

U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom

Testimony

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Distinguished Commissioners

I am here today representing 400,000 constituent families of the Simon Wiesenthal Center. I have been asked to focus on developments on anti-Semitism in Europe. I will focus on only four countries

France: I am certain no one here ever heard of Chalom Levy.

He died on December 29th, having never recovered from a [knife-wielding fanatic screaming Allah Akbar](#). Worse still, his attacker, who had stabbed an innocent victim in 2010, was deemed unfit for trial by French authorities. So he was let go, free to attack again. Chalom paid the ultimate price. This time the killer was released after 6 months-deemed mentally unfit. No one has a clue where he is in January 2020.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center released our Top Ten 2109 Anti-Semitic/Anti-Israel incidents. #4 was the release of the murderer of a beautiful French Jewish Kindergarten teacher Sara Halimi, who was attacked in her apartment and flung to her death by an assailant, who by his own admission, was chanting Koranic texts. He was recently released because he smoked pot before the attack. Yesterday, French Jews and other outraged and fearful citizens took to the streets of Paris to protest this outrage

In 2015, another Muslim with no prior history of mental illness was deemed unfit to stand trial for the stabbing of Jews in Marseille. Initially released, protests led him to be jailed for 4 years.

This French judiciary policy of ultimate appeasement of murderous anti-Semitism traces back to Abel Amastaibou who was deemed mentally unfit to stand trial for stabbing a Jew to death. He had no prior history of mental illness.

Commissioners, it is the French Judiciary that has exposed itself again and again as unfit to protect French Jewry from violent anti-Semitism. Left unchanged, such despicable policies **endanger all Jews in France and merits the placing France on your Tier II watchlist.**

Sweden on the 81st anniversary of the November 9th “Night of Broken Glass” when German synagogues were torched by the Nazis, neo-Nazis plastered stickers shaped like yellow stars on multiple Jewish sites in Sweden and Denmark. In Denmark, the stickers were placed on private residences and in Randers, 84 tombstones in the Jewish cemetery were vandalized. The same **yellow stars** appeared across Sweden, including the capital Stockholm where the Bajit Jewish café near the Adat Jeshurun synagogue, the Great Synagogue, and the Hillel school were hit.

Elsewhere, Jewish buildings in the cities of Helsingborg, where a Jewish woman was stabbed and severely injured earlier this year, and Norrköping were also desecrated. A Jewish mother who sends her children to the Hillel school in Stockholm, who declined to give her name lamented: “It is very, very sad that it is so. And it is, perhaps, something that makes us sometimes think about moving to another country where it would be easier to fully be who we are.”

Ten years ago, the Simon Wiesenthal Center placed a travel advisory on Malmö, Sweden’s third largest city for failing to deal with incessant anti-Semitic incidents against its Rabbi and small Jewish Community. Very little has changed despite the government’s announcement it will give a grant to better protect Jewish community facilities. Simply put, it may be too late. *Breitbart* reported that the numbers of Jews in the city has rapidly decreased in the last 20 years and [warned](#) the city’s community risked disappearing entirely.

A local Jewish teen Daniel Vaknine [described](#) his experience living in the city in August saying: “Uncertainty means that you cannot go to school with a visible Star of David because then there is a high risk of being threatened, or that someone follows you from the school or even being beaten.”

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention reported a record-high 280 anti-Semitic incidents, a jump of 53% over their last audit. While Jews make up no more than one-fifth of one percent of Sweden’s population, more than 4% of all hate incidents in the country target Jews. Shari Tingman, Acting Group Chief and Preliminary Investigation Leader at Stockholm Police’s Democracy and Hate Crime Group, said police need to do more to understand Jewish culture. How clueless are they? Swedish police allowed neo-Nazis to rally in Raoul Wallenberg Square across from Stockholm’s Main Synagogue.

Sweden fails to protect its Jewish citizens and institutions and has failed to hold anti-Semites accountable for their actions in the public and private sectors, including at its famed Karolinska Hospital.

Sweden should be placed on the Commission’s Tier II Watchlist.

Germany German official lamentations against anti-Semitism are not matched by consistent broad-based actions. On Yom Kippur, Judaism’s holiest day, dozens of Jews were praying and fasting in a synagogue in Halle. Only a miracle saved them from the bullets of a neo-Nazi gunman. Two other innocent people nearby weren’t so lucky. [Anti-Semitism in Germany is surging and not only from the extreme right](#). Hours after I met with the Mayor of Berlin, an [Israeli student was assaulted on its streets for speaking Hebrew in public](#). [Jewish kids have been bullied in schools](#), Jewish tourists accosted. [The Wiesenthal Center and others have been urging Chancellor Merkel and the Mayor of Berlin](#) to declare Hezbollah a terrorist organization. This would cut them off from financial support and make it harder for them to further spread their hatred of Jews among young Muslims in Germany. To date, Chancellor Merkel has refused, ensuring that Germany’s Jewish community will be further endangered.

We therefore call on the Commission to list Germany on its Tier II Watchlist.

England: Days before the UK's last election, the Simon Wiesenthal Center listed [Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour Party number #1 on our 2019 Top 10 anti-Semitic list](#). Corbyn resigned after a historic defeat. The anti-Semitism he allowed to be unleashed within his Party played a role in his political demise.

Tragically, [the injection of cancerous anti-Semitism into the mainstream of England's national political and social discourse will have long-lasting impact](#). [Ugly anti-Semitic hate crimes](#) have continued [beyond election day](#).

Given the close historic links between our two countries, it is important that the Commission carefully analyze the current situation and consider placing **UK on the Tier II watchlist**.

In closing, the Simon Wiesenthal Center urges the Commission in consultation with Special Envoy Elan Carr to visit these European countries and meet with activists and opinion makers to help combat history's oldest scourge.