



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on December 18, 2017

## Jews Feel Forced to Hide Skullcaps, Stars of David in France

“What upsets me is that in some areas of France, Jews can no longer live peacefully, and that just five minutes from my home, some are forced to hide their kippas [skullcaps] or their Star of David,” lamented Moshe Lewin, a rabbi in Raincy, a Paris suburb. This has led to what he called an “internal exodus” of Jews, with Jews abandoning the suburbs of Paris and the Seine-Saint-Denis department, for safer areas of the country.



Increasingly, Jews are opting to leave France altogether, owing to the rising tide of violent anti-Semitism, with most heading to Israel.

Journalist Zvika Klein wrote in 2015 of the open animosity he faced when walking the streets of the French capital, while wearing the kippa, a Jewish tradition. He noted the irony that in Paris, Jews are increasingly fearful of wearing anything that will identify them as Jews, while “keffiyeh-wearing men and veiled women speak Arabic on every street corner.” At the same time, Klein wrote, “soldiers are walking every street that houses a Jewish institution.”

Now, instead of Jewish institutions, such as synagogues, being the target of anti-Jewish feelings, it is now the Jews themselves. “For a long time, Jews were targeted through their symbols — today, people themselves are targeted directly,” Sammy Ghozlan, president of the Jewish security organization BNCVA told *20 Minutes*, a Paris commuter newspaper.

In just the past 13 years, a Pierrefitte rabbi said he had experienced a 50-percent decline in the number of Jewish congregations, as many Jews are increasingly fearful that they will be assaulted.

But simply not wearing identifying symbols and staying away from Jewish synagogues, and avoiding open celebration Jewish festivals such as Yom Kippur and Hanakkuh, is sometimes not enough. There have even been attacks upon Jews in their homes. For example, in Livry-Gargan, located in the northeast suburbs of Paris, a Jewish home was invaded despite being protected by metal bars.

In April, Sarah Halimi, a 65-year-old Orthodox Jew, was murdered in Paris by a Muslim neighbor, Kada Traore (an immigrant from Mali).

Five thousand Jews left France for Israel in 2016, and it is likely that the 2017 totals will be similar. The exodus of Jews from France has accelerated since 2011, with most citing concerns of attacks from Islamic terrorists.

“The Aliyah [he act of moving to Israel] of French Jews has been significant over the last decade,” said Danie Benhaim, who leads the Jewish Agency of Israel. France hosts the largest number of Jews of any nation in Europe (about 500,000), making it the home of the third-largest number of Jews in the world.

A recent poll by the French Institute of Public Opinion found that 43 percent of French Jews are considering moving to Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been quite open about



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inviting French Jews to relocate to Israel, saying, “Every Jew everywhere should know that they have a home in Israel.”

But some Jews who do opt to move to Israel from France provide a lesson we can learn about the Jewish exodus. When Jews leave France for Israel, they often encounter economic difficulties. Netanyahu’s promise that he would “take care of them” has been misunderstood by some to mean the Israeli government would provide them with jobs and housing. A welfare state, after all, is a powerful magnet for immigration. But when European Jews arrive in Israel, they often discover that the government there does not have as generous a welfare state as the one they left.

Immigration to Israel also places Jews in the boiling cauldron of the Middle East. The well-known White House press corps veteran Helen Thomas, now deceased, was asked a few years ago what the Jews in Israel should do in the face of Arab hostility. She responded, “Tell them to get the hell out of Palestine.” When asked where they should go, Thomas suggested they go “home” to Germany and Poland. Of course, the reason many Jews migrated to Palestine after World War II was they did not feel very welcome, to say the least, in Germany or Poland. Today, many argue that the solution for the Arab-Israeli conflicts is for Jews to “go home” to Europe. But if the Arabs of the Middle East truly want Jews to leave Israel for Europe, it makes little logical sense for Islamic terrorists to target them in European countries, such as France.

One thing that could be done is for Jews in France to arm themselves. If they did this, their liberties and safety, along with their fellow French citizens, would be more secure. Tragically, European Jews were disarmed prior to the Holocaust, and in France today, restrictive gun laws have left the civilian population largely defenseless in the face of rising terrorist attacks.

Even the perception that civilians are armed is likely to deter a person intent on violence. It is noteworthy that mass shootings invariably take place in “gun-free zones,” such as schools, movie theaters, churches, post offices, and the like. It is therefore not surprising that the armed in France are usually the bad guys, since the government thinks disarming the general population is a good idea.

*Photo of Jews wearing kippot by [David Berkowitz](#)*



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