

## INQUIRY INTO THE RISE OF ANTISEMITISM

You may know that every week, synagogues around the world read a portion of the Torah. A few weeks ago, a portion was read which contains in it three words that form the basis of Western civilisation: *tzedek, tedek tirdof* — justice, justice you shall pursue.

These simple words were radical. In a time when power was wielded through the sword and by wealth, the idea that justice should be the ultimate goal of every person and the worthiest form of power was bold and new. It goes to the essence of what civilisation is: without justice we cannot thrive. We cannot consider ourselves civilised.

When I look at the plight of Jews across Europe, I think of those words. I wonder how far Europe will tolerate intolerance. Will Europe pursue justice?

Events answer that question for me.

Law enforcement against extremists cannot wax and wane. If you let hate thrive for decades and decades, then you eventually pass a point of no return. The terrorist attacks we are witnessing around Europe were born in a vacuum; they were born in a vacuum of law enforcement, where extremism was tolerated with minimal disruption by acquiescent liberal states fearful of causing upset.

We talk so much about immigration into Europe that sometimes we forget to look at who is leaving, and Jews are leaving. Thankfully there is no global database tracking the migration of Jews, but Israel does count the number of people availing themselves of the Law of Return, which guarantees Jews unconditional safe haven. Since 2000, 6% of the Jewish population of Europe has emigrated to Israel. In 2014 the rate of Jewish emigration doubled to its highest ever level and rose again in 2015. Leaving your home is not a snap decision, and for it to have sped up so dramatically shows that it has momentum. For many of those who emigrate, it will have been a decision that was ten years in the making. And in addition to that 6%, there are more Jews still, perhaps another 6%, who are leaving mainland Europe and coming to Britain, or the United States.

Jews across Europe are justified in thinking that society and the state have failed to step forward to end the wave of antisemitism that is behind this emigration. Had the only terrorist murders in Paris in January last year been the four Jews doing their weekly shop at the kosher supermarket, would there have been a million people demonstrating in the street?

We know from the shooting at the Jewish Museum in Brussels, and the horrific shooting of three Jewish children and their teacher at a Jewish school in Toulouse, that the million-man demonstrations do not materialise when the dead are 'just Jews'. After November's terrorist attacks in Paris, many started saying that "everyone is a target" but they were already a

target — Jews are part of “everyone”. When Jews start leaving, it is the surest possible sign that society itself is collapsing.

But Jews are not just leaving because of the major terrorist attacks that make the headlines. They are leaving because of stories like that of Samuel and Diana Blog, both in their late eighties, both Holocaust survivors. One night two men noticed the Jewish mezuzah on their front door in Amsterdam. They pretended to be police officers and barged in. As they shouted “dirty Jews” they beat Samuel until he was blind. They broke Samuel and Diana’s bones until they were wheelchair-bound for life.

So what can we in Britain learn from the rest of Europe? We could comfort ourselves. We could use Jews as a gauge of our society’s health, and our country is one of the best places in the world to be a Jew. We are offering a haven to the afflicted. Some London synagogues are now conducting their services in French. But we should not be comfortable at all.

Four years ago, two British Islamists, Sajid and Shasta Khan, were caught by total fluke. They had been building bombs in their front room and planned to attack the British Jewish community. One day they had an argument which the neighbours overheard and called the police. That is how close we came to a bomb attack on British Jews.

We are in the midst of the Jewish High Holy Days, and once again synagogue-goers will pass airport-style security that has been the norm here for decades. But in 2014, when antisemitic attacks here broke all records during the Gaza war, many tried to explain it away as some sort of rage against Israel. If that is the case, why the following year, 2015, did Campaign Against Antisemitism’s National Antisemitic Crime Audit discover that antisemitic crime had jumped 26% to a new record high? Why, in the absence of the convenient excuse of a war in Gaza, did violent attacks on Jews surge by 51% last year?

