany, following Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's claim that Jerusalem's Grand Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini convinced Adolf Hitler to exterminate the Jews, the German government clarified that it was responsible for the Holocaust. Steffen Seibert, spokesman for German Chancellor Angela Merkel, said there was "no reason to change our view of history." He added that "all Germans know the history of the murderous race mania of the Nazis that led to the break with civilisation that was the Holocaust. This is taught in German schools for good reason, it must never be forgotten and I see no reason to change our view of history in any way. We know that responsibility for this crime against humanity is German and very much our own."

At the European parliament, a new coalition, the European Alliance for Holocaust Survivors, was formed in Brussels at the initiative of the World Jewish Restitution Organisation (WJRO). Thirty-six members of the European Parliament from across the political spectrum urged the assembly's President Martin Schulz to increase attention to the restitution of Holocaust-era property, noting the need for resolution so long after the Second World War. The MEPs stressed that European parliamentarians "bear a particular moral responsibility to promote the restitution of property unjustly taken during the Holocaust and its aftermath, as well as to advocate for the social welfare of ageing survivors and the enduring remembrance of the Holocaust."

In the UK, the results of a survey of nearly 8,000 school students by University College London's Centre for Holocaust Education were published. It found that just thirty-seven percent of British schoolchildren know what the term 'antisemitism' means, and whilst most knew Jews were the primary victims, they had "little understanding of why they were persecuted and murdered." A third of respondents "massively underestimated" the scale of the Holocaust, with ten per cent believing that fewer than 100,000 Jews were killed. Very few appeared to know about the role played by collaborating regimes, or the complicity and participation of huge numbers of people across Europe. Over half believed that the mass murder took place in Germany rather than Eastern Europe, and that the largest number of

Jews murdered came from Germany rather than Poland. Paul Salmons, Programme Director of the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education, said “the consequences of this lack of knowledge for making meaning from the Holocaust are immense – the incorrect belief that people had no choice in carrying out the killings may be comforting, but the historical reality raises far more difficult questions about why and how people could become involved in mass murder. It is essential that young people study the reality rather than the myth if they are to better understand how genocides can happen.”

In Germany, an annotated version of Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* is set to go on sale for the first time in seventy years following the expiry of the Bavarian state’s copyright at the end of 2015. Historians at the Munich-based Institute of Contemporary History (IFZ) have prepared a new, annotated edition of the book to be released in January. The new version will feature a total of 3,700 comments providing analysis on its content which doubles the number of pages of the original version. IFZ’s Christian Hartmann said every sentence will be explained and critically evaluated in the upcoming edition because “Hitler’s 800-page book is in great parts antisemitic, displays imperialistic thinking and violence. For Hitler, violence was the livelihood of human existence.” They believe the new version is an anti-Hitler book, aiming at showing that the dictator’s ideas do not work. Hartmann added that “we want to counter... any symbolic value with our version. It is an attempt to destroy Hitler’s ideology completely.”

3 / Other news stories about Jewish life in Europe you may have missed

In Montenegro, the third annual Mahar conference was held in Petrovac, Montenegro, at which more than 400 representatives from Jewish communities in the Balkans and former Yugoslavia gathered. The seminar was aimed at preventing the assimilation of the 2,500 Jewish people in the region. It was the first time in two decades that leaders of 26 Jewish communities in Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia and Hungary have met.

Revisiting Holocaust issues links

- / Czechs remember first transport of Jews to Nazi death camps (Yahoo! News, October 16, 2015)
- / Czech man posthumously honoured for helping Jews in Holocaust (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 29, 2015)
- / 80 Lithuanians who saved Jews during WWII granted status of freedom fighters (Delfi by *The Lithuania Tribune*, October 2, 2015)
- / Annual memorial for the Jews of Svintsyán (Švenčionys): Small but well done (Delfi by *The Lithuania Tribune*, October 8, 2015)
- / Šeduva unveils monument for town’s Jewish population (Delfi by *The Lithuania Tribune*, October 9, 2015)
- / Lithuanian deputy foreign minister attends events for Chiune Sugihara (Delfi by *The Lithuania Tribune*, October 9, 2015)
- / Film about Japanese diplomat who saved Jews premièred in Vilnius (Delfi by *The Lithuania Tribune*, October 16, 2015)
- / City of Warsaw honours Polish-Israeli writer Halina Birenbaum (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 14, 2015)
- / Angela Merkel forced to clarify Germany was responsible for the Holocaust following Benjamin Netanyahu controversy (*The Independent*, October 21, 2015)
- / New coalition in the European Parliament to support restitution of Holocaust-era property (European Jewish Press, October 15, 2015)
- / Survey reveals pupils’ deep misunderstanding about antisemitism and the Holocaust (*The Jewish Chronicle*, October 26, 2015)
- / Adolf Hitler’s ‘Mein Kampf’ to return to German bookstores (NBC News, October 16, 2015)

