

1 / Issues concerning antisemitism

Spotlight on France

Antisemitic incidents in France dominated many of the headlines in January. In Marseille, a Turkish teenager stabbed Benjamin Ansellem, a 35-year-old Jewish teacher, who was wearing a *kippa*, with a machete that left him with an injured shoulder and hand. The 15-year-old ethnic Kurd, shouted “Allahu Akbar” during the attack. He told police he was attacking in the name of the terror group Isis. Ansellem fell to the ground and protected himself with the Torah he was carrying. Bernard Cazeneuve, Minister of Interior, called the new attack a “revolting antisemitic aggression” while

President Francois Hollande said such acts were “unspeakable and unjustifiable.”

This latest antisemitic attack sparked a debate about whether male Jews should wear a kippa in public. Zvi Ammar, head of Marseille’s Israelite Consistory, called on Jews “not to wear the kippa in the street to avoid being identified as Jewish.” He added that “it is sad to find ourselves in this position in 2016, in a great democratic country like France. But faced with an exceptional situation, we have to take exceptional measures. It causes me such pain to come to this conclusion but I do not want anyone to die in Marseille because they had a kippa on their head.” However, France’s Chief Rabbi, Haim Korsia, said that “we should not give in to anything, we will continue to wear the kippa”, stressing that Jews and the skullcap were not responsible for the violence. Joel Mergui, President of the Israelite Central Consistory of France, said that “he (Ammar) knows as well as I do that wearing a kippa or not will not resolve the issue of terrorism. If we have to give up wearing any distinctive sign of our identity, it clearly would raise the question of our future in France.”

/ ABOUT EUROPEAN JEWISH DIGEST

Written by **Richard Goldstein**, JPR’s Director of Operations, 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.

/ 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 offer 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. Download JPR’s publications free of charge from our website: www.jpr.org.uk.

A social media campaign using the hashtag *#TousAvecUneKippa* (Everyone With a Kippa) was started as a call for people to wear a kippa to show solidarity with French Jews. Many posted pictures of both Jewish and non-Jewish celebrities wearing skullcaps as a form of encouragement. Parliamentarians Meir Habib and Claude Goasguen both wore a kippa at the National Assembly with Habib saying that “freedom of religion is a central value in France. We will not accept a situation where people are afraid to express their Jewish identity. It begins with the Jews and then quickly impairs all of France. We must be careful, but to stop wearing religious symbols is not an answer to terror.” In a survey carried out for weekly magazine *Paris Match*, 70 percent of the French population said that they do not think Jews should refrain from wearing *kippot*, although 71% said that they believe antisemitism is increasing in France.

Very soon after this attack, Jewish politician Alain Ghozland, a city councillor in Créteil, a suburb of Paris, was found dead in his home,

killed by asphyxiation. His body was also reportedly covered in stab wounds. Whilst police insisted it was too early to say why he was targeted, the National Bureau for Vigilance against Antisemitism said “even if it is perhaps a financially motivated crime, (we) are asking for everything to be done to explore all avenues, including that of Islamist terrorists and antisemites.” Ghozlan’s family suggested the death may be related to antisemitism. Two men, aged 21 and 23, were arrested.

In the aftermath of these attacks, President Francois Hollande expressed dismay that French Jews feel the need to “hide.” He said that “it is intolerable that in our country citizens should feel so upset and under assault because of their religious choice that they would conclude that they have to hide.” Bernard Cazeneuve, the Interior Minister, said in an interview with newspaper *La Croix* that whilst there was a drop of 5 percent in antisemitic attacks in 2015, they “nonetheless remained at a high level with 806 recorded.” Since 2005, antisemitic violence and threats have only twice exceeded the threshold of 800 acts, in 2009 and 2014 (851 cases recorded that year), every time echoing an escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Sammy Ghozlan, founder of the National Bureau for Vigilance Against Antisemitism (BNVCA), a Jewish organisation which monitors hate crimes against Jews, said that the BNVCA “expresses its deep concern regarding the progressive rise of antisemitism,” which “contemporary French society is clearly incapable of curbing.” While noting “developing hatred toward Christians and Muslims,” Ghozlan added that “anti-Jewish crimes remain the most serious and most numerous” in light of the fact that Jews account for less than one percent of the French population.

Amid fears of rising antisemitism, a record number of French Jews made *aliyah* to Israel in the year following the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* and the kosher supermarket in January 2015. According to the Jewish Agency, nearly 8,000 French Jews moved to Israel in 2015.¹ The number of French Jews making the move has constantly increased in the past five years. In 2013, less than 3,300 French Jews moved to Israel. Only two years earlier, that

number stood at 1,900. Speaking at a memorial for assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at the Paris City Hall, Prime Minister Manuel Valls vowed that France will work with “all its might to protect Jews.” He said that “Jews are being persecuted again and again, victims of a virulent antisemitism that is hidden behind hatred of Israel.” He added that “the fact that French Jews leave their country in great numbers because they no longer feel safe... should have been for a long time for all of us an unbearable idea. I said with my words, with my heart, and I will continue to repeat it because it is a profound conviction: without the Jews of France, France would not be France.”

