

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Breaking the Cycle of Violence

Countering Antisemitism and Extremism in France

January 2016

The deadly terrorist attacks on November 13 in Paris, coming less than a year after the killings at Charlie Hebdo and a kosher supermarket, have focused long overdue attention on the resurgence of antisemitism and extremism in France. France has both the largest Jewish and one of the largest Muslim communities in Europe. With the rise of the xenophobic far-right National Front party, this situation is a tinderbox. “Antisemitism is unacceptable no matter where it comes from,” said the Chief Rabbi of France, Haim Korsia, in July 2015. “When there is a Republic with strong values—liberty, equality, fraternity, which we often forget—we have security and serenity for everyone, including Jews.”

Violence targeting Jews and Jewish sites has led to a heightened sense of insecurity, and an increasing number of Jews are relocating in or outside of France for security reasons. Some observers have drawn comparisons to Europe in the 1930s. While that dark history continues to cast a cautionary shadow, as it should, the comparison is inapt. Nonetheless,



People light candles during a vigil in Kathmandu November 15, 2015, following the deadly attacks in Paris. REUTERS/Navesh Chitrakar

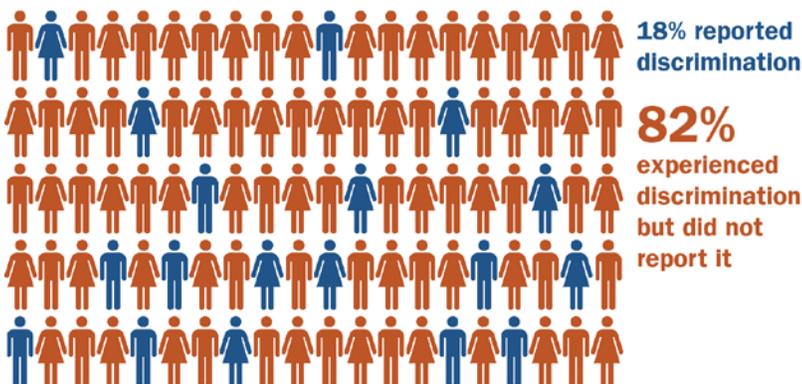
antisemitism is a grave threat to human rights, and its resurgence in France should be of great concern to the French government and its allies, including the United States.

Antisemitic violence harms not only its direct victims but entire Jewish communities, preventing them from

being able to exercise their fundamental rights. And the potential damage is even greater: Left unchecked, antisemitism leads to the persecution of other minorities, and to an overall increase in repression and intolerance. An increase in antisemitism is a harbinger of societal breakdown.

This report analyzes the nature and extent of antisemitism in France and presents recommendations for combating it by promoting tolerance and inclusiveness. Based on public information and interviews with a range of government officials, civil society representatives, and academic

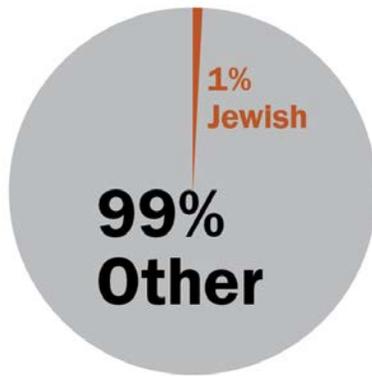
ANTISEMITISM UNDERREPORTED



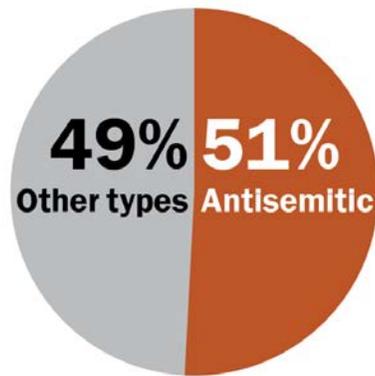
SOURCE: *Discrimination and Hate Crimes against Jews in E.U. Member States: Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism* at 57–58, E.U. Agency for Fundamental Rights (2013).

