

Scandinavia / Dr. Mikael Shainkman

Scandinavia experienced an increase in the number of antisemitic attacks in the second half of 2014, in the wake of Operation Protective Edge. This increase was noted in all three Scandinavian countries, Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

Operation Protective Edge

The general atmosphere in Scandinavia was decidedly anti-Israeli during the summer's protracted military operation against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. July 12 2014, Stefan Löfven, leader of the Social Democratic party in Sweden commented on Operation Protective Edge on Facebook. Löfven, who won the September elections and became PM, wrote that he wished both sides would stop fighting, that Israel must conform to international law, but at the same time has the right to defend itself in accordance with that law. Within hours the post was inundated with criticism and insults. Several dozen comments were clearly antisemitic, calling for the killing of Jews, for a new Hitler, praising Hitler and accusing Löfven of being Jewish, or being bought by "the Jews." The Swedish national news agency TT wrote that Löfven had made a "controversial" statement and that it had met with massive criticism. This reporting was in turn criticized on 15 July by several papers, since TT didn't mention the antisemitic content of the "criticism." Löfven himself commented, expressing worry about the "hate and antisemitism" fuelling many of the comments. The Facebook post was removed when it became apparent that it couldn't be properly edited and monitored to keep away hate speech. On 21 July 2014, Löfven published a new statement in which he condemned Israel. On 30 July 2014, famous Swedish musician and socialist activist Michael Wiehe published a post on Facebook about Operation Protective Edge. Although the post was very critical of Israel, it was not antisemitic, but many of the comments left by others were antisemitic, as documented and published by the Swedish Committee against Antisemitism on 2 August. The comments included Holocaust denial, charges that Israel is the new Nazi Germany, that the Jews control the world etc. Wiehe did not comment on this content.

Several Swedish candidates from various Swedish political parties, including mainstream parties with representation in the Riksdag, made antisemitic statements during the military action. On 5 August 2014, Petronella Petersson, third on the Center Party south-east region list for the parliamentary elections in September 2014, wrote on Facebook as a comment on Protective Edge, that despite the Holocaust, which she described as "disgusting," "one must still be able to criticize the Jews for not mixing with other people. That kind of stuff always leads to conflicts." The statement met with furious internal criticism in the party, and the next day, 6 August, Petersson announced that she was quitting the party. August 5 2014, Birgitta Hansson, a local Green Party politician in the metropolitan Stockholm area, Sweden, wrote on Facebook that the world doesn't react to Israel's actions (during operation Protective Edge) "because Jews are so influential in big companies, the US administration etc." She also accused Israel of being worse than Nazi Germany and conducting planned ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. On 13 August she had to resign from the party. The previous day, 12 August, the Green Party announced that it would start an initiative to work against racism and intolerance among its members. In July 2014, Jerker Nordlund, the party's second name on the election lists in Herrljunga County, wrote in a Facebook post that Israel was "a mental

sickness" and called for a global war against Israel. On 5 August 2014, Omar Omeirat, Social-Democratic candidate for the local council in Filipstad (Sweden) wrote on Facebook that Palestinians in Gaza were being slaughtered by "the Jewish pigs." Local representatives for the Social-Democratic party reacted very strongly, and even though Omeirat apologized, he was forced to leave the party.

On 19 July 2014, the paper *The Local* in Copenhagen (Denmark) published an article about an increase in antisemitic incidents in Denmark. The Jewish Community in Denmark (Det Jødiske Samfund) reported 15 antisemitic incidents in July 2014, and only 3 in the first six months of 2014. Most of the incidents entailed threatening messages via email or Facebook but in one case a man wearing the Star of David around his neck was spat on and his assailant attempted to rip his necklace off.

On 19 October 2014, Norwegian paper *Aftenposten* interviewed Ervin Kohn, head of the Jewish Community in Oslo. The interview was done against the background of an ADL study showing that 15% of Norwegians harbor antisemitic attitudes – more than any other Scandinavian country. Kohn was pessimistic, noting that the pressure on the 1,300 Jews in Norway has increased. He pointed out that "Jew" (together with "fag" and "whore") has become the most common curse word in Norwegian schools.

