



## PERSPECTIVES

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# Israel and Jews: Facing Europe's Challenges

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** A number of major problem issues in Western European countries and the EU face Israel and the Jews. The widespread demonization of Israel remains a critical problem. So do anti-Semitism, the continuous influx of Muslims without any selection, the major manifestation of anti-Semitism within the UK Labor Party, the growth of the extreme right and left in France, and other important issues. Establishing such an inventory may provide a useful tool for Israel and international Jewish organizations in defining their 2018 agenda.

In order to follow developments in 2018, it is helpful to establish a partial inventory of major problem issues for Israel and the Jews in Western European countries and the EU.

A central problem remains the widespread demonization of Israel. Polls in nine countries tell us that high percentages of their populations agree with statements such as, "What the state of Israel does today to the Palestinians is in principle no different from what the Nazis did to the Jews in the Third Reich" and "Israel conducts a war of extermination against the Palestinians." Statistics show that in these countries, at least 38% of the population agree with such statements. The figure is highest in Poland, at 63%.

These "feelings" of European citizens tell us nothing about Israel and its actions. They are, however, indicative of extreme anti-Israel bias in a number of countries. Concerning Germany, seven polls exist on these attitudes taken from 2004 to 2015. The latest, from 2015, found that 41% of Germans see Israel as behaving like Nazis.

On a continent where Nazi Germany had so many collaborators in the countries it occupied, the Israeli government is fully within its rights to confront governments about its being demonized.

Anti-Semitism in several EU countries seems to be expanding. Many in the European establishment have made efforts to suppress information or avoid mentioning the important role of Muslims in aggression and hatemongering against Jews and Israel. This has delayed this major aspect of anti-Semitism from coming forcefully into the European public domain.

A variety of detailed studies show that anti-Semitism among Muslim immigrants and their descendants by far exceeds that of the original populations of European countries. All Jews killed in Western Europe this century for ideological reasons were murdered by Muslims.

A UK study published in September 2017 found that 12.6% of Muslims there have strong anti-Semitic attitudes, whereas only 3.6% of the general population hold such opinions. The same study found that 34.7% of UK Muslims have strong anti-Israel attitudes versus 9% of the general population.

Research among recent refugees from Syria and Iraq in Germany indicates far stronger anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli feelings than in the local population. The additional influx – without selection – of Muslims into Europe means importing more anti-Semites.

The EU has taken some anti-Israel measures that are anti-Semitic, according to the definition of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. Furthermore, statements of the EU on events in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict often express anti-Israel bias. One might conclude that the weaker the EU is, the better for Israel.

The overall societal situation in Germany has greatly deteriorated over the past two years due to Chancellor Angela Merkel's irresponsible welcome policy for refugees. In the September 2017 elections, the country's two major parties, the Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Social Democrats (SPD), declined to their lowest levels since 1949.

In those elections, the AfD – a right-wing anti-Islam party – became the third-largest in Germany. It has no constructive program and its leadership is increasingly moving toward the extreme right. For both Israel and Jews, there is much more to worry about in the Germany of 2018 than there was in the Germany of 2015.

There has been an explosion of anti-Semitic expression in the Labor party in the UK. It is entirely possible that the country's conservative government will fall in 2018 due to problems concerning the Brexit negotiations. Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn, a facilitator of anti-Semitism who calls Hezbollah and Hamas his friends, may well win the next elections.

The situation for the Jews in France might be called "negatively stable." Two candidates in the 2017 presidential election, the extreme right wing Marine Le Pen and extreme leftist Jean-Luc Melenchon, together received 40% of the vote. Both deny that France is responsible for the extreme anti-Semitic crimes perpetrated by its wartime Vichy government. This is a great step backward, as French President Emmanuel Macron and his three predecessors have all admitted this responsibility.

Extreme right wing parties have, in the new century, become more significant in a variety of European countries. Muslim terrorism has strengthened them. Those of these parties who wish to participate in government usually moderate their official positions somewhat. Such an attitude enabled the entrance of the right wing FPÖ into the Austrian government at the end of 2017.

Sweden remains a problem country for both its Jews and Israel. One of the worst anti-Semitic incidents to occur in Europe in 2017 was the bombing of a synagogue in the country's second-largest city, Gothenburg, while a youth activity was taking place within. Other bombings have occurred in Malmö, the country's third-largest city and widely considered the capital of European anti-Semitism. Most perpetrators are Muslims. After the Gothenburg attack, Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven was forced by the circumstances to condemn anti-Semitism. He even indicated that immigrants play a role in it.

The situation in the Netherlands, as far as Israel and anti-Semitism are concerned, is usually less severe than in most of the countries mentioned. Yet in 2017, it became even clearer than in the past that the police and the judiciary are partially dysfunctional in dealing with anti-Semitic incidents.

In Switzerland, a particular problem confronts the Jewish community. The authorities have found that Jewish institutions are targets for terror, but they refuse to pay for the security of synagogues and Jewish institutions. As the authorities do supply such security for various potential non-Jewish targets, this reflects a discriminatory policy.

The above incomplete list may provide a useful tool for Israel's authorities and international Jewish organizations in defining their 2018 agenda.

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