Jewish man attacked with spade outside synagogue in Hamburg

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By [Philip Oltermann](https://www.theguardian.com/profile/philip-oltermann)

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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/05/jewish-man-attacked-with-spade-outside-synagogue-in-hamburg>

A young Jewish man has sustained severe head injuries after he was assaulted with a spade outside a synagogue in the northern German city of Hamburg on Sunday afternoon, in what politicians have condemned as a “disgusting” antisemitic attack.

The student, 26, was about to enter the Hohe Weide synagogue in the centre of Germany’s second-largest city when he was attacked by a man in camouflage gear.

After an initial strike to the face, the victim managed to escape further assaults and police guards detained the attacker.

Police say they believe the attack to have an antisemitic motive based on a piece of paper with a hand-drawn swastika found in the assailant’s pocket and the visible religious identity of the victim, who was wearing a kippah

The attacker, a 29-year-old with Kazakh roots registered as living in Berlin, had given off an “extremely confused impression” during his arrest, speaking of spirits that had urged him on. Police said the man had not been known to them previously.

Germany’s general prosecutor has taken over investigations into the case because of the possible extremist background behind the assault.

The attack came as worshippers inside the synagogue were celebrating the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, and almost a year after a man in a military-style outfit tried to force his way into a synagogue in the eastern city of Halle and [shot dead two people](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/09/two-people-killed-in-shooting-in-german-city-of-halle) during the ensuing rampage.

The president of the World Jewish Congress, Ronald S Lauder, said that while police had arrived quickly enough on the scene to stop the attacker from injuring others, the security presence had been “not enough” to deter the attacker.

The Hohe Weide synagogue, where Hamburg’s 3,000-strong Jewish community worship, was on Sunday protected by armed police guards outside the fenced-off property and inside the community’s own security service.

Lauder said: “We must ask ourselves, and German local and national authorities must address the question – why does this keep happening? Why is antisemitism thriving, and why does anyone believe there is room for such hate?”

The “long-term viability of Jewish life in Germany”, he said, depended on educating young Germans against this kind of hatred.

The German foreign minister, Heiko Maas, a Social Democrat, condemned the attack on social media: “This is not a one-off, this is disgusting antisemitism that we must all oppose.”

Hamburg’s mayor, Peter Tschentscher, also of the SPD, wished the assault’s victim a speedy recovery. He said: “Hamburg stands firmly on the side of its Jewish citizens.”