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## VIDEO OF ALLEGED ANTI-SEMITIC ATTACK IN BERLIN SPARKS OUTRAGE

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Religious and political leaders condemned the attack on two men wearing kippas in an affluent Berlin neighborhood. One of the victims says he wore the Jewish head covering as a kind of experiment.

The video depicts one of three suspects hurling verbal abuse and striking one of the victims with his belt. The man also yells the word "Jew" in Arabic. One of the victims [REDACTED] from Israel [REDACTED] told DW that he and his companion had tried to no avail to ignore the attackers.

"One of them got real aggressive and ran to me with his belt," Adam said. "At that moment I realized I have to take a video of it. I wanted to have evidence for police and the German people and the world to see how terrible it is these days as a Jew to go through Berlin streets."

Adam said that he was an Israeli who grew up in Arab family in Israel and told DW he was not, in fact, Jewish. He said the kippa, the traditional Jewish head covering, he wore was a gift from a friend who told him it was "unsafe" to wear out in the open.

"It was an experience for me to wear the kippa yesterday and go out," Adam said, adding that of 50 people on the street at the time, only one woman had volunteered help. But he said he had received lots of support from police and on social media.

### Part of a series?

The video went viral and immediately sent alarm bells ringing in Germany's Jewish community. Community leaders have been complaining for some time now that anti-Semitic incidents are on the rise.

"This is part of [a] series," said Josef Schuster, president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany. "Three years ago I warned against going into Arab areas of big cities with a kippa on," he said. "Now we're seeing an incident in a trendy, well-heeled neighborhood. That represents a new dimension."

### How dangerous is it to wear a kippa in Berlin?

Schuster added that he hoped that the video would help police apprehend the attackers and said

he expects them to be punished to the full extent of the law. Police say they are investigating.

### **'Something needs to be done'**

Although the German government says that most anti-Semitism comes from right-wing extremist groups, Jewish groups have complained that it is on the rise in parts of the Muslim community as well.

"Unfortunately we see an increase in these kinds of cases," the German government's anti-Semitism commissioner, Felix Klein, said. "1,500 anti-Semitic attacks are registered by police every year."

The video was first published by Germany's Jewish Forum for Democracy and Against Anti-Semitism (JFDA). JFDA representative Levi Salomon called the attack "intolerable," adding that the attack showed that Jews were not safe even in affluent areas of Berlin.

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"Now it's up to politicians and civil society," Salomon said in a statement. "We don't need any more sermons, something needs to be done."

### **'An attack on us all'**

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Wednesday that anti-Semitic incidents had to be combatted with "firmness and determination." Israel's ambassador to Germany, Jeremy Issacharoff, told DW that he was "very disturbed" by the scenes depicted in the video.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said Jews must "never again feel threatened" in Germany.

"When young men are attacked here just for wearing a yarmulke, that is intolerable," he posted on Twitter.

The parliamentary leader of the Social Democratic Party in Berlin, Raed Saleh, himself a Muslim born in the West Bank, said he was "deeply shocked" by the attack.

"These images are intolerable and shameful for our city," Saleh told Deutsche Welle. "Jewish life is an intrinsic part of the life of our city. An attack on Jewish Berliners is an attack on us all."

The president of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany, Aiman Mazyek, tweeted: "It enrages me when I see such hateful violence. Clear punishment for the perpetrator [REDACTED] on you! There cannot be one millimeter of space for anti-Semitism in our midst."

### **A burst of hatred in a nice neighborhood**

A factor in the uproar created by the video is its location. Helmholtzplatz, a square in the well-off neighborhood of Prenzlauer Berg, is usually considered an example of gentrification and an urban oasis for the upwardly mobile. A place of environmentally friendly supermarkets, wine shops,

trendy restaurants and couples strolling around behind baby carriages [REDACTED] attempted anti-Semitic whippings.

On Wednesday local residents were sunning themselves in the fine spring weather and enjoying lunch in an Indian restaurant on the corner. A film crew was preparing to shoot some scenes for a TV show, using the square as a backdrop. There was little sign that an outburst of hateful rage had taken place there.

"You always think these things take place on the city's outskirts or the districts that are said to be violent anyway," one local woman told DW. "This here — I don't get it."

The images in the attack video were shocking, although the victims suffered no serious injury. And those images are guaranteed to prompt further debate about whether Germany in general and the German capital in particular need to do more to combat anti-Semitism among a minority of Muslims.

Additional reporting contributed by Darko Janjevic.

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