

## April 15, 2002: Commission Deplores Anti-Semitic Attacks in France and Belgium

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WASHINGTON - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent federal agency advising the Administration and Congress, today deplored the recent spate of attacks on synagogues, other Jewish sites, and individuals in France and Belgium. Several synagogues were seriously damaged by firebombing and one in Marseille burned to the ground. Shots were fired at a kosher shop, a Jewish couple was attacked on the street, a bus full of schoolchildren was stoned, and high school soccer players were beaten by a gang wielding metal bars. The attacks are the latest in a series of anti-Semitic violence that has plagued the two countries since October 2000. More than 400 incidents have been documented in France since then. "These attacks on Jews in France and Belgium are despicable" said Michael K. Young, the Commission's Chair. "We hope the French government, in particular, will follow through on its recent statements to track down the perpetrators and hold them to account; making it clear such behavior will not be tolerated in France. The U.S. government should follow this issue carefully and urge the French authorities to treat these incidents with the seriousness they deserve." Chairman Young noted that the remarks of President Jacques Chirac, Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, and key Muslim leaders strongly condemning the anti-Semitic attacks in France were important indicators of a new concern over this issue which are welcomed by all who seek to end intolerance and violence against Jews in France.

Michael K. Young, Chair

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