
ANTI-SEMITISM RISING IN GERMANY, SURVEY FINDS

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Last week's attack on a synagogue in Germany has left Germans warning that anti-Semitism is on the rise. Federal and state interior ministers meet Friday to decide on protective measures for Jewish premises.

A survey done for ARD public broadcasting by the pollster Infratest dimap Friday showed 59% of voting-age Germans believe that anti-Semitism is spreading in their communities.

Compared to 40% in a sampling last year that's a jump of 19 percentage points.

The representative poll conducted by Infratest surveyed 1,062 voters between Monday and Wednesday — a week after a far-right attack on a synagogue in Germany's eastern city of Halle.

Another 35% responded that they saw no increase in anti-Semitism across Germany. Last year, 51% believed this was the case.

Rising anti-Semitism was seen by two-thirds or more of supporters of Germany's long-serving parliamentary parties — Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives, the center-left Social Democrats (SPD), the Greens and the former-communist Left.

Among adherents of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) formed in 2013 views were split. A rise in anti-Semitism was seen by 47% but not by another 48%.

Rampage in Halle

The sampling was made after a 27-year-old German man attempted a massacre in the city of Halle in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt but failed to shoot open the door of its synagogue packed with Jewish worshippers on Yom Kippur.

Instead, he shot and killed two local residents before being arrested and confessing to police of being motivated by right-wing extremism and anti-Semitism.

During his rampage, the gunman had live-streamed via an Internet gaming website a rant about Jews and Holocaust denials in English.

German interior ministers deliberate

Consequences from Halle were to be decided in Berlin on Friday by interior ministers of 16 regional states, or Länder, joined by German Federal Interior Minister Horst Seehofer.

In the Bundestag on Thursday, Seehofer outlined a package, including safeguards for Jewish premises, the pursuit of those making hate speech online, preventative work in schools, and a "massive" boost in security authorities' personnel — similar to what Germany had already established to deter Islamist terror.

In support of Jewish community members holding Sabbath rituals, Protestant and Catholic bishops in Saxony-Anhalt have urged Christians to gather with candles outside Halle's synagogue on Friday as a gesture of protection.

Long-standing warnings

Jewish communities in Germany have long warned of persistent anti-Semitism, with Josef Schuster, head of the Central Council of Jews, urging after the Halle shootings that "readiness for violence from the right must not be underestimated."

Halle was not an isolated case but a "clear and direct development," said Schuster last week.

Schuster: 'a clear and direct development'

During Thursday's Bundestag debate, Federal Justice Minister Christine Lambrecht, a center-left Social Democrat (SPD), described Germany's extremist right-wing scene as the "greatest threat" to Germany's communal life.

Intended, said Lambrecht, were also measures to better protect local and regional body politicians from far-right violence and hate campaigns.

Walter Lübke, a senior Kassel district official in Hesse state and long-time member of Merkel's conservatives, was killed with a shot to his head. Awaiting trial is a far-right extremist with past convictions for anti-migrant crimes.

Lübke was publicly known for advocating the welcoming refugee policy that Merkel adopted during an influx of cross-Mediterranean migrants in 2015.

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