



## Dear Praying Friends in Europe, A New Wave of Antisemitism

You will be receiving this prayer letter around January 27th, International Holocaust Remembrance Day. It is shocking to think that after almost 80 years since the appalling discoveries at the end of the second world war, this prayer letter should be highlighting the subject of antisemitism in Europe. Yet this is what we are having to do.

Today the focus on Israel may be skewed by events going on between Israel and the Palestinians in Gaza. The reality is that the events of 7th October could be considered the worst pogrom since the Holocaust. The difficulty is that in 2024 the distinction between political Israel and the Israel of the Jewish people has become muddled and this affects so much of the thinking across the continent of Europe.

In a number of European countries, we have seen a significant increase in antisemitic attacks, on Jewish cemeteries, synagogues and other Jewish properties like businesses. Even in schools, universities and other institutions antisemitism is once again raising its ugly head. Unfortunately most of this is caused by an ignorance of history and the rights of Israel as a sovereign state.

But the history of antisemitism itself goes back much further and deeper than the political issues that can colour our thinking today. In many ways it could be said that antisemitism is rooted in the idea of one race being chosen or set apart, which predates Christ, but that's more akin to an altogether more sweeping xenophobia. Sadly, it is probably more accurate to say that the roots of what we know as antisemitism should be laid at the door of some of the early church fathers such as Justin Martyr and Tertullian, who between 140-160AD vilified Jews as 'Christ Killers' and said that the Jews' synagogues were 'fountains of persecution'.

Yet we also know that at other times in history Jews and Christians have lived side by side complementing each other's way of life. I once had the privilege of meeting a Jewish gentleman who was the custodian of a small museum alongside a former monastic church in eastern France. The house, in which the museum was housed, was formerly owned by a Jewish family and had a ritual bath. The man told us how during medieval times, the Jewish community of the village around the monastery worked together with the monks for the benefit of the whole community. Sadly, the synagogue that stood nearby was destroyed by the Nazis during the occupation of that part of France and the gentlemen I spoke to was the only Jew left in the village.

There has been shock amongst Jewish communities, but possibly not surprise, as to how international organisations, and even some governments, cannot seem to differentiate between criticising Israel and its military action on one side and taking a clear stance against antisemitism in Europe on the other. Surely being critical of Israel's military action is one thing, but undermining Israel's right to exist is another, especially when there are loud voices from the street protests in our cities across Europe calling for the destruction of Israel "from the river to the sea". Israel's right to exist goes back to 1917 and the Balfour declaration and was formalised in 1948, with the accession of Israel to the United Nations in 1949 but even this organisation seems incapable of condemning the Hamas attack of 7th October. How can any Jew feel safe in Europe?

Can we take responsibility for repenting for the part that the church has played in propagating antisemitism throughout history?

Let us then pray blessing over the Jews and that we would not become an obstacle to them finding faith in Christ Jesus.

Nations are having to choose whether to be on the side of Israel or against (Joel 3:14 the valley of decision). Pray that the countries of Europe will choose to side with Israel.

I would like to take this opportunity also to highlight NGOs like European Coalition for Israel (ECI) who seek to educate those in authority, particularly in Europe. If you want to understand more about the history of the politics of modern-day Israel, you can visit their website <https://www.ec4i.org> Please pray for their work, ministry, provision and protection.

### Europe's farmers

There is much unrest among farmers in Europe. French farmers have been blockading major roads in France this week. Already facing challenges from climate changes, many are finding that contradictory policies to reduce environmental impact while being required to produce more food, are unfair, and make them worried for the future. But protests have also taken place in Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria and could well be seen elsewhere. Farming is likely to be a big issue in the European elections this year. We need our farmers. Let's pray for them and also for fair and just legislation.

### Further Prayer:-

1. Pray that Hungary's President and Parliament will ratify Sweden's application to join NATO without further delay.
2. Let us pray for national political parties as they prepare for this year's European elections. Pray as they select and submit candidates for party lists ready for the elections between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> June this year.

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