The number of incidents was up also in Sweden following Operation Protective Edge. The situation was especially serious in the country's third largest city, Malmö. According to police figures, there were 137 complaints of antisemitic incidents in Malmö 2013-4. None of them led to a conviction. There are approximately 700 Jews in the Jewish community in the city. On 24 June 2014, the Swedish Committee against Antisemitism published an assessment by Samuel Lindelöf, a high-school student in Malmö, Sweden. He wrote that the political parties in the city, especially the Social Democrats, who are in power, must do more to counteract antisemitism in the city. As long as they don't do so, they leave the floor open to SD that spreads its racist explanation that it's all because of the Muslims, without presenting any possible solution to the problem. On 4 August 2014, the Swedish tabloid *Expressen* published an editorial about the rising number of manifestations of antisemitism in Sweden in the summer of 2014, and especially in Malmö. The paper called it a shame for Sweden, and described attacks on Jews as an attack on the country as a whole.

The Jewish community in Malmö is still shrinking. It is now reaching critically low levels, with as few as 700 members – as opposed to more than a thousand a decade ago. The diminishing Jewish community is not, however, primarily a result of antisemitism in the city. More likely than not, the community can no longer provide all the services people need in order to live a full Jewish life in terms of minyanim, education etc. So those members who are religious or wish to bring up their children in a strong Jewish environment move, leaving the elderly and the less committed.

Those who move, move to bigger Jewish communities such as Stockholm, London or Israel. Although journalists and researchers have looked, so far no one has been able to find anyone who left Malmö due to antisemitism. Antisemitism is a constantly present unpleasantness, but does not seem to be the reason for the depletion of the local Jewish community. Malmö

Jews mostly move to Stockholm, where street antisemitism is prevalent in more or less equal measure, meaning that it is always recommended that men not wear a kippah or other Jewish symbols in public for fear of harassment. This is the situation all over Scandinavia, and has been for more than a decade; nonetheless Malmö is the only community that is shrinking so dramatically.

Examples of Vandalism and Attacks

Several attacks against Jews were reported in Scandinavia in 2014. Most of them occurred in Malmö, Sweden. Habad Rabbi Shneur Kesselman submitted almost half of the complaints of antisemitic attacks to the Malmö police in 2014. Unlike most Jews in Malmö, Rabbi Kesselman doesn't hide the fact that he's Jewish and his black robe, hat and beard make him stand out in the city. For example, on 2 August, when local rabbi Shneur Kesselman and another member of the Jewish community were on the way home from the synagogue in Malmö (Sweden), someone threw a bottle at him from a passing car. The people in the car shouted "Fucking Jews!" at the two men. The bottle hit the wall next to them and shattered. The rabbi was escorted home, since he had been the subject of a similar attack with someone throwing things at him from a passing car while he was walking to the synagogue the same day. Kesselman isn't the only rabbi who was threatened in 2014. On 20 November 2014, the paper Goteborgs-Posten in Gothenburg (Sweden) revealed that the city's rabbi had received death threats via email. The threats have been reported to the police. The man behind the threats is known and has sent threats to the Jewish community previously. Goran Larsson, professor of Religious Studies at Gotheburg University characterized the email as reflecting a classic antisemitic worldview, calling the incident "grave".

Despite the increase in complaints about antisemitic incidents to the police, few of these hate crimes are investigated. A noticeable exception, that even led to a conviction, came on 5 April 2014, when a 27-year-old man in the Stockholm area was convicted for sending death threats with antisemitic content to two MPs from the Sweden Democrats, Thoralf Alfsson and Kent Ekeröth. The man wrote to Alfsson, calling him "disgusting Jew" and threatened to grind him down and feed him to dogs and pigs. He had written death threats to Ekeröth as well. The man admitted the threats. He justified the threats with the MPs' hostile attitude to Islam.