DATA ON RISING FRENCH ANTISEMITISM

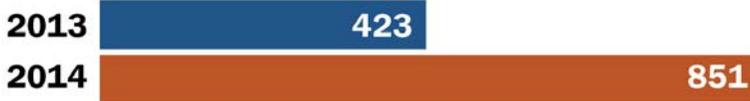
Population of France



Hate Incidents in 2014



Antisemitic Incidents



50% of incidents take place in the suburbs of Paris, in Marseilles, and in Lyon.

These are the largest Jewish communities in France.



SOURCE: 2014 Report on Antisemitism in France at 17, Service de Protection de la Communauté Juive (2014).

experts, the report examines this problem within broader and interrelated phenomena, including the ascendancy of the far-right party the National Front, mounting anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment, the spread of Islamic extremism, and the increasing alienation of many Muslims in France. While the report assesses spikes in antisemitic incidents related to developments in the Middle East, it focuses on France and the domestic dynamics contributing to this problem. However, we see France as a test case for the plight of Jews on the continent because the pertinent trends there also exist in other European countries.

The report's core findings include the following:

- French Jews confront multiple forms of antisemitism, including antisemitic hate crimes ranging in severity from insults and graffiti to assaults; organized crimes motivated by Jews' perceived wealth; antisemitic incidents associated with public protests against the government and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and terrorist attacks targeting Jews and Jewish institutions.
- Antisemitic incidents are on the rise in France, yet underreported and inadequately researched. The number of reported antisemitic hate crimes more than doubled in 2014 from the previous year, and they account for a disproportionate number of all bias-motivated incidents. Yet limited data is available on perpetrators' ethnic and religious identities, due in part to France's prohibition on collecting "ethnic" statistics. Inadequate data collection in schools and in the criminal justice system further inhibits analysis.
- Supporters of the National Front are among those most likely to hold antisemitic and other intolerant attitudes. Surveys indicate that other groups in France that are likely to harbor antisemitic views, but to a lesser degree, include supporters of far-left political parties, observant Catholics, and certain minority groups including Muslims and immigrants, although more research is needed on this issue.
- A complex array of root causes contributes to antisemitism, including the rising influence of the National Front and the exclusion of marginalized groups from French identity and "Republican" values. Conflicting and polarized interpretations of *laïcité* (secularism) fuel an environment in which antisemitic, racist, and xenophobic discourse is on the rise. French Muslims, immigrants, and French citizens of Middle Eastern, North African, and Sub-

Saharan African heritage also suffer from hate crimes, prejudice, and discrimination.

- Government action to denounce and confront antisemitism paradoxically exacerbates it, by validating the narrative that Jews exert inordinate influence over the French political establishment.
- The French government has launched renewed efforts to combat antisemitism, including a National Action Plan to Fight Racism and Antisemitism in 2014, but these measures fall short of the long-term political vision necessary to confront the problem's root causes. French civil society faces structural challenges including dependence on public funds, recruitment of promising leaders into government service, resistance among activists to coalition-building efforts, and a disconnect between established national NGOs and local grassroots initiatives.

States and France therefore share a strong interest in combating this serious human rights problem and creating a stronger and more inclusive society.

The report's recommendations seek to promote greater transatlantic cooperation. We aim to spur the U.S. government to work with France to address the root causes of antisemitism and extremism and prevent future attacks. We also provide recommendations to civil society, proposing that a coalition of civil society representatives from both countries work together across oceans, faiths, national, and ethnic identities to build concrete successes from the ground up and to shine a spotlight on where governments should intensify their efforts.

