French teenagers charged with rape and anti-Semitic violence on 12-year-old girl

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French authorities said they have charged two teenagers with the gang rape of a 12-year-old Jewish girl in a Paris suburb in an attack suspected to have been motivated by anti-Semitism. The violence has sent shockwaves through the Jewish community and added to tensions in the run-up to a snap election that could bring the far-right Rassemblement National (RN) to power for the first time.

The girl told police she was approached by three boys aged between 12 and 13 while she was in a park near her home with a friend and dragged into a shed on the evening of Saturday, June 15, in the northwestern Parisian suburb of Courbevoie. The suspects beat her and "forced her to have anal and vaginal penetration, fellatio, while uttering death threats and anti-Semitic remarks," a police source told Agence France-Presse (AFP).

Her friend managed to identify two of the attackers. The three boys were arrested on Monday. On Tuesday evening, two of them, both aged 13, were charged with gang rape, anti-Semitic insults and violence, and issuing death threats. The pair were taken into custody. The third boy, aged 12, was also charged with anti-Semitic insults and violence and issuing death threats, but not with rape. He was allowed to return home after being charged.

**'Abject act'**

The leaders of France's Jewish community – the largest in Europe – expressed horror over the attack. France, which is also home to Europe's largest Muslim community, has experienced a surge in anti-Semitic acts since Hamas's October 7 attack on southern Israel and the start of Israel's retaliatory campaign in Gaza.

France's chief rabbi, Haïm Korsia, wrote on X that he was "horrified" and that "no one should be excused in the face of this unprecedented wave of anti-Semitism." Courbevoie's conservative mayor, Jacques Kossowski, condemned what he called "an abject act" and called for the perpetrators to be met with the full force of the law "whatever their age."

Anti-Semitic acts in France increased three-fold in the first months of 2024, compared to the same period a year ago, official figures show. Of the 1,676 anti-Semitic acts recorded in 2023, 12.7% took place in schools.