Spotlight on France links

- / Jewish teacher attacked with machete in France (The Local, January 11, 2016)
- / Two Jews attacked in France and Germany (The Jerusalem Post, January 11, 2016)
- / Marseille antisemitic attacks spark debate over wearing skull caps (Deutsche Welle, January 12, 2016)
- / Killing of Jewish politician near Paris prompts fears of antisemitic attacks (The Telegraph, January 13, 2016)
- / Hollande: ‘Intolerable’ that French Jews feel they need to hide (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 13, 2016)
- / Social Media Campaign to Show Solidarity With French Jews Wants ‘Everyone With a Kippa’ (Newsweek, January 14, 2016)
- / French lawmakers wear kippahs to parliament following Jew’s stabbing (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 15, 2016)
- / French PM: Attacks in France, Israel show we are ‘in world war’ (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 18, 2016)
- / Suspects arrested in murder of French Jewish politician (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 19, 2016)
- / French Minister: Antisemitic attacks remained at a high level in 2015 (European Jewish Press, January 21, 2016)
- / Jews are leaving France in record numbers amid rising antisemitism and fears of more Isis-inspired terror attacks (The Independent, January 25, 2016)
- / French PM: We’ll protect Jews with ‘all our might’ (Arutz Sheva, January 26, 2016)

Violence, vandalism and abuse

King’s College London ordered an urgent investigation after protesters rioted in order to disrupt a speech by Ami Ayalon, the former head of Israel’s secret service, at a student society

¹ JPR note: official figures from Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics put the 2015 count at 6,627 (still a record number). The CBS counts for 2013 and 2011 were 2,904 and 1,619.

event. The demonstrators threw chairs, broke a window and set off a fire alarm at the event, hosted jointly by the Israel societies of King's College London and London School of Economics. Action Palestine said it had planned to "challenge" Mr Ayalon at the event, but said things escalated beyond its control and the violence was caused by "external attendees." The Union of Jewish Students argued that there was no justification for what happened, saying students had organised an event about peace but were "greeted by violence and intimidation."

Several instances of antisemitism were reported in the UK in January. In the Tottenham Hale area of North London, three Jewish shoppers were pelted with gas canisters. The men allegedly shouted "Hitler is on the way to you, Heil Hitler, Heil Hitler, Heil Hitler" before throwing the small canisters, which were thought to contain laughing gas. A spokesman for Shomrim, the Jewish neighbourhood watch group, said the victims, who were wearing traditional religious clothes, were shaken but not injured. Michael Blayer, Shomrim volunteer, said "this behaviour is appalling, the victims were innocent shoppers at the Tottenham Hale retail park, and they were targeted because they were visibly Jewish. The verbal abuse was disgusting, and small objects were thrown towards the victims, making them fear for their immediate safety." The attackers were subsequently arrested.

Two Southampton football fans, who made hissing sounds (reminiscent of the gas chambers during the Holocaust) and directed Nazi-style salutes at Tottenham supporters, were banned from attending any matches for three years. Thomas Flynn, 22, and Michael Haydon, 23, shouted antisemitic abuse during a Premier League match in December. Both men admitted making hissing noises and claimed to be ashamed of their actions. They were given twelve-week community orders and ordered to pay £145 in costs. The magistrate said "this was a very serious matter and watching you during these court proceedings I think you know that and are very ashamed of what you did."

Police in London launched an investigation into alleged antisemitic abuse on a bus. A group of Jewish passengers in their 20s were traveling on the 102 bus towards Golders Green when they heard a man, who was accompanied by a child, say "these f***** Jews." When confronted by the group member, the man turned to his son and said Jews

were "disgusting." The group also reported that the bus driver did not show "any care" about what had happened.

In the Netherlands, it was reported that the home of a Jewish family in Amsterdam became the target of an antisemitic attack. The assailants also apparently shouted "cancer Jews" and "Free Palestine" while they kicked down the door and broke windows of the house where a Jewish family lives, causing extensive damage. The events took place over the new year celebrations when a number of local youth began rioting and sought to release their anger on Jews. In a statement, the Jewish community in Amsterdam said that "this event brings us back to those times Jews were afraid to go out into the streets. The police must do all they can so the Jewish population can live without fear."

In Germany, a French businessman, aged 49 and wearing a kippa, was attacked and robbed in an apparent antisemitic attack. The alleged assailants called the victim "Jew" in Arabic, threw him to the ground, stepped on his hand and took his shoulder bag that contained money, a cell phone and other valuables. Police later arrested the alleged attackers who were refugees from Syria and Afghanistan. The victim continued on to his home in Morocco after testifying to police. The stolen property was not recovered.

In Hungary, a court has sentenced Norbert J., of Dömös, near Budapest, to 400 days in custody or a fine of HUF 800,000 (2,500 Euros) for a Holocaust denial comment on social media. He was given the sentence by the Esztergom district court for posting a comment branding the mass murder of Jews during the Second World War "Holohoax" in response to an interview with Rabbi Slomó Köves about the Holocaust. Also, following the success of the Hungarian film "Son of Saul" at the Golden Globes awards, which tells the story of a member of the Sonderkommando working in Auschwitz, the Facebook page of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán posted a comment congratulating the authors of the film and film commissioner Andy Vajna, the head of the Hungarian National Film Fund. In response, hundreds of critical comments were posted online, maintaining that the film's achievement was not a Hungarian success, but a Jewish one. For example, under Orbán's post one of his followers said "this is not a Hungarian film. It is Jewish! Huge difference."

Others called it Jewish propaganda; one wrote: “if you create anything based upon the lie that they call Holocaust and it meets the expectations of the Zionists it will always be a major success.” There were countless other antisemitic comments including “I didn’t know that they give out Golden Globes for science fiction.”

In Belgium, *Joods Actueel*, the Antwerp-based Jewish newspaper, complained to the country’s watchdog on journalism about a daily publication that published a Holocaust denier’s claim that no one died in Nazi gas chambers. *Joods Actueel* filed the complaint against *De Morgen* citing legislation from 1995 that forbids claiming the Holocaust did not happen. In an interview published earlier in the month, Siegfried Verbeke, a far-right sympathiser with multiple convictions for inciting racial hate against Jews and denying the genocide, said “of course gas chambers existed, hundreds of them. To disinfect the clothes of people who went through them. But gas chambers designed to kill people never existed, no.” Bart De Wever, Mayor of Antwerp, expressed support for his prosecution.

