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Jews demand action from Germany after deadly anti-Semitic attack

Head of the Central Council for community says it was 'scandalous' that there wasn't more security on a day like Yom Kippur; World Jewish Congress head calls for 24-hour protection

By AGENCIES and TOI STAFF
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A Jewish man stands between police officers at a Jewish cemetery and synagogue in Halle, Germany, October 9, 2019. (Jens Meyer/AP)

Jewish leaders demanded action from Germany Thursday to protect the community and face down resurgent right-wing extremism, as a deadly anti-Semitic gun attack on the holy day of Yom Kippur underscored the rising threat of neo-Nazi violence.

At least two people were shot dead in the eastern German city of Halle on Wednesday, with a synagogue among the targets. The suspect, identified by German media as 27-year-old German Stephan Balliet, filmed the assault and posted the video online.



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The rampage was streamed live for 35 minutes on Twitch and eventually seen by some 2,200 people, the online platform said, in a chilling reminder of the mosque attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, last March, which was also online in real-time.

Police captured the Halle suspect after a gun battle that left him injured.



A body lies on a road in Halle, Germany, Oct. 9, 2019 after a shooting incident (Sebastian Willnow/dpa via AP)

Chancellor Angela Merkel joined a solidarity vigil at Berlin's main synagogue on Wednesday, and firmly condemned the anti-Semitic rampage.

But Jewish leaders said that words were not enough, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu joining calls for German authorities to "act resolutely against the phenomenon of anti-Semitism."

The head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany ripped into the authorities for failing to provide adequate security on such a key day.



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“It is scandalous that the synagogue in Halle is not protected by police on a holiday like Yom Kippur,” said Josef Schuster.

“This negligence has now been bitterly repaid.”

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis, said in a statement that the shooting marked “the first time in a long time that Jews have been killed by far right extremists in Germany.”

“This should be a wakeup call for all those who follow the extreme right in Germany and across Europe,” he said. “Furthermore, it is shocking to understand from the Central Council of Jews in Germany that the synagogue was not adequately protected. This should not and cannot happen. Governments must deliver on their promise of never again.”



Josef Schuster, president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, speaking at the Westend synagogue, in Frankfurt, Germany, September 26, 2016. (Hannelore Foerster/Getty Images via JTA)

Ronald Lauder, who heads the World Jewish Congress, also stressed: “We need action not words” as he called for round the clock security for Jewish sites.



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“We also need immediately to launch a unified front against neo-Nazi and other extremist groups, which threaten our well-being,” he said. “The fact that, 75 years after the Holocaust, such groups are gaining influence in Germany speaks volumes.”

On Wednesday The Simon Wiesenthal Center [warned German authorities that the shooting attack](#) could be a precursor to further attacks on the upcoming anniversary of Kristallnacht.

In a letter to German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, Shimon Samuels, the center’s director for international relations, noted that the Halle synagogue was one of those destroyed in the Nazi-instigated pogrom in Germany and Austria in which 91 Jews were killed, 30,000 Jews were arrested, 1,400 synagogues were set on fire, and countless homes and businesses were vandalized.

“It is known that both extreme right and Islamist terrorists often act to mark anniversaries,” he said. “If so, this may be a precursor to [the] Kristallnacht [anniversary].”



An armed man fires on a street in Halle, Germany, following a shooting outside a synagogue in that city which killed two. (Screenshot/Andreas Spieltz/ATV-Studio Halle/AFP)



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Samuels noted the time the killer had to repeatedly go to his vehicle and take out new guns and ammunition, saying it indicated a “police vacuum.”

“The delayed reaction by the authorities in an obvious case of anti-Semitic terror demands an official investigation,” Samuels wrote. “Next month’s Kristallnacht commemoration will require a maximum national alert.”

‘We made it out’

In a copy of a 35-minute video obtained by AFP the gunman filmed himself launching into a diatribe against women and Jews, before carrying out the attack.

The video’s authenticity has been confirmed by the SITE monitoring group but not by police.



German synagogue attacker, identified as by media as neo-Nazi Stephan Balliet, during his rampage in Halle (Screenshot)

The gunman also published an anti-Semitic “manifesto” online more than a week ago, according to SITE director Rita Katz, who said the document showed pictures of the weapons and ammunition he used.



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In the video, he was seen trying to force open the synagogue door before shooting dead a female passerby. He then tried unsuccessfully to blast open the gate of the Jewish cemetery with explosives.

The man was later seen shooting at a patron of a kebab shop about 600 meters away from the synagogue.



The leader of the Jewish community Max Privorotzki (R) is pictured on October 10, 2019 in Halle, Germany, a day after the Yom Kippur attack outside a synagogue there in which two people were shot dead. (AXEL SCHMIDT / AFP)

Jewish community leader Max Privorotzki, who was in the Halle synagogue, told the Stuttgarter Zeitung of the harrowing minutes as the site came under assault.

“We saw through the camera of our synagogue that a heavily armed perpetrator wearing a steel helmet and rifle was trying to shoot open our door.”

Between 70 and 80 people were in the synagogue then, Privorotzki said.

“We barricaded our doors from inside



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and waited for the police,” he said, adding that “in between, we carried on with our service.”

Among those in the synagogue were 10 Americans and several Israelis, who had turned up in Halle especially to join the small local population in celebrating Yom Kippur.

“We’ve made it out with our lives, in health and amazing spirits,” wrote Rebecca Blady, a Jewish American community leader, who was in the synagogue.



Bullet holes in the entrance door of a synagogue are pictured in Halle, Germany, October 10, 2019. (Jens Meyer/AP)

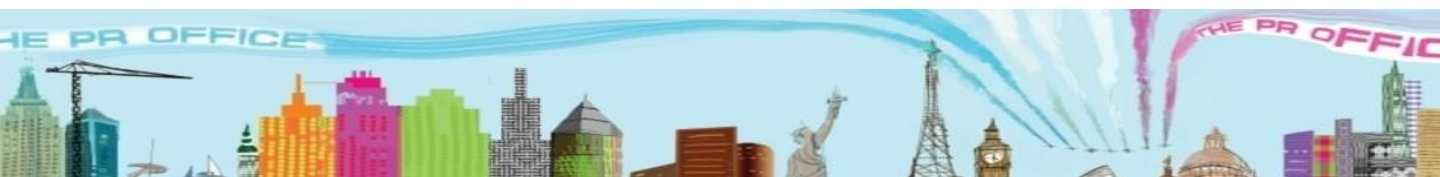
The owner of the kebab shop, Rifat Tekin, described the gunman as “calm like a professional.”

“Maybe he has done this many times. Like me making a kebab, he’s doing this — like a professional.”

Anti-terrorist prosecutors confirmed that they were taking over the probe given “the particular importance of the case” which involved “violent acts that affect the domestic security of the Federal Republic of Germany.”

Wednesday’s shootings came three months after the shocking assassination-style murder of local pro-migrant politician Walter Luebcke in the western city of Kassel, allegedly by a known neo-Nazi.

Luebcke’s killing has deeply shaken Germany, raising questions about





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Interior Minister Horst Seehofer last month warned of the rising danger of the militant far right, calling it “as big a threat as radical Islamism.”

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/jews-demand-action-from-germany-after-deadly-anti-semitic-attack/>

