



Year After Paris Attack, Jews Jittery as Soldiers Still Patrol Their Streets

A year after the attack on a Jewish kosher grocery in Paris in which four hostages were killed before police fatally shot the lone jihadist gunman, hundreds of French soldiers are still patrolling Jewish neighborhoods, protecting their schools, synagogues, and other “sensitive sites.”

On January 9, 2015, the self-proclaimed Islamic terrorist killed four customers and held several others as hostages in Hyper Cacher supermarket, until French police stormed the store and killed the gunman. The attack followed the killing of a dozen employees at the Paris office of French magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. Five of the victims were cartoonists who had published several satirical cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammed, considered blasphemous by Muslims.



Jews in France have had mixed reactions to the attacks and the increased protection by police and soldiers.

“I don’t feel safe here anymore,” declared one female survivor who was in the kosher store. “As Jews we are a preferred target, in a country which itself is a target.” Another regular store customer, identified only as Samuel, said it took him six months before he was able to go back to the grocery. According to AFP (the French Press Agency), he added, “There has been a real breaking point. Now we know we can be killed while doing our grocery shopping or walking the streets.”

Roger Cukierman, a French Jew who is vice president of the World Jewish Congress, labelled the Jewish supermarket killings a “despicable crime,” adding that “Islamist terrorism” is the principal “threat to our security and well-being today.”

However, Frederic Encel, a French Jewish politician, cautioned against blaming all Muslims for the attack, stating that the man who carried out the attack at the kosher grocery was an “extremist.”

Meanwhile, Dr. Shimon Samuels of the Simon Wiesenthal Center asserted that his hope was for “the authorities to draw the lessons of today and crack down on these threats with all measures available.”

Historically, Jews have far too often been targets simply for being Jews. However, many have pointed out that giving authorities carte blanche to “crack down with all measures available” could lead to an ever more powerful government, and a corresponding loss of liberty for all French citizens, including the country’s 500,000 resident Jews.

For many Jews in France, the very presence of soldiers patrolling their neighborhoods gives them a



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sense of heightened concern. Likewise, no doubt many would find it difficult to imagine that American soldiers patrolling the streets of U.S. cities would provide great comfort to freedom-loving Americans.

The attack on the kosher grocery in Paris was certainly not the first which specifically targeted Jews in France. In 2010, four Jews, including a rabbi and three children, were murdered by a Muslim terrorist shouting “Allah hu Aqbar!,” while the victims were simply standing in front of Jewish school in Toulouse, France. During the first seven months of 2014, attacks upon Jews in France had doubled. Five hundred and twenty-nine such actions or threats were registered up until the end of July, according to the Council of Jewish Institutions in France (CRIF), compared to 276 for the previous year.

A July 2014 march in Paris, announced as an event to support the cause of the Palestinians, turned instead toward the looting of Jewish businesses, while perpetrators shouted anti-Israeli slogans.

The well-known member of the White House press corps Helen Thomas, now deceased, was asked a few years ago what the Jews of Israel should do. She responded, “Tell them to get the hell out of Palestine.” When asked where they should then go, Thomas advised them that Germany and Poland were their “homes.”

However, not many Jews felt welcome in Germany or Poland in the 1930s. In November of 1939, Nazi storm troopers in Germany, along with many German civilians, erupted in what historians call “Kristallnacht,” or in English, “Crystal Night.” As the German “authorities” looked on with disinterest, Jewish businesses and synagogues were attacked across Germany. So many windows were broken that it gave the pogrom its name of Crystal Night, or the Night of the Broken Glass. Hundreds of Jews were murdered, over 1,000 synagogues were burned (some centuries-old), and over 7,000 businesses were damaged.

The horrors of the Holocaust, in which millions of European Jews were slaughtered, caused hundreds of thousands of Jews to flee Europe and settle in Palestine after World War II, eventually leading to the creation of the modern state of Israel in May of 1948.

Today, many French Jews are now considering taking the same action as thousands of their compatriots have done since that time: emigrating to Israel.

Official figures state that 7,900 Jews left France in 2015 in reaction to the escalating anti-Jewish attacks perpetrated by Islamic militants. With thousands more Muslim refugees expected to arrive in France from Syria, many Jews fear the situation will only worsen.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in response to the escalating anti-Semitic assaults in France and in Europe generally in the last few years, “To all the Jews of France, all the Jews of Europe, I would like to say that ... the state of Israel is your home.”

French Prime Minister Manuel Valls countered Netanyahu’s appeal and urged the Jews to stay in France. “France, without its Jews, is not France,” he insisted.

The creation of the state of Israel in 1948 was met with great hostility by neighboring Arab nations. “Zionism,” or the push for the recreation of the nation of Israel in the Middle East, has led to violent disputes over the displacement of alleged indigenous Palestinians from their homes. The region has seen turmoil, with wars and rumors of wars ever since Israel’s recreation.

For some, the solution, as Helen Thomas once suggested, is for the Jews to go “home” to Europe. But, with Jews being targeted in France as well as in other European countries, nothing appears to be a perfect solution for them. Being killed while shopping in a grocery store in Paris hardly has anything to



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do with Jewish settlements in modern Israel.

Not wishing to place themselves in the boiling cauldron of Middle Eastern conflicts, most Jews have decided to stay in France — for now. One year after the attack at the kosher grocery Hyper Cacher, many have expressed gratitude at the increased security and have decided to “get on with their lives.” But their lives, and the lives of their non-Jewish countrymen, would be much safer, and their liberty would be more secure, if large numbers of them were armed. Tragically, that was not the case during the Holocaust, and it is not the case today in France or any other country where restrictive gun laws have largely disarmed the civilian population.

Photo: AP Images

Steve Byas is a professor of history at Hillsdale Free Will Baptist College in Moore, Oklahoma. His book, History’s Greatest Libels, is a challenge to some of the great lies of history against some of history’s greatest heroes, such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Christopher Columbus, and Joseph McCarthy.



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