In Poland, two Jewish cemeteries, renovated with funding provided by Germany, were rededicated. Ceremonies were held at cemeteries in Jozefow Bilgorajski, founded in 1725, and Frampol, founded in the nineteenth century, which were both destroyed during World War Two. Monika Krawczyk, director general of the *Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage*, said that “the historical significance is the fact that these are the first two Jewish cemeteries in Poland renovated with funds from the German federal government. We managed to achieve this goal 76 years since the outbreak of World War II.”

In Austria, the Jewish Museum in Eisenstadt completed a project to digitise over a thousand graves in the city’s Jewish cemetery. The cemetery was in use from 1679 to 1875 and many of the headstones were so worn that the inscriptions were

unreadable. The museum documented all 1,082 graves and attached a QR code to each one, which, when scanned by a smartphone, will report who is buried in the grave, when the person died and a list of relatives.

In the UK, a new Jewish-Muslim women's network aimed at breaking down religious and cultural barriers has been launched with government backing. Nearly 150 people attended the launch of *Nisa-Nashim* (meaning 'women' in Arabic and Hebrew) at the Islamia Girls' school in north London. The government supported the network with a £30,000 grant.

Also in the UK, over 100,000 Jews from all over the country took part in Shabbat UK towards the end of the month. Those taking part were encouraged to "switch off the week, switch on Shabbat" by disconnecting from all technology in favour of spending time with friends and family. Over 900 community events were arranged with *Great Challah Makes* in thirty different locations nationwide, including in a giant tent in Brent Cross, where 5,000 people set a Guinness world record for the largest bread-making gathering. Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis said "it was a remarkable experience we won't forget. And the reports coming in from around the country are of similarly memorable Shabbat experiences, from the record breaking challah make events to packed communal meals, unprecedented levels of home hospitality and incredibly inspiring Havdallah events." Prime Minister David Cameron said Shabbat UK "brings together tens of thousands across our country to celebrate the unity and sense of community that has been a hallmark of Jewish life for generations. But it also has a wider message that speaks to everyone in Britain, because we can all benefit from taking a moment to appreciate the value of family, friends and community life."

In the Netherlands, the Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority has advised the government to ban ritual slaughter of animals, citing pain and suffering caused to them in the process. The authority said it opposed ritual slaughter because it means that animals may take more than 45 seconds to die, during which time they may be subjected to stress and pain. Chief Rabbi Binyomin Jacobs expressed his surprise at the report as "we made an agreement" between the Jewish community and the government regarding

slaughter," referring to a 2012 agreement between the country's Agriculture Minister and Jewish and Muslim leaders stipulating that animals can continue to be ritually slaughtered as long as they lose consciousness within forty seconds of their throats being cut.

In Portugal, the Justice Ministry has started granting citizenship rights to the descendants of Jews expelled by Portugal five centuries ago. At the beginning of October the ministry said that it had received more than 200 applications. In Spain, the government granted citizenship to 4,302 Sephardim whose Jewish ancestors were expelled from the country in 1492. The Federation of Jewish Communities in Spain reported that most of the new citizens were from Morocco, Turkey and Venezuela.

In Spain, a town in the north of the country held an official ceremony to mark its name change from 'Kill Jews Town.' Daniel Kutner, Israel's ambassador to Madrid and representatives from the Jewish communities in Spain took part in a ceremony during which the town's new name signs were installed. The town, formerly known as Castrillo Matajudíos, reverted to its original name, Castrillo Mota de Judios, or Castrillo Jews' Hill. Researchers believe the village got its previous name from Jewish residents who converted to Catholicism and wanted to emphasise their loyalty to the Spanish authorities. No Jews live in the village today but many residents have Jewish roots and the town's official shield includes the Star of David.

