

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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