Violence, vandalism and abuse links

- / King’s College orders ‘urgent investigation’ into anti-Israel riot (The Times, January 21, 2016)
- / Arab refugees arrested, released in attack on French Jew in Germany (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 11, 2016)
- / ‘Hitler is on the way to you’: Jewish shoppers ‘abused and pelted with laughing gas canisters’ (Evening Standard, January 6, 2016)
- / Nazi logo tape surrounds two Swedish schools (The Local, January 18, 2016, 2015)
- / Southampton football fans banned over antisemitic abuse directed at Tottenham supporters (The Jewish Chronicle, January 10, 2016)
- / Court fines man for Holocaust denial (Politics.hu, January 7, 2016)
- / Police investigate antisemitic abuse on a London bus (The Jewish Chronicle, January 27, 2016)
- / Antisemitism bubbles to surface again (The Budapest Times, January 32, 2016)
- / Dutch Jewish family’s home vandalised in antisemitic attack (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 3, 2016)
- / Belgian Jewish newspaper complains over Holocaust denier interview in daily (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 19, 2015)
- / Swiss socialist group apologises for publishing caricature seen as antisemitic (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 26, 2016)

In Switzerland, JUSO, the youth division of the Social Democratic Party, apologised for publishing an online caricature on its Facebook page that critics said was reminiscent of Nazi antisemitic propaganda, calling it a “mistake.” The caricature showed Johann Schneider-Ammann, Minister for Economics, saying “and one spoonful for the international finance lobby” as he feeds an identifiably strictly Orthodox Jew who is clutching the minister’s wrist. JUSO wrote in its apology that “we understand that the cartoon allows for an interpretation through antisemitic codes and stereotypes that absolutely do not correspond with JUSO’s basic values. We would like to apologise unreservedly for this regrettable error and affirm that there was no intention to reproduce antisemitism.”

Politics

In France, President Francois Hollande unveiled a memorial plaque at the site of the kosher supermarket in Paris where an Islamist terrorist killed four Jews on 9 January 2015, listing the names of those murdered. At a ceremony organised by the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France (CRIF) a few days later, Prime Minister Manuel Valls said the thought of Jews leaving France because they no longer feel it is their home was “an unbearable idea.” Outside the Hyper Cacher supermarket he said that “nothing can explain the killing at outdoor cafes. Nothing can explain the killing in a concert hall. Nothing can explain the killing of journalists and police. And nothing can explain the killing of the Jews. Nothing can ever explain it.” Candles were lit by several officials including Haim Korsia, the Chief Rabbi of France, André Vingt-Trois, the Archbishop of Paris, Anwar Kbibech, the leader of the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM), and former president Nicolas Sarkozy. Roger Cukierman, President of CRIF, said that “the year 2015 was a horrible year for Jews, for journalists, for police and eventually for all French people.”

In Germany, in advance of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Chancellor Angela Merkel said that antisemitism in Germany is “more widespread than we imagine.” She agreed it was especially important to reach young people coming to Germany from countries where hatred of Israel and Jews are common adding that “you can try arguing again and again” to re-educate Holocaust deniers or antisemites, but in the end

“you also have to set clearer boundaries ... and let them know that this has no place in our society.” At the opening of a Holocaust art exhibition displaying works from Jewish concentration camp prisoners Chancellor Merkel again vowed to tackle rising antisemitism in Germany. The exhibition, entitled ‘Art from the Holocaust,’ presented 100 pieces from Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust museum, and included works from fifty artists, including 24 who did not live beyond World War II, and who created their art in secret between 1939 and 1945, during their time in concentration camps or Nazi ghettos.

In the UK, London Mayor Boris Johnson signed on to *Mayors United Against Antisemitism*, an American Jewish Committee (AJC) initiative calling on municipal leaders across Europe to publicly address and take concrete actions against rising antisemitism. Johnson said that “however it manifests itself, antisemitism is totally unacceptable and can never be justified. In London we have a large and visible Jewish population, which makes a massive contribution to our city’s success, and as mayor I take this issue very seriously. We are working closely with the Jewish community and the police to tackle the problem and it is important for mayors to stand shoulder to shoulder to condemn and challenge antisemitism, which, like all forms of religious or racial discrimination, has no place in our cities.” The initiative was launched in the United States last year and more than thirty European mayors and 309 mayors and municipal leaders from 47 states across the US have signed the statement, which pledges a commitment to respectful co-existence, and affirms that antisemitism is incompatible with democratic values. Johnson is the first mayor in the UK to join the campaign.

In Russia, European Jewish leaders met with President Vladimir Putin to discuss the threat to Jewish communities from terrorism and rising antisemitism. Dr. Moshe Kantor, President of the European Jewish Congress, told President Putin that “the situation with the Jews in Europe is the worst it has been since the end of the Second World War. The Jews are again in fear and a Jewish exodus from Europe is quite real. There are more Jews fleeing France, which is considered very secure, than from civil war-torn Ukraine.” Putin responded by saying “let them come here. They emigrated from here under the Soviet Union, but now they can come back.”

Also in Russia, Aleksandr Levintal, the Governor of the Jewish Autonomous Oblast (Birobidzhan), announced that his region “will welcome Jews from European countries, where they may face attacks by antisemitic elements.” The Jewish Autonomous Region in Siberia once had a population of at least 17,000 Jewish residents. Levintal added that his oblast, whose 1934 establishment predated the 1948 declaration of Israeli independence, was the “first officially established Jewish state.” Although the region maintains its Jewish name, the Jewish population is only around 1,600 of the region’s 180,000 residents.