There are also several reports of vandalism where the motive was antisemitic. Individual Jews have been targeted at their homes, especially in Sweden. On 21 January 2014, the CFCA published tweets by a woman in Malmö, Sweden, who has been documenting antisemitic graffiti on her front door. The police's response was that they can do nothing except collect the complaints. On 23 January 2014, a woman living in the southern provincial town of Finnsång, Sweden, came home to find her front door vandalized. Someone had sprayed a Star of David on in and the word "Get lost". Someone had also attacked the door with an axe. The axe was still stuck in the door, and the police expressed hope that a technical investigation would yield evidence. On 1 September 2014, a Jewish man in Stockholm, Sweden, discovered that someone had vandalized his car the previous night. All windows were smashed and a laminated card with a swastika had been placed under the windshield wiper. His was the only car vandalized in the parking lot.

Community property was also targeted for antisemitic vandalism. For example, one incident, on 18 February involved someone throwing rocks at a window of the synagogue in Malmö, Sweden. The rocks made holes in the exterior pane of glass, but did not manage to damage the bullet-proof glass within. The police have no clues as to the identity of the perpetrator. On 24 June 2014, it was discovered that someone had thrown rocks through the windows of the synagogue in Norrköping, Sweden. The vandalism had taken place sometime between 20 and 24 June. This was the second time in a short period that such an attack took place in Norrköping, but the police denied seeing any indications that this might be a hate crime. On 31 July 2014 members of the Jewish community in Malmö, Sweden, discovered that during the night someone had smashed three windows in the synagogue. It was the third instance of vandalism at the site in 2014. Fred Kahn, chairman of the community, connected the incident to the situation in Gaza.

Schools were not spared from antisemitic vandalism, either. As one example, on 10 March 2014, antisemitic graffiti was discovered at the entrance to the school Vasa Real in Stockholm, Sweden. 3 of the 32 classes at the school belong to the Stockholm Jewish junior high school. Someone had daubed a swastika, the neo-Nazi code 1488 and “Jewish pigs” on the wall and front door of the school. The incident was reported to the police. The following day, members of the Liberal Party youth movement staged a counter-demonstration, covering the defaced wall and doors with hearts. On 4 April 2014, the Swedish Committee against Antisemitism arranged a demonstration in Vasaparken, a park in central Stockholm, not far from Vasa Real. The purpose was to express support with the Jewish community after the vandalism of the school, as well as protest against racism, neo-Nazism and anti-Semitism. On 24 August 2014, the Jewish private school in Copenhagen, Denmark, Carolineskolen, sent out a letter to its pupils ahead of the new academic year. In the letter, the school management presents new rules about carrying symbols that are identifiable as Jewish, forbidding pupils from leaving the school premises with such symbols, for instance a kippah, visible. This rule will apply whether the pupils leave the premises alone or as part of an organized school outing. The new rule is a consequence of the rising number of antisemitic attacks following Operation Protective Edge.

Debates, Politics and Elections

Generally speaking, there isn't much antisemitism in the mainstream public discourse in Scandinavia. It is mostly found in the fringes of the debate, within various extremist milieus: extreme leftwing, rightwing or Islamist discourses. However, sometimes it does surface beyond the fringes. Indeed, there are examples of antisemitic expressions and statements from a multitude of political parties in 2014. Some of them were expressed by politicians belonging to parties whose platforms aren't extreme. These politicians were, as a rule, expelled after their antisemitic sentiments were revealed. On 28 February 2014, the anti-racist Swedish paper Expo reported that the local branch of the Left Party in Tranemo invited Holocaust denier Carl Norberg to give a lecture at a party function. Norberg has repeatedly published antisemitic, conspiratorial and Holocaust denying material. After Expo's report, the lecture was cancelled. On 4 April 2014, a 34-year-old member of the neo-Nazi Swedish Resistance Movement was put on trial for spreading antisemitic messages on Twitter. On 4 October 2013 he wrote “Death to Zion. Long live Golden Dawn!” September 11 2013 he published an antisemitic caricature. The man denied the charges, claiming that the caricature