In Italy, Jewish rosary bead sellers who were given their licences to sell Catholic souvenirs in Rome by the Vatican two centuries ago, protested outside the town hall over new restrictions on their trade. The street vendors, who offer images of Christ and saints, are angry at being banned from selling near the Colosseum after the city decided to clear out hawkers. Fabio Perugia, spokesman for Rome's Jewish community, said "the Jewish rosary bead sellers are a Roman tradition which risks being destroyed." Since the Jews were first given licences by the Vatican in the nineteenth century to sell religious paraphernalia, the traders have worked uninterrupted except during the Nazi occupation. The 115 licences awarded have been handed down from father to son. Of the 200 families which now share the licences, 99 per cent are Jewish.

Other news links

- / 26 Balkan Jewish leaders meet for first time since 1995 (World Jewish Congress, October 27, 2015)
- / Two destroyed Polish Jewish cemeteries rededicated (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 20, 2015)
- / Eisenstadt digitises over a thousand Jewish graves (The Local, October 27, 2015)
- / Jewish-Muslim women's network is launched with government support (*The Guardian*, October 15, 2015)
- / Chief Rabbi lauds Shabbat UK as "remarkable experience" as 100,000 take part (*Jewish News*, October 27, 2015)
- / British PM Cameron praises Shabbat project (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 21, 2015)
- / Dutch food authority recommends banning kosher slaughter (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 30, 2015)
- / Portugal issues first passport under new law for descendants of Sephardic Jews (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 14, 2015)
- / Spain grants citizenship to 4,300 people whose relatives were Sephardic Jews expelled during the Inquisition (Mail Online, October 2, 2015)
- / Adios 'Jew killer': Town named after massacre gets new road sign (The Local, October 23, 2015)
- / Rome incurs the wrath of Jewish rosary bead sellers (*The Times*, October 15, 2015)
- / Top officials at Rome's Israelite Hospital arrested in fraud probe (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 23, 2015)
- / Jews have lowest rate of unemployment in Britain, says report (*The Jewish Chronicle*, October 30, 2015)

Also in Italy, police arrested senior officials and medical personnel at Rome's Israelite Hospital for allegedly defrauding the country's national health service. Anti-corruption police issued warrants for seventeen people on charges of fraud and forgery. Hospital director Antonio Mastrapasqua and other top administrators and heads of departments were among those arrested. Fourteen of them were placed under house arrest. The Israelite Hospital, conceived in the nineteenth century as a hospital for needy Jews and formally established in 1911, is privately run but has a board appointed by the Jewish community. It is not a community-run facility and has an autonomous budget and administration.

In the UK, a report published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission said that British Jews suffered a bigger drop in their employment rate

than any religious group between 2008 from 2013 but still have the lowest rate of unemployment. Employment rates among Jews fell by over seven per cent to 68.8 per cent in 2013 but only 3.2 per cent of Jews were unemployed – compared to an average unemployment rate of 11.6 for religious minorities.

4 / In memoriam

In the UK, historian David Cesarani died aged 58. Cesarani was a leading specialist in Jewish history and the Holocaust and a research professor at Royal Holloway, University of London. He wrote and edited over a dozen books including *After Eichmann: Collective Memory and the Holocaust since 1961*; *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation*, *Justice Delayed: How Britain became a refuge for Nazi war criminals*; and *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*. Cesarani also advised the Home Office unit responsible for Holocaust Memorial Day and was a member of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office delegation to the Intergovernmental Taskforce for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. In 2005, he was awarded an OBE for "services to Holocaust Education and advising the government with regard to the establishment of Holocaust Memorial Day." Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis said "the British Jewish community mourns the loss of Professor David Cesarani, a towering academic and historian." Prime Minister David Cameron said "I will always be incredibly grateful to David Cesarani for his brilliant and passionate contribution to the work of the Holocaust Commission." In a statement the Board of Deputies said "we are shocked and saddened to hear of the death of David Cesarani at the age of only 58. He was a giant in his field, producing ground-breaking work on Jewish history and the Holocaust and was also a pioneer in the field of Holocaust education for which he richly deserved the OBE he was awarded ten years ago."

In memoriam link

- / David Cesarani has died, aged 58 (*The Jewish Chronicle*, October 25, 2015)