In the Czech Republic, two far-right politicians have been charged with incitement to hatred and defamation over a note they wrote supporting a nineteenth century blood libel. Adam Bartos, Chairman of National Democracy, and Ladislav Zemanek, a party official, left the signed note last Easter at a memorial to Anezka Hruzova, a 19-year-old woman who was murdered in 1899. In a case that became one of Europe’s most notorious blood libel trials, Leopold Hilsner was falsely sentenced to death for killing Hruzova as part of a Jewish ritual. Hilsner was pardoned after eighteen years in prison but never acquitted. The note, signed by Bartos and Zemanek on behalf of the National Democracy party, said the murder “united the Czech nation and showed the urgent need to solve the Jewish question. The Jewish

Politics links

- / Hollande unveils memorial plaque at Paris kosher supermarket (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 5, 2016)
- / London Mayor Johnson Joins AJC Campaign Against Antisemitism (PR Newswire, January 25, 2016)
- / ‘France without Jews is not France,’ French PM says at Hyper Cacher (The Times of Israel, January 9, 2016)
- / Antisemitism and terror on agenda as European Jewish leaders meet Putin (Jewish News, January 19, 2016)
- / Merkel: Antisemitism more widespread than we imagined (The Times of Israel, January 23, 2016)
- / Russian Governor Invites Europe’s Persecuted Jews to Resettle in Siberian ‘Jewish State’ (The Algemeiner, January 20, 2016)
- / Angela Merkel opens Holocaust art show with warning on antisemitism (The Guardian, January 26, 2016)
- / Two far-right Czech politicians charged with supporting century-old blood libel (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 7, 2015)

question has not been satisfactorily dealt with to this day.” The Hruzova memorial is located in the town of Polna.

2 / Holocaust Memorial Day

There were many Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremonies throughout Europe. In Germany, politicians spoke in front of a full Bundestag to mark the country’s annual recognition of its role in the Holocaust. The guest of honour was Ruth Klüger, an Austrian Auschwitz survivor, who talked about the “the coldest winter of her life” in 1944 and 1945, when Auschwitz was liberated. When she arrived at Auschwitz she lied about her age – she was 12 but was warned by another prisoner to say she was 15 – which landed her a spot on a work crew. Other prisoners who arrived with Klüger were not so fortunate and were sent straight to the gas chambers. Norbert Lammert, President of the Bundestag, began the hour of remembrance by announcing the opening of a new exhibit outlining the history of the more than 13 million men, women, and children from all over Europe who were forced to work for the Nazi regime.

In Hungary, at the ‘Shoes on the Danube’ memorial, István Mikola, the Minister of State for Security Policy and International Cooperation, said that “the International day of remembrance for the victims of the Holocaust, the Shoes on the Danube Embankment memorial and the commemoration of tragedy also bear with them hope.” He added that remembrance also bears with it the hope that by openly stating historical lessons “we can reach people and reach souls so that we can prepare the next generation to build a more humane world through suitable school programmes that teach them to better respect both ourselves and others.” Mikola also said that during World War II “we ourselves still lacked the courage and determination to protect our own citizens” against the arbitrary actions of Arrow-Cross brigades, adding that the Hungarian State failed during the time of the Holocaust. “We have faced up to our behaviour during the time of the Holocaust, we have repented our historical actions, weaknesses and treachery, but this is still not enough and we still have much to do to ensure that such horrors never happen again in a country whose strength lies precisely in its diversity.” Chief Rabbi Róbert Frölich said that “we Hungarian Jews, Jewish Hungarians bear the

perpetual wound of the Danube Embankment in our souls, and in our hearts. We, who were born after the Holocaust, bear it; our children and the whole of Hungarian society will continue to bear this wound, because while these shoes are here they will serve as a reminder of the tragedy of the Holocaust.” Auxiliary Bishop Imre Cserhádi from the Esztergom-Budapest diocese, who is responsible for providing pastoral services for Hungarians living abroad, along with retired Reformed Bishop Mihály Márkus and retired Lutheran Bishop Imre Szebik all said prayers at the memorial service. Other participants included members of Parliament, members of the Cabinet and members of the diplomatic corps.

In Lithuania, the Vilnius synagogue hosted a reading of all the names of Holocaust victims, followed by prayers and memories shared by Holocaust survivors. Students from the Vilnius ORT Sholem Aleichem Gymnasium, Israeli ambassador Amir Maimon and deputy Foreign Minister M. Bekešius also read out names. Faina Kukliansky, Chairwoman of the Jewish Community of Lithuania, said in her address that there was a noticeable lack of an official reaction or even a minute of silence to remember the circumstances of the brutal mass murder of Jewish Lithuanian citizens by the leaders of the country, adding that “I fear that the oblivion could lead to relapse. Over the years after the war, we have been trying to keep the memory alive so that people remember what they have done.”

Also in Lithuania, a gymnasium at Ariogala in the Raseniai district organised a national conference of school students to present dramatic rescue stories and share memories by representatives of Jewish communities from across Lithuania. The aim of the conference was to foster historical memory and recall the lost Jewish communities along with their cultural, economic and social heritage as well as their tragic fate in the Holocaust. In Panevėžys, members of the Jewish community, students and members of the public gathered at the ‘Sad Jewish Mother’ statue to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day. Students from the Saulėtekis Pre-Gymnasium laid a wreath at the statue and students from the Rožynas Pre-Gymnasium lit candles. Panevėžys city deputy mayor Petras Luomanas said “There is enough room for everyone in our country. We must get used to the idea of tolerance and live honestly. It will not do to forget the tragic fate of our Jewish neighbours.”

