



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on March 17, 2015

Anti-Semitism Has European Jews Pondering Whether to Stay or Leave

Following the January 9 Porte de Vincennes hostage crisis at a kosher food market in Paris, in which four Jewish victims died, and the shooting attacks on a synagogue and a free speech event in Copenhagen on February 15 that left two people dead, some European Jews are considering Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's suggestion that they emigrate to Israel.

The crisis at the market closely followed the January 7 attack on the Paris offices of the French satirical weekly newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*, in which 12 people were killed. Though that attack was not anti-Jewish in nature (having been allegedly fueled by the magazine's irreverent depiction of Muhammad), Amedy Coulibaly, the gunman at the market who specifically targeted Jewish shoppers, was a friend of Said and Cherif Kouachi, the two *Charlie Hebdo* gunmen.



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The day after the attack at the market, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued the following statement: "To all the Jews of France, all the Jews of Europe, I would like to say that Israel is not just the place in whose direction you pray. The state of Israel is your home."

Netanyahu also asked Israeli legislators to liberalize his nation's immigration laws to make it easier for Jews to permanently move to Israel, announcing, "This week, a special team of ministers will convene to advance steps to increase immigration from France and other countries in Europe that are suffering from terrible anti-Semitism."

A month later, following the attacks in Copenhagen, Netanyahu issued a similar appeal to the Jews of Denmark, noting:

We are preparing for a wave of mass aliya [Jewish immigration] from Europe; we are calling for a wave of mass aliya from Europe. I want to tell all the Jews of Europe, and Jews wherever they may be: "Israel is the home of every Jew... Israel awaits you with open arms."

During the funeral for the four victims of the market attack, whose bodies had been flown to Israel, Netanyahu addressed a motive for the killings that went beyond anti-Semitism of the type that European Jews faced in ages past — "extremist Islam."

"Islamist terror ... is not just the enemy of the Jewish people but of all humanity. It is time all people of



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all cultures united to eject these elements from among us,” said Netanyahu.

French Prime Minister Manuel Valls took exception to Netanyahu’s suggestion that Jews abandon France, noting that such a move would be a loss to the nation: “A Jew who leaves France is a part of France that is gone.”

Raphael Werner, president of Belgium’s Forum of Jewish Organizations, cautioned against allowing fears created by these violent attacks from prompting an exodus of European Jews, noting, “We have to strengthen the Jewish communities in Europe, not panic them.”

Determining whether anti-Semitism has increased in Europe in recent years is difficult, because ethnic and religious prejudices have existed since the dawn of civilization. An article about anti-Semitism in Europe published by the *Economist* on February 21 delved deeply into the subject. The article provided polling data supplied by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research and the Pew Research Center indicating that the percentage of people holding views unfavorable to Judaism had declined in four major European nations since 2008. Furthermore, anti-Jewish sentiments appeared to be prevalent mostly among immigrants from Muslim nations. A 2010 poll taken in Germany found that only three percent of native Germans agreed with the statement “Jews have too much power in the world,” but that the number rose to 25 percent among those of Turkish origin and 40 percent among those of Arab origin.

In an article for CNN on March 2, Ruth Ellen Gruber, a professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Charleston, related her experiences living in Rome during the 1970s and ’80s, when several terrorist attacks occurred there. Gruber wrote that she did not intend to minimize the recent terror attacks against Jewish targets in Europe, such as in Copenhagen and Paris, but did want to add some perspective. She writes:

To be sure, Jews are being targeted. But it is important to recognize that Jews are being targeted as part of a violent campaign against western democracies and western values in general. Today’s victims of Islamist terror include Christians and Muslims as well as Jews. In the Middle East and Africa, women, children, students, and cultural heritage — history — are also directly targeted.

Gruber continues by noting that both Jewish and European national leaders have made it clear that a mass exodus of Jews from Europe is not an option. She concludes:

It is wise to be on guard, of course, and there is indeed ample cause for alarm — even fear. But we should also be on guard against something else — against a facile temptation to cry wolf that can all too easily distort alarm into alarmism — and fear into fear-mongering.

Jeffrey Goldberg, a national correspondent for *The Atlantic*, wrote a lengthy report in that journal for April titled: “Is It Time for the Jews to Leave Europe?” One of the people Goldberg interviewed for his article, French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut, who is the son of Holocaust survivors, provided a ready answer to the question: “We should not leave, but maybe for our children or grandchildren there will be no choice.”

Goldberg acknowledges that the new variety of anti-Semitism in Europe has as its stronghold the Muslim immigrant communities, but makes some rather odd conclusions about this phenomenon. Among these:

That the chief propagators of contemporary European anti-Semitism may be found in the Continent’s large and disenfranchised Muslim immigrant communities — communities that are



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themselves harassed and assaulted by hooligans associated with Europe's surging right — is flummoxing to, among others, Europe's elites. Muslims in Europe are in many ways a powerless minority. The failure of Europe to integrate Muslim immigrants has contributed to their exploitation by anti-Semitic propagandists and by recruiters for such radical projects as the Islamic State, or ISIS.

If we are to understand him correctly, Goldberg says that European nations are to blame for the radicalization of these immigrants, for by failing to "integrate" Muslim immigrants into their society they have turned them into not only anti-Semites, but also prime candidates for ISIS!

Goldberg writes: "I've spent much of the past year traveling across Europe, in search of an answer to a simple, but pressing, question: Is it time for the Jews to leave?" As part of his search for that answer, Goldberg acknowledges that the Europe of today is not the Europe that existed during the worst years of Hitler and the Holocaust. He notes that "in 1933, the new leader of Germany announced himself as the foremost enemy of Jewish existence; today, Germany's leader [Angela Merkel] is among the world's chief defenders of Jews."

He also observes that Manuel Valls, France's prime minister, "is, if anything, an even more ardent defender of Europe's Jews. He argues that the French idea itself depends on the crushing of anti-Semitism."

But Goldberg concludes his article on a pessimistic note:

I am predisposed to believe that there is no great future for the Jews in Europe, because evidence to support this belief is accumulating so quickly. But I am also predisposed to think this because I am an American Jew — which is to say, a person who exists because his ancestors made a run for it when they could.

It would be foolish to assert that anti-Semitism does not exist in Europe, because there is evidence to the contrary. There is also anti-Muslim, and maybe even anti-Christian sentiment in some quarters. However, without the backing of government, such prejudices do not present the threat they did under the Third Reich or even under the anti-Jewish Czars.

Hopefully, European Jews will not abandon a continent that has been a home to them for centuries, and is as much a part of their culture as any other place in the world, because a small minority of hateful individuals has engaged in violent actions that all decent Europeans abhor.

Photo of friends and relatives of a Paris market attack victim mourning in Israel: AP Images

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