

# Netanyahu exploits Islamist attacks on European Jews

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Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has once again urged European Jews to leave Europe and emigrate to Israel, following the killing of a Jewish man outside the main synagogue in Copenhagen. He did so previously following the attack on a Jewish supermarket in Paris where four Jews were killed in the aftermath of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks. The four bodies were later flown to Israel, where they were buried.

The bid to increase the number of Jewish immigrants to Israel from Europe is part of a broader push to capitalise on the terrorist attacks in the two European capitals by Netanyahu's Likud party and the Zionist political establishment.

Netanyahu issued a statement after the Copenhagen attack saying, "Israel is your home. We are preparing and calling for the absorption of mass immigration from Europe." The statement said, "Jews have been murdered again on European soil only because they were Jews."

He made a similar call after last month's attacks in Paris when he tweeted, "To all the Jews of France, all the Jews of Europe, Israel is not just the place in whose direction you pray, the state of Israel is your home."

Netanyahu said his government had initiated a \$45 million project "to encourage the absorption of immigrants from France, Belgium and Ukraine." Israel already offers substantial inducements to Jewish immigrants, including cash grants, tax breaks, subsidies, and loans. He added, "To the Jews of Europe and to the Jews of the world, I say that Israel is waiting for you with open arms."

According to *Ha'aretz*, the government is setting up a "special ministerial committee" that "will convene ... to discuss steps to encourage immigration from France and from Europe in general."

France's Jewish community that numbers half a

million, the largest in Europe, is a major target. According to the Jewish Agency, 7,000 immigrants arrived from France in 2014, three times the number in 2012. Sofa Landver, Israel's minister for immigrant absorption, expects more than 10,000 to immigrate this year. She said that the government would continue "to promote the ingathering of the exiles, a vision that has accompanied the people of Israel since the state's establishment."

Netanyahu's actions are in part motivated by narrow electioneering considerations, aimed at outdoing his political opponents in their efforts to be seen to be protecting Jews. "I went to Paris not just as the prime minister of Israel but as a representative of the entire Jewish people," he said, referring to his visit to Paris following the terrorist attacks on the staff of the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine and a kosher supermarket in the city.

In a reference to US House Speaker John Boehner's controversial invitation to address a joint session of Congress over Iran on March 3, Netanyahu said he would be speaking on behalf of all Jews, "Just as I went to Paris, so I will go anywhere I'm invited to convey the Israeli position against those who want to kill us."

Netanyahu's calls for Jews to move to Israel—like those made by his political opponents in the Israeli ruling elite—are also motivated by concerns about the demographic situation in Israel and Palestine.

Of Israel's 8 million population, about 1.6 million or 20 percent are Palestinian, while a further 4.5 million Palestinians live in the West Bank and Gaza. Without a Palestinian mini-state, the Palestinian population, whose fertility rate is higher than that of Israeli Jews, will soon exceed that of the Jewish population. Jewish immigration to Israel is seen as vital if Jews are not to become a minority within Greater Israel.

Crucially, it is also part of a broader push to capitalise

on the attacks by equating Palestinian opposition to Israel's brutal occupation and crushing oppression with Islamic terrorism and the US-led "global war on terror" focused on the oil-rich Middle East. Netanyahu hopes to reverse Israel's increasing political isolation by demonstrating the universality of the struggle against Islamic militants.

Following the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in 2001, Netanyahu said that it was "very good" for Israel, because it would "generate immediate sympathy" for its war against the Palestinians.

This is why Netanyahu and his ilk have mounted a hysterical campaign in the Israeli media, claiming that Jews can never be safe in a Europe awash with Jihadist intent on destroying and conquering the Christian West. His reactionary and divisive campaign is the flipside of another equally reactionary agenda aimed at dividing the international working class.

Several surveys have pointed to the rising number of incidents against Jewish property and institutions in Western Europe. But this renewal of anti-Semitism is being fuelled in large measure by the actions of the Israeli government—its murderous wars against Gaza in 2006, 2008-2009, 2012 and most recently last year, as well as its daily humiliation of the Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the settlement expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the torpedoing of peace talks with the Palestinians and defiance of countless UN resolutions—that have outraged international public opinion, including many Jews.

Popular anger against Israel is being channelled by the Islamists and other reactionary right-wing forces—not against the perpetrators, but against the Jewish people.

More than one Israeli commentator has pointed out that Jews are safer in Europe than in Israel, where they face the constant threat of war against the Palestinians, the possibility of being caught up in the vicious sectarian war in Syria where Israel has actively supported the Islamists, not to mention the continuous threats of war against Iran.

While they do not admit it, it points to the essentially dead end of the Zionist project that was supposed to provide a safe haven for the Jews in a capitalist nation-state at the expense of the Palestinians already living there.

Europe's Jewish leaders have criticised Netanyahu's pleas for Jews to leave Europe. Rabbi Jair Melchior, Denmark's chief rabbi, said he was "disappointed" by Netanyahu's call for European Jews to immigrate to Israel, and that "Terror is not a reason to move to Israel."

But others have gone further, playing to Netanyahu's right-wing agenda by calling instead for additional security and surveillance measures. Rabbi Menachem Margolin, the director of the European Jewish Association, said he regretted that "after every anti-Semitic attack in Europe, the Israeli government issues the same statements about the importance of *aliyah* [immigration to Israel], rather than employ every diplomatic and informational means at its disposal to strengthen the safety of Jewish life in Europe."

Margolin accused European Union leaders of not doing enough to combat anti-Semitic attacks and prejudices, saying there was a need to "secure all Jewish institutions 24/7," and demanded that European governments and EU institutions establish a European task force to protect Jewish institutions and reinforce educational efforts against what he called "rampant anti-Semitism." He added, "European leaders need to support us in fighting the battle on terror in our homeland."

The answer to the increasing attacks on Jews lies not in additional policing and the strengthening of the state apparatus, which will be used not for the defence of workers of any denomination or ethnicity under attack, but for their further suppression. These events pose the urgent necessity of uniting the working class, Muslim and Jewish, across national and religious barriers in the fight against imperialism, their local proxies the Zionist and Arab ruling elites, and the drive to war, and for the socialist federation of the Middle East.



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