In Poland, more than eighty former Auschwitz prisoners marked Holocaust Remembrance Day, the 71st anniversary of their liberation, at a ceremony at the former Nazi concentration and death camp. The ceremony included speeches by Andrzej Duda, President of Poland, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, President of Croatia and Martin Shultz, President of the European Parliament. Duda emphasised that Auschwitz is “not just a museum” and “not just a big grave,” but a case study of “what may happen if international law is violated, and the international community does not respond on time” and “if some states behave aggressively towards the others, if they take over their territories. If they spread war and hatred.” He added: “Whenever I am present at this site, I feel internally broken because the scope of the tragedy, especially the scope of the tragedy of the Jewish nation, but also my Polish nation, is unimaginable in this place.” Schultz said “it hurts that in today’s Europe Jews again live in fear.” He added that “it is unacceptable that Jews are reluctant to wear their traditional clothes and display religious symbols in the public because of fear of reprisals and aggression. It is saddening when Jewish people consider leaving Europe because they no longer feel safe. Jewish friends and neighbours, we stand with you against those who seek to harm you. We will never let them make you outsiders in your own country. Europe is your home today, tomorrow and forever.”

In Sweden, Margot Wallström, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Anders Ygeman, Minister for Home Affairs, said in a statement that “the Jews and members of other minorities who fell victim to the Holocaust were murdered because they belonged to an ethnic minority group ... It must never happen again. The responsibility for managing the memory of the Holocaust is therefore a matter of both honouring the memory of the millions of victims and combating antisemitism and racism. Knowledge is an antidote against antisemitism, Afrophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Ziganism and fascism. The government is conducting a number of measures to ensure that the atrocities of Nazism and racism are not forgotten ... Antisemitism and racism are not just a threat against the groups targeted by such hatred; they are a threat against society as a whole. In this sense, our open and democratic society is also a victim of the threats and attacks that target individual groups, such as Jewish communities, because these attacks strike the foundation of

our country: an open, democratic, free and inclusive society. The battle against antisemitism must always be fought. It is a battle for the rights of individuals, but also for an open and democratic society.”

Holocaust Memorial Day links

- / International Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremonies under way (*Deutsche Welle*, January 27, 2016)
- / International Holocaust Remembrance Day (Jewish Community of Lithuania, January 29, 2016)
- / Holocaust Memorial Day (Hungary Today, January 28, 2016)
- / On Holocaust Remembrance Day, former prisoners mark liberation at Auschwitz (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 27, 2015)
- / Lithuania marks International Holocaust Remembrance Day (Jewish Community of Lithuania, January 27, 2016)
- / The battle against antisemitism and racism must always be fought (Government Offices of Sweden, January 27, 2016)
- / Panevėžys Jewish community marks International Holocaust Day (Jewish Community of Lithuania, January 28, 2016)

3 / Revisiting Holocaust Issues

In Lithuania, interwar President Kazys Grinius and his wife Kristina have been recognised posthumously by Yad Vashem as Righteous Gentiles for rescuing Jews during the Holocaust. Grinius and his wife hid Kaunas (Kovno) ghetto prisoner Dmitri Gelpert during the Nazi occupation. Their actions were previously recognised by Lithuania in 1993 when they were posthumously awarded the Life Saver’s Cross. In Vilnius, the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum held a three-day seminar with speakers from around the world for sharing ideas with Lithuanian teachers teaching the Holocaust. At the conference, Danius Junevičius, roving Ambassador-at-Large from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that the history of Lithuanian Jews is inseparable from general Lithuanian history, the lessons of the Holocaust are needed now more than ever, and that history must not repeat itself. Rimantas Jokimaitis, Chief Specialist at the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science, said that Holocaust education was not only much needed in society at large, but especially at the grade

school and high school level, to teach tolerance and to ensure that the Lithuanian educational system isn't exploited by dark forces of hatred and extremism. Philippe Jeantraud, the French Ambassador, spoke about the need for Holocaust memory and education to fight extremism, citing current events in France as an example, whilst Bruno Boyer, Head of International Relations for Mémorial de la Shoah (co-sponsors of the seminar) also spoke about the urgency and importance of teaching the facts of the Holocaust, and the shared yet different experiences of Western and Eastern Europe.

In Poland, it was announced that a record number of more than 1.72 million people visited the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum in 2015, breaking the previous record of 1.534 million visitors in 2014. Polish visitors were the most numerous with 425,000, followed by the United Kingdom (220,000), United States (141,000), Germany (93,000) and Italy (76,000). Next were Spain (68,000), Israel (61,000), France (57,000), the Czech Republic (47,000) and the Netherlands (43,000). Piotr Cywinski, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum Director, said that "going through the remnants of the former camp does not constitute only a history lesson. It is also the moment of unique reflection on our own responsibility for the shape of our world nowadays. That is why systematic tools supporting educational visits of young people at the Memorial have been created in so many democratic countries." In the Netherlands, the Anne Frank House also had a record number of visitors in 2015, the sixth consecutive year this was achieved. Last year 1,268,095 people visited the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam where the young diarist hid from the Nazis with her family.

Also in Poland, a monument to thousands of its Jews murdered in the Holocaust was unveiled in Suwalki, at the site of the synagogue destroyed in 1956 after being severely damaged by the Germans during the Nazi occupation. The inscription, in Polish, Hebrew and English, reads "in the memory of some 5,500 pre-war Jewish residents of Suwalki murdered during World War Two as a result of the policy of extermination of the German occupier." Local Christian organisations were involved in the project to build the monument. Before World War Two, Jews accounted for about one-third of the population of Suwalki.

