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# WHO KILLED JÉRÉMY COHEN?

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Anti-Semitism could be rearing its murderous face in France—yet again. In the evening of February 16th, 30-year-old French Jew Jérémy Cohen was savagely beaten to the ground by a thuggish, multiethnic mob of loitering youths. The [incident took place](#) near the Bobigny train station, in the notoriously unsafe Seine Saint-Denis county northeast of Paris, where the threat of this kind of violence has slimmed a once vibrant Jewish community into near extinction. Back on his feet and teeteringly fleeing the scene, Cohen, who suffered from an undisclosed disability, was run over by an inbound tram at 35 kms per hour and died a few hours later in hospital of his cranial injury. The moments leading up to Cohen's death were videotaped by shocked onlookers and went viral on Twitter, although the country's non-Jewish media, contra the Cohen family's pleas, had largely kept the case under wraps until Monday. The likely reason why? The French are headed to the polls this Sunday and airing the case would have boosted the chances that either Éric Zemmour or Marine Le Pen, both of whom are campaigning against mass migration, make it to the runoff later this month. Their opponents in government and the media have much explaining to do.

In itself, the death of a French Jew as a likely consequence of anti-Semitism is nothing new. In the past 16 years, anti-Semitic murders in France have recurred every 2.5 years on average, to say nothing of the countless taunts, insults, and other forms of intimidation that most Jews report experiencing on a regular basis, according to a recent [survey](#) by FONDAPOL and the American Jewish Committee. In 2006, a gang of 20 youths kidnapped,

tortured, and killed Ilan Halimi, a 24-year-old whom they fantasized could be ransomed for a fortune. In 2012, a terrorist's killing spree outside a Jewish school in Toulouse slayed three infants. In 2015, another terrorist took hostage 17 shoppers at a kosher supermarket, killing four of them before police shot him dead. In 2017, a Malian immigrant broke into the apartment of Sarah Halimi, an Orthodox grandmother, and knifed her to death, only to be found criminally irresponsible four years later for being high on cannabis. In the same Parisian neighborhood, Holocaust survivor Mireille Knoll was similarly murdered in 2018. But Jérémy Cohen's case is particular in one way—it is exploding into view amidst a presidential race where one of two right-wing candidates is likely to make it to the run-off.

There are two plausible reasons why the case took over a month and a half to break into the mainstream news cycle. One concerns judicial proceedings: up until last week, the prosecutor's inquiry had singled out the scenario of involuntary homicide by the tramway driver, unconnected to the brawl that the video later revealed had taken place just moments earlier, thus overlooking the role of anti-Semitism in Cohen's death. At a press conference yesterday, the prosecutor, Eric Mathias, launched a second inquiry into the entire sequence of events, calling for other witnesses to help identify Cohen's assaulters. For now, the only evidence hinting at the assault's anti-Semitic nature is a kippah found near the spot, likely but not assuredly worn by Cohen. The second reason for the cover-up may be dismissed as sensationalist but needs to be confronted head-on. Whilst Cohen's family had relentlessly pled for the truth to emerge to lawmakers, police, and the media, the case remained mostly under wraps until Monday April 4th, when the possible incidence of anti-Semitism could no longer be ignored. Is the deliberate cover-up of the case connected to the presidential race kicking off in a matter of days?

The presumption, likely in the minds of news editors, broadcast anchors and the prosecutor's office, that a case of this sort would boost Zemmour and Le Pen's chances of making it into the runoff seems confirmed by the effect the case's publicity is already having on the campaign. Having reached out to every candidate shortly after his son's death, Cohen's father met Zemmour at his campaign's headquarters yesterday to thank him effusively for shining a consistent spotlight on the case. Zemmour, who is also Jewish but champions full assimilation of all immigrants into French nationality, has been

sounding the alarm about the intersection of mass migration and the rise of Islamic anti-Semitism. Both he and Le Pen, who has a more troubled history with France's Jewish community owing to her father's comments about the Holocaust, but who has been courting their vote nonetheless, have tweeted about the possibility that this could be an anti-Semitic second or third-degree murder and that its late arrival on the news cycle could be premeditated. The likelihood of such a cover-up seems supported, too, by the experience of the 2002 election, when Jean Marie Le Pen's success in the first-round was likely aided by the "Papy Voise" affair, where a retiree was savagely beaten up in Orléans and had his home set on fire by two thugs of immigrant stock.

At a minimum, the brutal assault on a handicapped Jew caught on tape should have made the headlines the day the video made the rounds. At this stage, ruling out a premeditated cover-up would be careless.