A sampling of key recommendations, which the report's final section articulates in more depth:

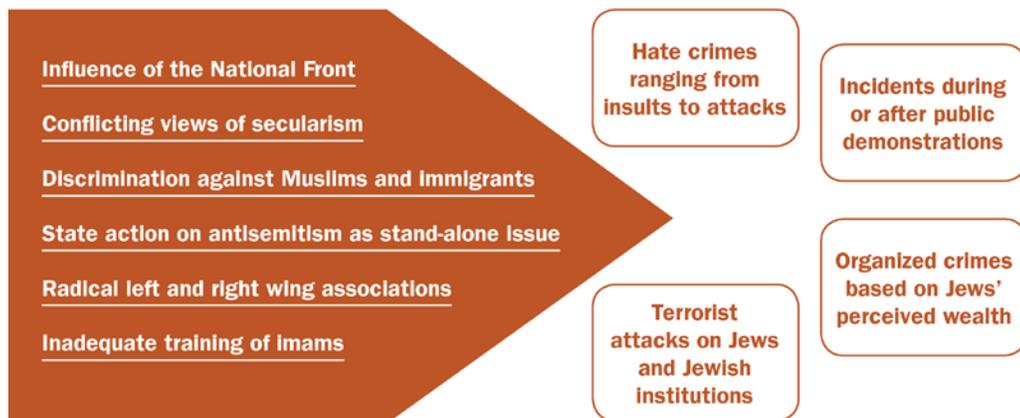
- **For the U.S. government:** The U.S. government should maintain a focus on antisemitic violence

and its prevention in France, seeking to better understand the root causes, including the marginalization and radicalization of other segments of society. It should conduct intergovernmental exchanges on combating hate crime and promoting community/law enforcement relations; increase opportunities

for civil society cooperation (including between U.S. and French civil society organizations) to combat antisemitism and racism; and promote programs to increase social and economic inclusion in France.

- **For the French government:** The French government should continue to prioritize combating antisemitism and racism; maintain appropriate security measures without undermining civil liberties; increase resources to respond to bias-motivated violence; fill research gaps, particularly

CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF ANTISEMITISM



This report builds on our extensive history of monitoring and combating hate crime—including antisemitic hate crime—in Europe. For more than a decade, we have advanced a comprehensive approach to hate crime, urging governments to address its root causes while protecting free speech. We engage on this issue as an organization that seeks to foster American leadership on human rights. France is a vital American ally, both as a close partner in bilateral initiatives and as a member of the European Union and other multilateral institutions advancing security, democracy, and human rights. The United

on hate crime victimization, radicalization, and the root causes of antisemitic violence; increase consultations with civil society; and advance a national narrative that emphasizes the positive contribution made to France by people from all parts of society, in particular immigrants and their descendants. Parliament should increase its attention to these issues.

- **For French civil society:** Civil society organizations should undertake coalition-building efforts, particularly welcoming and cultivating grassroots and interfaith initiatives, in order to comprehensively address different forms of intolerance and discrimination, including antisemitism. An inclusive discourse is needed to have policy impacts that address the root causes of bias-motivated violence.
- **For Internet companies:** Internet companies should proactively reach out to civil society and jointly discuss approaches for better identifying and responding to hate speech and incitement to violence. This collaboration could include training by Internet companies on how to report violations online and how to develop and disseminate effective counter-narratives through various social media platforms.



French President Francois Hollande and U.S. President Barack Obama place flowers at a makeshift memorial to pay tribute to the victims of the Paris attacks at the Bataclan Theater, November 30, 2015. REUTERS/Kevin Lamarque

Upcoming French elections in 2017, the rise of far-right parties, and the refugee crisis make the need to confront this problem all the more urgent. We are releasing this report on the one-year anniversary of the Charlie Hebdo and kosher supermarket attacks, as an urgent appeal: in 2016 we should work together to strengthen France so that the violence of 2015 does not happen again. The U.S. government and France should work together now to prevent attacks and help build a more peaceful, inclusive future. Our research is intended to contribute to a greater mutual understanding and to galvanize a powerful response. ■



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