In Switzerland, a museum has refused to return an oil painting, valued at £700,000, to a Jewish family, despite admitting that the work was seized illegally during the World War Two. *Dedham from Langham*, painted by John Constable in 1813, is part of a series of paintings of the Stour Valley. The Musée des Beaux-Arts in La Chaux-de-Fonds has volunteered to place a plaque next to the painting that would acknowledge that it was "auctioned without entitlement" but will not restore it to the heirs of the Jaffe family who now plan to sue. The museum said that it was not required by Swiss law to return the painting, that it received the work from previous owners who had acquired it in good faith and that it had a duty to keep the painting on public display. Christopher Marinello, Chief Executive of Art Recovery Group, said that if the painting were held by a British museum there would be no question that it should be returned, but that Swiss museums did not abide by the same code of ethics.

In Germany, it was announced that Hubert Zafke, aged 95 and former SS member, will go on trial in Neubrandenburg accused of assisting in the mass murder of Auschwitz death camp inmates. The indictment states that he was an accessory to the murder of at least 3,681 people between 15 August and 14 September 1944. During this month when Zafke worked as one of the death camp's paramedics, at least fourteen deportation trains arrived at the camp from as far away as Lyon, Vienna and Westerbork. Among the prisoners on the trains was the teenage diarist Anne Frank and her family.

Also in Germany, Ingeborg Berggreen-Merkel, Chair of the task force set up in 2013 to check if art works found at the home of the late Cornelius Gurlitt were looted by the Nazis, submitted a progress report to Monika Grütters, the Culture Minister. Ronald S. Lauder, President of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) said the results of the investigation were "meagre and not satisfactory" and criticised "the persistent lack of transparency and communication about the work of the task force." He added that he "expected Germany to do better, given that time is running out." Lauder further added that "the interim report presented today shows that a lot of work has been done on analysing the artworks in the Gurlitt trove, but this is about the only positive news. Without any doubt: the work is far from

completed. The task force could have progressed much more had its leadership managed the process properly. We are concerned that the framework for further research at the German Centre for Lost Cultural Goods remains totally unclear... lack of transparency and organisational disorder including funding will not do historical justice to the victims.” Of the 500 works in the Gurlitt trove that are under suspicion for being looted art and whose provenance the task force has been checking since 2013, only five have so far been identified as Nazi-looted and only two returned to their rightful owners.

In the UK, a report published by the Department for Education (DfE) Select Committee concluded that that more teachers need to be trained to teach the Holocaust and more attention should be paid to spreading Holocaust education to include other subjects in schools besides history, such as English, drama and PSHE (personal, social, health and economic education). The committee called on the DfE “to do more to support the organisations it funds so as to deliver Holocaust education to more history teachers” and recommended that the government focused extra attention on preserving the memories of Holocaust survivors and enabling more pupils to visit Auschwitz and related sites. Neil Carmichael, MP for Stroud and Chairman of the committee, said that “in the course of our inquiry, we heard from a number of inspiring witnesses who help to explain the nature, scale and significance of the Holocaust to students in classrooms today. Too few teachers, particularly history teachers, are being trained to teach the Holocaust and our report calls on the government to act. We expect the Department for Education to ensure the support it gives to Holocaust education is as effective as possible.”

Also in the UK, Prime Minister David Cameron announced on Holocaust Memorial Day that a memorial to the victims of the Holocaust will be built alongside the Houses of Parliament to remember “the darkest hour of humanity.” Mr Cameron said “it will stand beside parliament as a permanent statement of our values as a nation.” A competition will be launched to design the memorial and it is due to be completed by the end of 2017. The memorial will stand in Victoria Tower Gardens, which run along the Thames to the south of the Palace of Westminster. Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chairman of the UK Holocaust

Memorial Foundation, said that its task “was to find a site that would allow a striking, prominent and iconic memorial to be built. There is nowhere better to achieve this than beside parliament.”

In the Channel Islands, a woman who risked her life by hiding a Jewish friend during World War Two, has been nominated to receive the Righteous Among the Nations honour from Yad Vashem. Cambridge University academic Gilly Carr has requested that Dorothea Weber becomes only the second Channel Islander to receive the honour for hiding her friend Hedwig Bercu, who was being hunted by the Germans in Nazi-controlled Jersey. Dr Carr said that “if she [Dorothea] had been caught, it is likely that she would have been sent to a concentration camp, as would Hedwig.” Stephen Regal, President of the Jersey Jewish Congregation, said that “it is important to perpetuate [accounts of] not just the suffering but the positive sides of the war. Dorothea needs to be remembered and this could help encourage other people to speak out against injustice in the future.”

Revisiting Holocaust issues links

- / Lithuanian President and wife recognised as Righteous Gentiles (Jewish Community of Lithuania, January 17, 2016)
- / Former Auschwitz paramedic, 95, to go on trial in Germany next month (*The Guardian*, January 18, 2016)
- / Three-day seminar for teaching Holocaust opens at Vilna Gaon Museum (Jewish Community of Lithuania, January 20, 2016)
- / Gurlitt trove: Ronald Lauder criticises scant progress on Nazi-looted art, laments lack of transparency (World Jewish Congress, January 14, 2016)
- / Auschwitz memorial breaks record with over 1.72 million visitors in 2015 (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 4, 2015)
- / More teachers and more training needed for Holocaust education, say MPs (*The Jewish Chronicle*, January 23, 2016)
- / Record number visit Anne Frank House (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 4, 2015)
- / Britain to get Holocaust memorial (*The Times*, January 27, 2016)
- / Polish town unveils Holocaust monument to murdered Jewish residents (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 24, 2015)
- Woman who hid Jewish friend nominated for Israeli honour (BBC News, January 27, 2016)
- / Museum refuses to hand back Constable looted by Nazis (*The Times*, January 27, 2016)

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

A number of synagogues were restored across Europe in January. In the Czech Republic, the Jewish community of Brno held a dedication ceremony marking the completion of a year-long renovation of Agudas Achim, the city's only surviving synagogue. A new Torah scroll was inaugurated as part of the event, which was attended by several hundred people including Petr Papousek, Head of the Czech Republic's Federation of Jewish Communities, Gary Koren, Israeli ambassador to the Czech Republic, Petr Vokral, Mayor of Brno and Vojtech Cikrle, Bishop of the Brno diocese. The renovation of the synagogue was partly funded by a €204,409 grant from the European Economic Area (EEA) and Norway.