didn't depict a Jew and that other people had access to his Twitter account and could have published the image. In the past, he has been convicted of harassment of the leftwing politician Daniel Riazat and he has also been convicted of assault, threats and carrying an illegal weapon. On 22 August 2014, the anti-racist Swedish paper Expo revealed that a local politician and candidate in the September 2014 elections for the Sweden Democrats in south-Swedish Hällaryd, Ibb Malmgren, has repeatedly written antisemitic and racist posts on a neo-Nazi webpage. Malmgren has written that Jews can only survive as parasites on others, that they are disgusting and – unlike Aryans – have no honor or sense of loyalty. He has also denied the Holocaust and propagated for the establishment of concentration camps for people who commit crimes "against the Nordic race." Malmgren himself denies that he was behind the posts, despite technical evidence. The party has decided not to act, since he denies involvement. On 5 September 2014, Swedish daily Metro reported that Dayana Jadarian, politician and candidate in the parliamentary elections on September 14 for the Center Party, posted a YouTube video with David Duke on her Facebook wall. In the video, Duke claims that Judaism teaches hatred of non-Jews, and that the Jews control Hollywood and the US government. When asked about the video, Jadarian rejected the notion that it was antisemitic. The Center Party decided not to act against her. On 13 December 2014 Norwegian national security service (PST) raided an extreme right wing group in Rogaland. During the operation, police seized drugs, propaganda material and a variety of weapons. Some of the seized weapons had the logo of the extreme right organization Motstandsbevegelsen ("The Resistance Movement"). The organization is connected to the Swedish Resistance Movement (SMR), led by the convicted murderer Klas Lund.

Examples of extreme leftwing antisemitism were also to be found in the Swedish rap scene. In March 2014, the Swedish Committee against Antisemitism published a survey by Charlotte Wiberg about anti-Semitism in Swedish rap music. The survey focused on Ken Ring and Dani M. For example: in his song "Agenda," Dani M raps about a secret gang driven by greed, that thinks it's above the law and that has caused every war in history. Without mentioning Jews, he echoes the thinking of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Ken Ring has been more explicit, calling another rapper, Petter, "a damn fucking Jew." In his song "A Free Palestine" Ken Ring raps about never abandoning the struggle and keep on fighting until "we" get "as rich as all the Jews." In his song "Embrace Them" he raps that the US is controlled by a few Jews and that George W Bush should have his White House in Israel. In a comment, Ken Ring denied being an antisemite and claimed he was the victim of a media campaign.

Beside the extreme left wing and neo-Nazi groups, the biggest body of political extremism in Scandinavia is represented by the populist extreme right, primarily embodied in populist parties such as the Progress Party in Norway, the Sweden Democrats and the Danish People's Party. In 2014 they maintained their positions or advanced in elections. In Sweden, the previously shunned Sweden Democrats who gained their first seats in the Swedish parliament in 2010 with roughly 5% of the votes, had a strong showing in both the EU-Parliament elections and the Swedish general elections in 2014. The party received 13% of the votes in the general elections, becoming the third largest party in the Riksdag. On 14 December 2014, Swedish daily Dagens Nyheter published an interview with Bjorn Soder, Sweden Democrats party secretary and third speaker of the Swedish Parliament. In it, Soder

said that immigrants should be encouraged to go back to their countries of origin and that Sami (Scandinavian indigenous inhabitants) and Jews aren't Swedes and can't belong to the nation as long as they don't give up their minority identity – but they should be allowed to live in the country. In Denmark, the Danish People's Party became the largest party in the elections to the EU Parliament, and polls show that the party would grow considerably if elections were held to the Danish parliament today.

The Social-Democratic party that leads the current Danish government is weak in the polls. The Norwegian Progress Party received 16.3% of the votes in the Norwegian parliamentary elections in 2013, and is now a member of the rightwing coalition government with seven portfolios, including finance, justice and oil. This is the first time since the end of the War that an extreme right wing party controls ministries in Scandinavia. The Progress Party is nonetheless supportive of Israel, as is the Conservative party, which now holds the Norwegian premiership. On 20 January 2014, Ynet published an assessment about a shift in Norwegian policy toward Israel. Norway has long been known as one of Israel's harshest critics, and several organizations in Norway have called for or initiated boycotts against Israel. The center-right government that came to power in Norway in late 2013 is promoting cooperation with Israel, signaling that isolation and boycott won't lead to peace.

