

AMERICAN RABBI

Topical messages on antisemitism and Israel delegitimization from a broad coalition of U.S. Jewish community organizations

Jews Worldwide Demand Justice as Killer of French Jewish Woman May Walk Free

This email is developed by The Focus Project in partnership with The American Rabbi. The Focus Project distributes weekly talking points on timely issues regarding antisemitism and delegitimization of Israel. Its editorial input represents a consensus view across an extensive spectrum of North America's Jewish organizations. The American Rabbi recognizes and respects the diversity of views on these issues among its readers and the community at large.

Three-minute read:

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Background:

[Jewish groups](#) in the United States and around the world marched in [solidarity](#) with the French Jewish community to [protest](#) after a court ruled that [the murderer](#) of Sarah Halimi was “unfit for trial.” Halimi, a Jewish grandmother, [was murdered](#) in front of her family by Kobili Traore as he [crushed her skull](#) and threw her through the third-story window of her apartment – while shouting in Arabic, “God is great...I’ve killed the Satan!” Traore, a neighbor of Halimi, [specifically targeted](#) the home because of its [mezuzah](#), a religious object affixed to the doorpost of many Jewish dwellings, making it easy to identify the apartment as the sole Jewish residence in the building.

The Jewish community in France was outraged as the [lead investigator](#) initially refrained from classifying the murder an antisemitic crime. A [judge ruled](#) Traore was not criminally responsible for the murder because [he was high on marijuana](#) during the killing. This ruling was [upheld](#) by the Paris Court of Appeal in 2019, and again by the [high court](#) in France two weeks ago. Halimi's family members [announced](#) their intention to take the case to the European Court of Human Rights. In contrast to this case, a French man [recently killed his dog](#) by throwing it out a window while he was high on cocaine, was convicted and received a year's sentence in prison. The head of the main French Jewish organization, [the CRIF](#), said the Traore judgement [meant](#) Jews could now be killed "with complete impunity" in France.

French President Emmanuel Macron [expressed support](#) for the Jewish community and called for a change in the law regarding the consequences of the voluntary use of drugs – which may allow Traore to walk free. French Minister of Justice Eric Dupond-Moretti [tweeted](#) that he will present a bill at the end of May to eliminate the legal loophole. Many in France were [shocked by the initial silence](#) surrounding the case. The Traore ruling is reminiscent of a [torched synagogue](#) in Germany, which a high court ruled “no anti-Semitic motivation could be identified in the arson” as it was [intended as a protest](#) against Israel. The arsonists, three Palestinians, were also high on marijuana during the attack.⁵⁵⁶

Talking Points:

1. Halimi's murder is one of [a string](#) of antisemitic murders that have shaken French and European Jews in recent years. The release of her murderer is a massive injustice. Denial of justice adds to the growing sense of vulnerability and insecurity impacting the French Jewish community. Many Jews and non-Jews alike worldwide fear that if the murder of Jews goes unpunished in France, murders may continue not only in that nation but across Europe and around the globe. A growing sentiment and concern that many Jews share is that hatred against Jews is not taken as seriously as all other forms of hate.
2. Antisemitism is [enveloping Europe](#) at an even faster rate during the past decade. The [U.K.](#), [France](#) and [Germany](#) report alarming records for antisemitic incidents year after year. To prevent the U.S. from following suit, everyday Americans must bluntly object to antisemitism whenever they witness it – adopting the same zero-tolerance stance they proudly take against racism and homophobia. Silence is unacceptable, because it normalizes hate speech and gives permission for antisemites to continue dangerous behavior.

3. Antisemitism rarely starts with physical attacks, but can reach physically dangerous levels only after society tolerates lesser offenses. That is why antisemitic words and images must be [forcefully, swiftly and repeatedly](#) condemned by all who encounter them – from elected officials and business and community leaders to teachers, neighbors and other everyday civilians.
4. Leaders play an important role in speaking out against extremist rhetoric and actions wherever they come from. Community leaders who speak out against antisemitism deserve praise. Likewise, all Americans have a responsibility to condemn all forms of extremism they observe – from racism and misogyny to homo- and transphobia to antisemitism and Islamophobia.
5. Hate against visibly Jewish people must stop. No one should be attacked or discriminated against because of [how they look or worship](#). Elected officials and law enforcement must continue taking antisemitic hate crimes seriously to change the dynamic on the ground. Jewish people worldwide should not fear wearing their Jewish identity on their sleeve. People who are identifiably Jewish will always be more vulnerable to discrimination, including physical attacks. Yet [most](#) Jews in the U.S. continue to feel comfortable expressing their Jewish identity, especially in comparison to other countries.⁵⁵⁶

Actions to consider:

1. **Demand justice for Sarah Halimi from French leaders.** Tweet at [President Macron](#), [Prime Minister Castex](#), and [Justice Minister Dupond-Moretti](#). Use the hashtag #JeSuisSarah. [Email](#) the French embassy in Washington, D.C. Contact the French consulate in [New York](#) and [Los Angeles](#). Also tweet at the [European Court of Human Rights](#) and demand that it takes up the case.
2. **Report antisemitic incidents whenever you encounter them.** Use these forms from [StandWithUs](#), [ADL](#) and the [Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law](#). A portal to specifically track antisemitic and other racist incidents related to the pandemic was [launched](#) last year by the Anti-Semitism Accountability Project and American China Public Affairs Institute.
3. **When you see something, say something.** Contact legislators, news media, community leaders and alma maters and hold representatives accountable to immediately call out instances of antisemitism. Impress upon your audience the

urgency of **speaking out against antisemitism** whenever they witness it; thank leaders who publicly, clearly and swiftly condemn antisemitism.⁵⁵⁶

Stories to watch:

1. **New York:** [Five synagogues](#) in Riverdale, N.Y., were vandalized over the past week and their windows shattered. No suspect was immediately identified. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo instructed the State Police Hate Crimes Task Force to assist in the investigation. Police presence has increased around the synagogues.
2. **Iran:** [Vienna nuclear talks](#) reached 'drafting stage.' [Axios](#) reported that Israel and the U.S. are increasingly not on the same page. The U.S. offered Iran [sanctions relief](#), but a [State Dept.](#) press release said the U.S. still has "major differences" with Iran. [Iranian women's rights advocates](#) condemned Iran's election to the [U.N. Women's Rights Commission](#). Iran is in control of [Syria's](#) newly reactivated chemical weapons program.
3. **Gaza:** [Hamas](#) launched more than [45 rockets](#) towards Israel over the weekend. [Hamas](#) urged all Gaza terror organizations to be on standby. [Palestinian factions](#) called for an Intifada in Jerusalem. [Riots](#) resumed along the Gaza border on Sunday evening. Hamas issued [more threats](#) against Israel on Monday. Israel warned of a [strong response](#) and its security cabinet [authorized](#) broad military action if the rocket attacks continue.
4. **UNRWA:** Watchdog group [NGO Monitor](#) recommended the Biden administration take specific steps to prevent USAID from supporting terror activities, promotion of antisemitism and other problematic entities. [Twenty-two Republican senators](#) urged Secretary of State Blinken to immediately freeze all U.S. funding to UNRWA.⁵⁵⁶

In other news:

1. **Positive momentum continues from peace agreements between the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, Morocco, Kosovo and Israel.**
A [UAE art exhibit](#) featured Israeli artists for the first time ever; [BDS groups](#) across the world called for a boycott.

2. The Combat Anti-Semitism movement released its first-ever monthly [IHRA Adoption Report](#).
3. A [bipartisan group](#) of [22 senators](#) signed a letter requesting President Biden expeditiously nominate a qualified Ambassador to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism.
4. Registration for the virtual [American Zionist Movement Biennial National Assembly](#) on May 3 is now open.
5. Scientists from Tel Aviv University have developed [optical technology](#) that will revolutionize skin cancer detections via instant diagnosis.⁵⁵⁶

Suggested social media posts: We invite you to post these captioned images on your social media. Paraphrasing our captions is encouraged.



Jewish groups marched in solidarity with French Jews to protest a court ruling that the murderer of Sarah Halimi was “unfit for trial.” Halimi was targeted because she was a Jew. The court ruled her killer could walk free because he was high on marijuana when he murdered her. Email thoughtful and civil communications to the French embassy in Washington, D.C., and demand justice for Sarah Halimi. #JeSuisSarah

<https://www.euronews.com/2021/04/25/sarah-halimi-thousands-protest-decision-not-to-try-jewish-woman-s-killer>



Halimi's murder is one of a string of antisemitic murders that have shaken French and European Jews during the past decade. Antisemitism rarely starts with physical attacks but can reach dangerous levels only after society tolerates lesser offenses. Antisemitic words and images must be forcefully, swiftly and repeatedly condemned.

<https://www.adl.org/reportincident>



Have you heard? Scientists from Tel Aviv University developed optical technology that will revolutionize skin cancer detections via instant diagnosis. Just imagine how many lives will be saved because of this extraordinary Israeli tech!

<http://bit.ly/IsraelScienceBreakthrough>

For Twitter:

Demand justice for Sarah Halimi from French leaders. Tweet at @EmmanuelMacron + @JeanCASTEX + @E_DupondM. Use the hashtag #JeSuisSarah. Email the French embassy in Washington, D.C. Also tweet at @ECHR_CEDH and demand that it takes up the case.

franceintheus.org/spip.php?article1131#01

When you see something, say something. Contact legislators + news media + community leaders + alma maters. Hold #representatives accountable to immediately call out instances of #antisemitism. Thank #leaders who publicly, clearly and swiftly condemn antisemitism.

The American Rabbi distributes weekly talking points on timely issues to help rabbis in their efforts to combat antisemitism and de-legitimization of Israel. These are developed by a broad coalition of U.S. Jewish organizations. The objective is to enable the American Jewish community to speak with more consistency and focus so that its messaging has greater resonance and reach with the general public.

We hope you will find this information useful in your writing and/or speaking, and we believe your feedback will be tremendously valuable.

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