In Latvia, the historic wooden Green Synagogue in Rezekne was reopened as a wooden architectural heritage centre and cultural space with an exhibition about Jewish heritage. The synagogue is the only surviving one out of eleven that once stood in the town. The restoration work cost more than €711,000 and was funded mostly by grants from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway via the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism (85%) but also by the Latvian government.

In Lithuania, the Kaunas branch of the Ministry of Culture's Cultural Heritage Department called for an immediate end to the demolition of a former wooden synagogue in the town of Kulautuva, near Kaunas. The synagogue was built in 1935, but had been hidden behind brick walls erected in the communist period. The wooden structure was revealed as the main building was being torn down, and pictures of the partially demolished building were posted on Facebook. Svaigedo Stoškaus, head of the Kaunas Cultural Heritage Department, said the fact that "it has survived is great news. We [cannot] allow it to be destroyed." He added that the future of the building would be discussed with town authorities. Also in Lithuania, the brick synagogue in Simnas was added to the Cultural Heritage Department's registry of heritage sites. The synagogue was built in 1905 on the site of a former wooden synagogue and has been used as a cultural centre since the 1950s.

In Poland, President Andrzej Duda conferred medals and state honours on seventeen actors of the Jewish Theatre in Warsaw. The ceremony took place on Holocaust Remembrance Day, following a performance of a play titled 'The Night of the Whole Life.' Adam Baliński, Marian Dutkowski, Jan Grenwald and seven other actors received the Gold Medal for Long Service honours for their contributions to Polish and Polish-Jewish culture.

In Italy, Pope Francis made his first visit to a synagogue as pontiff when he visited the main synagogue in Rome, and he and Jewish leaders condemned violence in the name of religion and said the extraordinary rapprochement between Jews and Catholics over the past fifty years should serve as a model for other faiths. Pope Francis said that "violence of man against man is in contradiction to every religion that merits the name, in particular the three monotheistic religions. Every human being, as a creature of God, is our brother regardless of his origins or religious belief." The event was attended by Jewish community members and representatives of the government, Holocaust survivors, international Jewish organisations, representatives from Israel and other faiths. In his speech the Pope also stressed that Christianity is rooted in Judaism saying that "you are, in fact, our older brothers and sisters in faith." He added that Christians "to understand themselves, cannot fail to make reference to the Jewish roots, and the Church, while professing salvation through faith in Christ, recognised the irrevocability of the ancient alliance and constant and faithful love of God for Israel."

In Portugal, the Lisbon City Council announced that a Jewish museum will open in the capital in 2017, in the vicinity of Sao Miguel Square in Alfama, Lisbon's oldest quarter. A municipal spokesman said that the quarter was selected due to the fact that it is "emblematic for the Jewish community and for Lisbon itself, because it was home to medieval Lisbon's largest Jewish population." Jose Oulman Carp, President of the Jewish Community of Lisbon, said that the plan announced by the city was a "private initiative" involving some members of his community, the municipality and private donors, but that the project is important because Lisbon is the only European capital of its calibre without a Jewish museum.

Also in Portugal, the introduction of a new Torah scroll into the Kadoorie Synagogue in Porto was celebrated by nearly 300 Jews from eight countries, including the Chief Rabbi of Turkey. Rui Moreira, Mayor of Porto, said that “at a time of rising antisemitism across Europe, I want you to know that you are always welcome here, a place whose identity your communities have shaped forever.” Moreira, a descendent of Ashkenazi Jews who arrived in Portugal in the nineteenth century, also added that “there is no antisemitism in Porto, and I know this because I was elected mayor.”

In Spain, Avner Azulay, aged 80, became the first Sephardic Jew to swear allegiance to the Spanish King in a ceremony symbolising Madrid’s apology for expelling thousands of his ancestors more than 500 years ago. Azulay, a former JPR Board member, took the oath to King Felipe VI at a ceremony near Tel Aviv and is one of 4,300 Sephardim from around the world who have been granted dual nationality.

In Switzerland, the Jewish community celebrated the 150th anniversary of the granting of freedom of settlement and civil rights. At the official event in Bern, President Johann Schneider-Ammann said that without its Jews, Switzerland would not be “the strong, culturally diverse, economically successful and socially tolerant country” it is today. He added that today’s immigrants to Switzerland should see the Jews of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as examples of how integration should work, saying that “if the new immigrants follow the example, immigration can be beneficial.”

In London, protests took place outside the Swiss Embassy in protest at plans to desecrate a medieval Jewish cemetery in Zurich. Satmar rabbis claimed the expansion of the Kunsthaus fine art museum in Zurich threatened to damage the burial ground. A Satmar spokesman said that “the impending uprooting of this cemetery is especially hurtful, given the history and sanctity of the cemetery, which dates back over 600 years and is known to be the resting place of great sages.” The Commission for the Preservation of American Heritage Abroad has also appealed for excavation work at the site to be halted. However, the Swiss Jewish community dismissed these concerns, with Jonathan Kreutner, General Secretary of the Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities, saying that he saw “no reason to protest” because the three

Orthodox communities of Switzerland have agreed with the city that it will take steps “according to halachah if remains of Jewish people will be found at the construction site, which is not even clear at the moment.” He added that “for us, everything is in good local Jewish hands and we do not need advice from Jewish groups abroad.”