Another branch of the populist extreme right are various counter-jihad and anti-Islam movements, such as Stop the Islamization of Norway (SIAN), Stop the Islamization of Denmark (SIAD), Danish Defence League (DDL), Norwegian Defense League (NDL) and Swedish Defense League (SDL). These organizations have a strong presence online, but usually fail to attract more than a handful of followers at demonstrations. In 2014, the German PEGIDA-movement began to gain supporters in Scandinavia too, especially in Denmark and Sweden and first efforts were made to establish PEGIDA-organizations in Scandinavia. It is reasonable to assume, however, that there is considerable overlap in the people involved in all these organizations.

Even though the discourse on the populist extreme right isn't particularly antisemitic (as opposed to xenophobic, racist and anti-Muslim), individual members of populist parties and groups in all Scandinavian countries are from time to time caught making antisemitic statements, usually regarding a Jewish world conspiracy, Jewish control of the banks/media/Hollywood/the US administration or Holocaust denial.

Unlike the populist extreme right, antisemitism is rife and prevalent within the ideological extreme right, a milieu dominated by neo-Nazi groups. Within the ideological extreme right, the neo-Nazi Swedish Resistance Movement (SMR) continued to step up its activities in 2014 in preparation for the general elections of 2014 in Sweden. Nonetheless, the ideological extreme right didn't do well in the September general elections. They lost nearly all the seats in the local councils they had held since the 2010 elections. No neo-Nazi party had any seats to lose in parliament.

Besides extreme left wing and right wing extremism, antisemitism is also found in extreme Islamist circles and among some people with roots in the Middle East. On 12 January 2014, following the death of Israeli former PM Ariel Sharon, the spokesperson of the mosque in

Örebro, Sweden, Aisar Al Shawabkeh published a status on Facebook. Al Shawabkeh claimed that Sharon once, in order to celebrate his birthday, gave orders to Israeli soldiers to catch and slaughter Palestinian children and then prepare a meal from their blood. When Al Shawabkeh was criticized for the status, he said that he had just repeated a story he had been told as a child by people who knew the victims. He added that he “maybe should have expressed himself differently,” but claimed not to know of the antisemitic myth of Jews killing non-Jewish children and consuming their blood. On 14 January, the tabloid Expressen published an article connecting Aisar Al Shawabkeh's statements with widespread antisemitism in the Middle East. The mosque didn't want to comment on his claims or his stepping down, since “he was attacked in the media and feels bad.” On 18 July 2014, Abu Bilal Ismail, imam at a mosque in Aarhus (Denmark) spoke at a mosque in Berlin (Germany) and called on God to “destroy the Zionist Jews.” He added “count them and kill them to the very last one. Don't spare a single one of them,” and “bring torment upon them.” The sermon was filmed and uploaded to YouTube. Furthermore, local police in Aarhus suspects that 22 young men have left Denmark to participate in jihad in Syria after being encouraged to do so at Ismail's mosque.

Positive Developments

Despite the increase in antisemitic incidents in 2014, the year also brings a silver lining. That silver lining is that the problem of antisemitism is being increasingly noticed in Scandinavia. As late as a few years ago, it was considered a non-problem in public discourse, and among leftists it was even nearly axiomatically rejected as a Zionist tactic to deflect criticism of Israel. Today, however, there is an increasing awareness of antisemitism in Scandinavia. On 11 August 2014, Danish radio journalist Asger Juhl put on a kippah and walked through Copenhagen to see what would happen. Juhl isn't Jewish and wanted to know if reports of rising antisemitism had any truth to them. Juhl related to the paper Berlingske Tidende that he was harassed and threatened. Already after five minutes he was surrounded by a group of ten or so men of Middle Eastern origin. The only way he escaped being beaten up was by admitting that he wasn't Jewish, but a reporter. The men also demanded that he donate money to Hamas in order to let him go.

Also the trend of the so-called "Kippah Walks", or "Kippah Marches" has continued in Scandinavia in 2014. This year, three major walks were organized, one in Copenhagen, one in Malmö and one in Stockholm. The walks and marches were a show of support for the local Jewish communities in the face of rising antisemitism following Operation Protective Edge.