

French Jews drawn to security of London

FINANCIAL TIMES
JANUARY 8, 2016

The defiant posture struck after the Paris attacks has not been enough to reassure all sections of the community

When armed guards appeared in front of her children's school in Paris, Sabine decided it was time to leave her native France.

A resident of Boulogne, a Jewish district in the French capital, she had become increasingly concerned about anti-semitism and was fearful of showing any sign in public that she was Jewish.

The last straw came a year ago when a gunman [killed four people at the Hyper Cacher kosher](#) supermarket on the other side of the city. "The Jews don't have a future in France," she said from her new home in London, where she moved in July with her husband and three children.

In London, she said, "there are a lot of people from a lot of countries. The English people have accepted [this]. London seems a lot safer than Paris. It is not the same in France."

Sabine, who declined to give her last name, is one of an increasing number of [Jews who are leaving France](#), many of them coming to London. "It was easy for my husband to find work here as he was already bilingual," she said.

Exact figures on how many Jews are leaving [France](#) and where they are going are hard to find because it is illegal to carry out a census according to ethnic or religious affiliation there. But there is little doubt many have decided it is time to leave, and after Israel — about 8,000 French citizens moved there last year, a record — the UK is an obvious destination.

Moshe Kantor, president of the European Jewish Congress, said: "The French government is making great efforts to protect our communities and return them to a semblance of normalcy. "However, it is clear that the numbers of Jews leaving France are extremely high, with many seeking a safe haven in the UK, as well as Israel and the US, and that is a big worry. A Europe-wide solution is required to tackle the evil of anti-semitism in Europe."

On Thursday Human Rights First, a US-based group, said anti-semitic attacks were "on the rise in France", yet inadequately researched. In 2014 the number of such attacks doubled from the year before and [accounted for 51 per cent of all hate crime](#), according to figures compiled by Jewish Community Security Service, an NGO, with the help of the interior ministry and police. Jews comprise about 1 per cent of France's population.

Daniel Turner, chairman of Brondesbury Park synagogue in north-west London, said he had noticed that more French Jews were moving into the area. "Anti-semitism is only moving in one direction in France," he said. "They're all very happy to not be there."

London was an easy choice because it was accessible from France, had an established Jewish community and a booming economy, he said. Of the Jews in his community, "when you get on to security matters, the ones most vocal about security measures we should put in place are the French".

One member of Mr Turner's synagogue said he had noticed a big rise in the number of French-speaking pupils at the large Jewish primary school his children attended. "In year one, it is about 10 per cent of kids who speak French. In reception, it goes up to 30 per cent and in nursery I would say it's about half."