In the UK, a claim was reported that some synagogues in London have experienced an influx of French Jews over the past year, with French children making up more than fifty per cent of the intake in some Jewish primary schools. There is now a French-speaking rabbi at St John’s Wood synagogue who lectures in French. Rabbi Sam Taylor, from the Western Marble Arch synagogue, said that a third of all new members in the past year were French. Rabbi Taylor added that “there has been a steady increase. It’s very noticeable. Every month there are new families or young single people coming to London. It happens regularly. In terms of those who pray on a Saturday morning, perhaps a quarter are now from France. They feel much safer here.” Marc Meyer, the French chairman of the Hendon United synagogue, said that fifty per cent of the recent intake at local schools had been French, with some being more than seventy per cent. He added that “there is a very obvious issue with antisemitism in France and a great degree of discomfort for observant Jews.” Rabbi Barry Marcus, from the Central synagogue, said that the new French arrivals were “definitely connected to a feeling of discomfort in France,” but also many had left because of the economic situation in France.²

In London, the Conference of European Rabbis hosted an event to present an award to former President Nicholas Sarkozy for his contribution to European Jewry. In his acceptance speech Sarkozy said that “it is unacceptable that seventy years after the end of the Holocaust, French Jews are afraid... We do not want French Jews to leave France because they are afraid. We want them to be comfortable to wear a kippah. We must stand up to protect our Jewish communities. It is impossible not to. We didn’t fight the Nazis to force the Jews to run to Israel seventy years later.”

In the UK, the Department for Education ordered the Charedi Talmud Torah Tashbar school in

2 JPR note: there are no official statistics for the number of French Jews who have emigrated to the UK in recent years.

Stamford Hill to close after Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) inspectors warned that it was failing to meet the “minimum” standards required. Inspectors who investigated the school said that its curriculum, taught in Hebrew, encouraged “cultural and ethnic insularity because it is so narrow and almost exclusively rooted in the study of the Torah.” They also found the school to “severely restrict the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils” and prevent them

from “developing a wider, deeper understanding of different faiths, communities, cultures and lifestyles, including those of England.” The school has stated that “as a matter of religious principle” it does not allow pupils to learn English, nor provide for any secular education.

Other news links

- / Czech Republic: renovated Brno synagogue reopens & gets a new Torah (Jewish Heritage Europe, January 21, 2016)
- / Latvia: Restored Rezekne Green Synagogue to be rededicated (Jewish Heritage Europe, January 14, 2016)
- / Lithuania: Wooden synagogue re-discovered; new synagogue on heritage list (Jewish Heritage Europe, January 27, 2016)
- / Polish president honours seventeen Warsaw Jewish theatre actors (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 31, 2015)
- / Pope Francis joins Holocaust survivors on historic visit to Rome’s synagogue (Jewish News, January 17, 2016)
- / Catholics and Jews must unite against terrorism, says Pope during synagogue visit (Catholic Herald, December 18, 2015)
- / Lisbon municipality to open Jewish museum next year (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 8, 2015)
- / Portuguese mayor with Jewish roots: My election proves there’s no antisemitism here (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 1, 2016)
- / Jew swears his allegiance to contrite Spain (The Times, January 21, 2016)
- / Swiss Jews mark 150th anniversary of civil rights (World Jewish Congress, January 18, 2016)
- / Rabbis protest over gallery plan for medieval Jewish cemetery (The Jewish Chronicle, January 18, 2016)
- / French Jews seek refuge in London after gun attacks (The Times, January 11, 2016)
- / French Jewry are an increasing asset to British life (The Times, January 11, 2016)
- / Synagogue hires French rabbi as Jews move to London after terrorist attacks (Evening Standard, January 19, 2016)
- / We did not fight Nazis for Jews to flee, says Sarkozy (The Jewish Chronicle, January 11, 2016)
- / European rabbis honour former French President Sarkozy for protecting Jewish life in France (World Jewish Congress, January 11, 2016)
- / Charedi Talmud Torah Tashbar: Stamford Hill Jewish school that does not teach English ordered to close (The Independent, January 14, 2016)

5 / In Memorium

Lord George Weidenfeld, the British Jewish philanthropist who recently helped rescue Christian Iraqi and Syrian refugees, has died at 96. Ephraim Mirvis, British Chief Rabbi, described Weidenfeld as “a towering figure in the Jewish community whose legacy will be one of great compassion.” Ronald Lauder, President of the World Jewish Congress, said Weidenfeld was “one of the most inspiring figures of the twentieth century.” He added that he was “a committed philanthropist, an advocate of the Jewish people and a life-long Zionist who always defended Israel against attacks and unfair criticism.” Jonathan Arkush, President of the Board of Deputies, said of Weidenfeld that “I am very saddened to hear about the death of Lord Weidenfeld. He was a tireless worker for Israeli, Jewish and other causes and a philanthropist who only last year funded a rescue mission for Christian Syrians. His energy, charm, warmth and intelligence will be remembered by all who met him.”

In memoriam link

- / Lord Weidenfeld dies aged 96 (The Jewish Chronicle, January 20, 2016)
- / George Weidenfeld, British Publisher of ‘Lolita’ and London Fixture, Dies at 96 (The New York Times, January 20, 2016)