

GERMANY: German Jews call for anti-Semitism classes for Muslim immigrants

Germany's federation of Jews says Muslim immigrants need special classes to counter anti-Semitic beliefs. They also condemned the AfD for normalizing anti-Semitism in Germany.

By Alistair Walsh

DW (05.11.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2DAiHXc> – Germany's Central Council of Jews on Sunday called for combating anti-Semitism among new Muslim immigrants through education.

Vice President Abraham Lehrer told the Protestant Press Service that he expects anti-Semitism among immigrants to become more of a problem as they become more settled in Germany.

"The problem of immigrant Arab-Islamic anti-Semitism still lies ahead of us. Many of these people were influenced by regimes in which anti-Semitism is part of the rationale of the state and the Jewish state is denied the right to existence," Lehrer said.

"When these people no longer think only of jobs and housing, this influence will have a greater bearing and people will express their opinions openly. In order to prevent this

scenario, we need to tailor integration courses more closely to these people, preferably by country of origin.

“What is needed are additional hours (in integration classes) in which fundamental values such as democracy and the treatment of women in our society are taught intensively.”

Lehrer was speaking ahead of the 80th anniversary of Kristallnacht, the seminal pogrom in which Jewish houses, synagogues and businesses were torched across the country with the implicit blessing of authorities.

AfD provides platform for anti-Semitism

Speaking more broadly about anti-Semitism in Germany, particularly in regard to the rise of the far right, Lehrer said the current climate in Germany reminded him of attitudes at the end of the Weimar Republic.

Anti-Semitism had surged in Germany with the onset of the Great Depression in 1929 and the rise of Adolf Hitler and his Nazi party.

“We are concerned about the spread of anti-Semitism. I still encounter old sentiments of resentment in line with the principle ‘the Jews dominate television and the banking and financial world,’” he said.

He said authorities had failed to adequately condemn and prosecute anti-Semitism on display at neo-Nazi marches, such as those in Chemnitz.

Lehrer said the AfD, while not explicitly anti-Semitic, had helped foster anti-Semitic attitudes.

“At the very least (the AfD) creates a platform on which anti-Semitism can grow and manifest itself openly. In its draft party manifesto, for example, the party opposes circumcision and shechita (Jewish method of animal slaughter),” he said.

“Radical representatives such as Björn Höcke relativize the Holocaust and are apparently supported by a broad majority. The AfD is a kind of catalyst for various groups with anti-Semitic roots. It deliberately transgresses boundaries and thus contributes to anti-Semitic attitudes being regarded as normal.”

He called on states to introduce an anti-Semitism commissioner to signal that the government was concerned about the issue and devoted special attention to it.

HRWF Comment: Highly recommended reading: “The Roots of Antisemitism in the Middle East: New Debates”

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FRANCE: Anti-Semitic acts up 69 percent in France in 2018, prime minister says

Anti-Semitic acts in France rose by 69 percent in the first nine months of 2018, Prime Minister Édouard Philippe said Friday, on the 80th anniversary of the infamous “Kristallnacht” attacks on Jews in Nazi Germany.

France 24 (09.11.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2Dj2WmS> – Kristallnacht (also known as the Night of Broken Glass) refers to the smashed windows of Jewish shops and homes that happened in Nazi Germany during a heightened wave of violent anti-Jewish pogroms that took place on November 9-10, 1938. At least 91 Jewish people were killed and up to 30,000 men were rounded up and taken to concentration camps.

“Every aggression perpetrated against one of our citizens because they are Jewish echoes like the breaking of new crystal,” Prime Minister Édouard Philippe wrote in the statement on Facebook, referring to Kristallnacht.

“Why recall, in 2018, such a painful memory? Because we are very far from being finished with anti-Semitism,” he said, calling the number of acts “relentless”.

After a record high in 2015, anti-Semitic acts fell by 58 percent in 2016 and went down a further 7 percent last year.

France has the largest Jewish population in Europe and the third-largest Jewish population in the world. However, despite Jewish people making up less than 1 percent of the French population, they were the targets of nearly 40 percent of the violent acts in France classified as racially or religiously motivated in 2017.

And according to Phillippe, there has been a 69 percent rise in anti-Semitic acts in the first nine months of this year.

Günther Jikeli, a German historian at Indiana University who conducted a significant study of Muslim anti-Semitism in Europe, said the causes of this dramatic spike are difficult to identify. “The only two countries with reliable data on anti-Semitism are the UK and France,” he said. “Rises in anti-Semitism often happen in correlated waves in the two

countries, and last year there was a major wave in the UK.”

‘Unite and speak out’

“Anti-Semitism is often in the minds of many people, but we need to discover what triggers this into action,” said Jikeli. “Sometimes people feel emboldened in the wake of another anti-Semitic act, like the Pittsburgh attack” on a Jewish synagogue that killed 11 people in October.

The murder of an 85-year-old Jewish woman in her home last spring left many in France aghast.

“The murder of Mireille Knoll in March shocked and outraged so many people, but maybe it also activated others. We know that anti-Semites feel encouraged to take action for many reasons. But, crucially, they can also be discouraged – and international leaders must unite and speak out.”

Philippe quoted Holocaust survivor and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel as saying that “the real danger, my son, is indifference”, pledging that the French government would not be indifferent.

The government plans to toughen rules on hate speech online next year, pressuring social media giants to do more to remove racist and anti-Semitic content.

Philippe said it would also “experiment with a network of investigators and magistrates who are specially trained in the fight against acts of hate”, which could be extended nationwide.

He added that from mid-November a national team would be mobilised to intervene in schools to support teachers dealing with anti-Semitism in their classrooms.

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