

Publication: The Jewish Telegraph  
Date: 18.04.19

# JEWISH *Telegraph*

# French Jews shocked by Notre Dame blaze horror



DEVASTATION: Clouds of smoke billow skywards from the Notre Dame blaze

**FRENCH Jewish leaders expressed shock and sadness over the fire that devastated the Notre Dame cathedral in Paris on Monday night.**

"We are all in shock, believers and non-believers, Christians and non-Christians, because a jewel of the history of France and Christianity as much as of the heritage of Europe is currently in flames," said Joel Mergui, president of the Consistoire Central Israélite de France, the body responsible for the religious affairs of the French Jewish community.

"This magnificent cathedral has been part of Paris, of the life of Parisians and French people, for almost 1,000 years.

"I express my deep solidari-

ty and my strong sympathy to our Catholic friends, particularly affected on the eve of Easter."

France's Chief Rabbi, Haim Korsia, also sent "friendship and prayers" to the Catholic community.

And Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis, said: "Notre Dame is a symbol of human ingenuity and endurance, celebrating almost 1,000 years of European and French culture, architecture and freedom.

"Places of worship are a bridge between our past and future, symbolising the aspiration of man to reach new heights and spirituality.

"The Conference of European Rabbis expresses its solidarity with France and especially with its Catholic com-

munity following this devastating incident and wish them strength and hope."

The effort of firefighters were praised by the Representative Council of French Jewry (CRIF).

"We express with great emotion our solidarity with the firefighters who fought at best against the flames," it said.

French Jewish author and leading intellectual Bernard-Henri Levy said: "When I saw the images of Notre Dame burning, I felt that the heart of Paris was burning, that the soul of France was burning.

"It is a holy place for Christianity, but it is also a holy place in secular terms for the spirit of France."

Israeli leaders joined their counterparts around the world mourning the blaze.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressed deep sorrow over "a cultural and religious heritage site of France and of all humanity".

And president Reuven Rivlin said: "Notre Dame is among the most beautiful of Paris' symbols and of France's in general, but also one of the most important to any cultured person.

"Last January, I looked over the Parisian skyline, all the more beautified by the cathedral's spire," he added.

"Our hearts are with the citizens of France and the tales of Notre Dame, true and fictional, in prayer that they will endure for ever."

Paris officials said the fire was under control late on Monday night. However, the blaze severely damaged large parts of the building.