The reason is that at the same time as antisemitic crime was breaking new records, the charging of antisemitic crime dropped.

We do not believe that there is a hierarchy of hate, but antisemitism is different from other types of racist hatred. It is no mere prejudice; it endures because it is an ideology. It presents itself as a form of justice. Whereas other forms of racism slur their victims to diminish them, antisemitism does the opposite. Jews are presented as conniving, corrupting, parasites who wield immense power to the detriment of society. Antisemites present themselves as agents of justice, freeing mankind from Jewish dominance.

Like all ideologies, antisemitism has its own antibodies. Every Jewish contribution to society is cast as a bid for power. Every person who does not adopt antisemitism is dismissed as weak and blind. Every opponent of antisemitism is discredited as being part of a Jewish conspiracy or in the pay of Jews. Call an antisemite antisemitic and they will insist that you are smearing them to stop them exposing Jewish power. This has been accelerated by

social media, which has enabled antisemitic ideology to become 'open source', allowing it to mutate faster than ever before, combining the strains of far-right antisemitism, far-left antisemitism and Islamist antisemitism into one super-resistant antisemitic ideology that is almost invulnerable to the usual social immune defences of reason and opprobrium.

It is due to these traits that antisemitism spreads faster than other prejudices, and for that reason we simply cannot wait for the slow progress that the criminal justice system is making in tackling hate crime as a whole. Antisemitism needs forceful, immediate and specific action.

Instead, the opposite is happening. The Crown Prosecution Service has proudly announced that it prosecuted more hate crime than ever before last year — 15,442 cases — yet as far as we know, only twelve of those cases were prosecutions of antisemitic hate crime. We cannot know exactly because the Crown Prosecution Service refuses to provide any breakdown of its statistics.

Campaign Against Antisemitism deals daily with police forces, regulators and the Crown Prosecution Service. It is our opinion that it is almost impossible for an unaided Jewish layperson to successfully ensure that a non-violent antisemitic crime of which they are victim is investigated and prosecuted. Indeed, even in the cases in which we become closely involved in supporting the victim and dealing with police and Crown Prosecution Service, we are met with flat, unaccountable refusal to act, either by the police or Crown Prosecution Service. This allows antisemitic incitement and low-level crime to escalate and spread as antisemites are emboldened, and as the Jewish community increasingly views reporting antisemitic hate crime as an exercise in futility. The situation has become so desperate that we have now launched judicial review proceedings against the Crown Prosecution Service, and will soon commence private prosecutions.

We have one of the strongest legislative frameworks in Europe for fighting hate crime and extremism but we are not using it effectively. For all the talk about cracking down on hate crime following Brexit, we have seen no evidence of any meaningful action against resurgent far-right groups, the antisemitic extreme-left has taken over the Labour Party, and it has taken over 20 years for us to finally silence the Islamist preacher Anjem Choudary.

There is the political will to enforce the law against antisemites and extremists, but the breakdown occurs in police forces and the Crown Prosecution Service. Antisemitism is rarely a hot topic for long, and in competition with domestic violence or benefits fraud, antisemitism is often left to fester, which is exactly how it thrives. The consequence is that we are treating the cancer of growing extremism only when it is already strong and at its most violent. We are not ripping it out by its roots.

Campaign Against Antisemitism is working to change that. We have earned the support of the Prime Minister and her team precisely because we hold the authorities' feet to the fire, even taking them to court when necessary. This is the fight for our country and we must not

lose.

Unless we act now to act against antisemites as forcefully as the law will permit, then antisemitism will continue to spread, antisemites will become bolder, attacks on Jews will become more common and more ferocious, the Jewish community will become more fearful and start making plans to emigrate, and the golden era for Jews in Britain will have ended.

The words are as true now as they ever were: *tzedek, tzedek tirdof* — justice, justice we must pursue.

Yours sincerely,

Gideon Falter  
Chairman  
Campaign Against Antisemitism