

GERMANY: Anti-Semitism: Germany sees '10% jump in offences' in 2018

The German government has revealed a sharp increase in the number of anti-Semitic offences recorded last year.

BBC (13.02.2019) – <https://bbc.in/2IetSIe> – Crime data, detailed in German media on Wednesday, says 1,646 crimes were linked to a hatred of Jews in 2018 – showing a yearly increase of 10%.

It comes just a day after French politicians spoke out about a sharp rise of incidents in their own country.

French Interior minister, Christophe Castaner, has warned that anti-Semitism is “spreading like poison”.

Over the weekend there were a series of anti-Semitic incidents reported in central Paris – including Swastika vandalism on post-boxes featuring a holocaust survivor’s portrait.

The latest data from Germany was released after a request from a member of the far-left Die Linke party. [That information was then shared with German newspaper, Der Tagesspiegel.](#)

The government have said the final totals may still increase – but the latest collation of data revealed a total jump in anti-Semitic offences of about 10%.

It also revealed a 60% rise in physical attacks – with 62 violent incidents recorded, up from 37 in 2017.

Josef Shcuster, the head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, said the news shows that government action is “urgently needed”.

“The latest numbers are not yet official, but at least they reflect a tendency – and that’s scary,” he said in a statement to the BBC.

“What had already solidified as a subjective impression among Jews is now confirmed in the statistics.

“Considering that acts below the threshold for criminal liability are not covered, the picture becomes even darker.”

Jewish groups have warned about the rise of far-right groups in fostering anti-Semitism and hatred of other minorities throughout Europe.

Last year, [a survey of thousands of European Jews revealed that many were increasingly worried about anti-Semitism.](#)

Since 2017, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) have been country's main opposition party.

AfD are openly against immigration, but deny holding anti-Semitic views.

However, a number of [comments from their politicians, including about the Holocaust, have drawn scorn from Jewish groups](#) and other politicians.

Last year the German government announced that a specialist team would be sent into German schools to try and combat anti-Semitism.

There have also been calls for special classes about anti-Semitism to be provided for some immigrants.

The Central Council of Jews in Germany said the classes were needed after a large increased in immigration from Muslim-majority countries.

It came after a video went viral showing a man, shouting in Arabic, attacking two Jewish men in Berlin.

Last month, Chancellor Angela Merkel has said it was the responsibility of everyone to have a "zero tolerance" approach

to anti-Semitism and other forms of xenophobia.

“People growing up today must know what people were capable of in the past, and we must work proactively to ensure that it is never repeated,” Merkel during a video address to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.

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FRANCE: Spate of anti-Semitic acts sparks outrage in France

A tree planted in a Paris suburb in memory of a young Jewish man who was tortured to death in 2006 has been chopped down, authorities said Monday, confirming the latest in a series of anti-Semitic acts in France.

France 24 (12.02.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2tiPEAz> – Ilan Halimi was kidnapped by a gang that demanded huge sums of money from his family, believing them to be rich because he was Jewish.

After being tortured for three weeks, the 23-year-old cellphone salesman was found dumped next to a railway in the southern suburb of Sainte-Genevieve-des-Bois. He died while being brought to hospital.

On Monday, municipal workers sent to prepare a memorial site for an annual remembrance ceremony this week discovered that a tree planted in his honour had been chopped down and a second one partly sawn through, local officials told AFP.

The police are investigating the incident, which the French government's special representative on racism, anti-Semitism and discrimination, Frederic Potier, described as "ignominious".

It is the latest in a series of anti-Semitic acts and attacks that have raised fears of a new wave of anti-Jewish violence in a country that is home to Europe's biggest Jewish population.

Anti-Semitic acts surged by 74 percent last year, from 311 in 2017 to 541 in 2018, French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner said Monday.

“Anti-Semitism is spreading like poison,” the visibly moved minister said near the spot where the tree was chopped down.

“By attacking... Ilan Halimi’s memory, it’s the Republic that’s being attacked,” he added, vowing that the government would take action.

In two separate incidents in the past two days, swastikas were drawn on Paris postboxes containing portraits of late Holocaust survivor Simone Veil and the word Juden (German for Jews) was sprayed on the window of a bagel bakery in the capital.

The incident involving the postboxes was reported by artist Christian Guemy, who painted the portraits of Veil on the boxes in the city’s 13th district to mark her burial last year at the Pantheon, final resting place of France’s most illustrious figures.

A former justice minister, Veil was a hugely respected figure whose death in 2017 caused a national outpouring of emotion.

“Shame on the despicable person that disfigured my tribute to Simeon Veil, Holocaust survivor,” Guemy tweeted Monday along with pictures of the boxes.

Reacting to the tweet, European Affairs Minister Nathalie Loiseau expressed consternation over the “desecration”.

Jihadist attacks

Meanwhile on Sunday, one of the founders of French bagel bakery chain Bagelstein said vandals had sprayed the word "Judens" in yellow paint on the window of an outlet in the Ile Saint-Louis island in central Paris.

Government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux drew a line between the graffiti and an arson attack last week on the home of parliament speaker Richard Ferrand, over which the "yellow vest" protest movement has come under suspicion.

But Gilles Abecassis, co-founder of Bagelstein, said he did not believe that anti-government demonstrators, some of whom have shown support for a comedian convicted of anti-Semitism, were responsible.

"They wrote it in yellow but that could be for the Star of David," he said, adding that he had received thousands of messages of solidarity from around the world.

In November, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe warned that France, whose pro-Nazi regime deported Jews during World War II, was "very far from being finished with anti-Semitism".

In recent years, French jihadists have targeted Jews in a number of attacks.

In 2012, an Islamist gunman shot dead a rabbi and three children at a Jewish school in Toulouse and in 2015 an extremist claiming allegiance to the Islamic State group killed four people at a kosher supermarket in Paris.

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