

Anti-Semitism Rising, But So Is Aliyah to Israel

In late May, a young man showed up one afternoon outside the Jewish Museum in Brussels, located on a quiet street in the heart of the Belgian capital. Wearing a baseball cap and a “Go-Pro” camera mounted on his chest, he proceeded to take out a .38 revolver and a Kalashnikov rifle from a satchel and fire upon people at the museum entrance.

Within seconds, he had gunned down an Israeli couple, a French woman and a museum worker and then fled the scene.

A week later, the trail led police to Mehdi Nemmouche, a 29-year old French-Algerian criminal, who, after being released from jail in Paris in 2012, went to Syria to join the ranks of the Islamic State terror militia and recently returned to France thirsting to shed Jewish blood. As in the Toulouse shooting two years ago, the shooter had hoped to film his exploits to boost recruiting. Now awaiting trial back in Brussels, he is believed to be the first European jihadist to volunteer in the Syrian war and then return to kill in Europe.

But with ISIS now rampaging across Iraq and slaughtering every “infidel” in its path, European leaders are worried there will be many more like Nemmouche. Officials in Britain, for instance, are concerned that twice as many British Muslims have opted to join ISIS in Iraq and Syria than are currently serving in the British army.

Add to this growing threat the dramatic surge in anti-Semitic incidents across Europe in the wake of Israel’s efforts to end Hamas rocket attacks from Gaza over recent months, and we are looking at a very volatile mix.

The Anti-Defamation League just released a study that found a sudden spike in the number of anti-Semitic incidents

worldwide, particularly in Europe, since the beginning of the IDF's Operation Protective Edge in Gaza in early July. This included physical assaults on Jews; threats and intimidation; damage to Jewish synagogues, homes and businesses; public hate speech; declarations invoking blood libels and Nazi atrocities; and anti-Semitic political cartoons. The majority of the incidents occurred throughout Europe, but others were reported in South Africa, Australia, Turkey, Canada, Morocco and several Latin American countries.

Though many of those involved said they were only expressing anger at Israel, in most incidents this quickly lapsed into hatred of Jews in general. Protesters often chanted "death to the Jews" and held up signs comparing Zionism to Nazism.

In Paris, several synagogues have come under siege by violent mobs. Near the Peace Palace in The Hague, Muslim crowds have repeatedly held demonstrations featuring the black flag of ISIS and calls for Jews to "remember Khybar"—a reference to the massacre of Jews in that Arabian town carried out with Muhammad's assent.

In Frankfurt, a rabbi received a phone call threatening to kill 30 of the city's Jews. Elsewhere, a rabbi was assaulted in Casablanca in retribution for the Gaza campaign, breaking his nose and ribs. In far-off Australia, hooligans jumped onto a bus filled with Jewish students and threatened them harm.

Meanwhile, both Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan have joined Hollywood stars in accusing Israel of committing "genocide" in Gaza.

Given this decrepit state of affairs, it is no wonder that aliyah to Israel is up over recent months, including a rise of 162 percent from Western Europe. This includes a 250 percent increase from France compared to last year. In fact, as many as 5,000 French Jews—a full 1 percent of the community—are expected to move to Israel this year alone. That is an

unprecedented figure for a Western country.

Many are being pushed out by the surge in anti-Semitism while also being lured by the prospect of finding better jobs in Israel.

Jewish Agency chairman Natan Sharansky even claimed that Israel has taken in more Jewish immigrants than Hamas rockets over recent months.

Many of these newcomers to Israel are fleeing from Ukraine, where the civil war against Russian separatists in the east of the country has intensified. Over recent months, this conflict has turned into urban warfare between Ukrainian troops and pro-Russian forces, emptying entire cities of their populations. This includes thousands of Jews now living in refugee camps in western Ukraine, many of whom are deciding to move to Israel. Aliyah from the Ukraine has doubled so far this year.

Yet many elderly Jews remain shut up in their homes in eastern Ukraine. There is no power or running water in many towns, the trains have stopped operating, shooting and mortar fire can be heard all around, and competing militias have set up roadblocks everywhere demanding bribes for safe passage.

Nonetheless, efforts are under way to send in rescue teams to bring many isolated and internally displaced Jews in the Ukraine out to safety. The Jewish Agency has asked the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem to help fund these rescue efforts, which eventually will lead to their aliyah to Israel.

Understanding that they must be brought out to safety while immigration authorities are expediting their paperwork, the ICEJ has handed over enough funds to assist several hundred Jews awaiting flights to Israel. We also have committed to help fund this most urgent humanitarian mission to rescue trapped Jews still in eastern Ukraine, but we need your gifts

to make it happen.

Meanwhile, the next set of ICEJ-sponsored aliyah flights for the Bnei Menashe community in northeast India is expected in November. This, too, is a great humanitarian effort to bring home an ancient Israelite tribe that has been waiting 2,700 years to return to the land of their forefathers.

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