

# Life Becomes Unbearable for Jews, Swedish Edition

[Excerpts]

by [Annika Hernroth-Rothstein](#)

*Targeted for humiliation, prohibited from observing her religion in freedom, Annika Hernroth-Rothstein tried to draw attention to the plight of Sweden's small Orthodox Jewish community—and that's when the trouble really began.*

A few months after I had entered high school, the boys with the boots showed up. I called them that because they had paired their historically accurate Hitler Jugend uniforms with shiny 10-hole Dr. Martens, white laces dramatically contrasting their perfect oxblood shade. I could always hear them approaching, the boys with the boots. The sound of rubber soles against linoleum would cut through the noises of my high school hallway and as soon as I turned around, there they were.

A year ago, to the day, I went to a foreign policy conference in Washington, DC, to attend a lecture by a State Department official who specializes in countering anti-Semitism. I had come there to ask for help, and when I asked this man whose job is to monitor and combat this scourge of hate around the world what the administration was planning to do about the European crisis, his response to me was that this is not 1939 and while the situation may be dire, the sky is not falling.

The boys with the boots would talk to me sometimes. Without a hint of aggression they would tell me that my relatives had become soap in camps, not too far away from where we stood, and that I should follow suit. There was no physical violence, not even once. Instead they would sit next to me in the cafeteria, wait for me at the top of the stairs, or stand to attention as I passed by them. I didn't know why they despised me, but I knew that it mattered. It mattered to them, and so, it had to matter to me.

In the past two years, Europe has exploded, from gruesome murders in Belgium and France to riots, torched synagogues and defaced Holocaust memorial sites, along with a dramatic spike in hate crimes all over the continent. Jews are being singled out and persecuted, once again, and most recently Paris and Copenhagen were added to the list of cities synonymous with terror, as more Jewish blood was spilled before the eyes of the world.

A few weeks ago my son didn't come home from school at four o'clock, as he always does. I tried his phone, with no answer. I would have tried his friends, but he's been keeping to himself. The hours passed and just as I was about to call the police, he walks in, breaking down in tears before his bag even hits the floor. He tells me he had joined a few boys to play soccer after school, and everything had gone well until there was a dispute over the rules, and then the group had turned on him. The leader, a classmate of my son, had said, "This is why I don't play with the cheating Jews." My son had looked to the rest of them to protest, to stand by him in any way, but instead they had left him to make it back home alone.

Just last year I got it in my head to find out ...

*To read this article in its entirety, go to:*

*<http://www.thetower.org/article/life-becomes-unbearable-for-jews-swedish-edition/>*