Anti-Christian Hate Crimes in Europe

OIDAC Europe, January 2026

SASCE Report

1. Summary

During the month of January 2026, the Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe (OIDAC Europe) recorded 39 anti-Christian hate crimes targeting Christian places of worship, religious symbols, and, in one case, a Christian individual.

The recorded incidents comprise 18 cases of vandalism, 5 cases of desecration, 10 arson-related attacks, and 4 thefts specifically targeting religious symbols. In addition, three cases involving violence against Christian individuals or activities were recorded. One concerned a physical assault on a street preacher in the Netherlands; the other involved the prohibition of a Christian march in the United Kingdom due to anticipated hostile reactions. One case involved physical violence, but was primarily recorded as arson.

The highest number of cases from January 2026 was recorded in Italy (10), followed by Germany (8), France (7), Spain (3), Austria (2), Poland (2), the Netherlands (1), Portugal (1), Romania (1), and Serbia (1). Outside the European Union, additional incidents were recorded in the United Kingdom (2) and Ukraine (1).

Further cases involving theft, break-ins, and property damage without a clearly identifiable anti-Christian bias are outlined separately at the end of each country analysis and are not included in the overall total above.

2. Trends: Spike in Arson Attacks and Impact on Communities

One notable development in January 2026 was the high number of recorded arson-related attacks on churches, with ten incidents documented during the reporting period. The majority were recorded in Germany (4) and Italy (3), with individual incidents also documented in France, Serbia, and Romania. Four of the arson cases involved the deliberate burning of sacred objects, including liturgical books, nativity scenes, and two altars. In Rome, a church had to be evacuated due to an arson attack. In a separate incident in Poland—recorded as desecration rather than arson—a woman removed a Gospel book from a church and set it on fire.

Several incidents had a pronounced impact on local communities. In Westerwald, Germany, vandals targeted a Lutheran church, turning a cross upside down and scattering ashes throughout the interior, leaving the local community in shock. In

Normandy, France, repeated attacks on churches, including an arson attack on the altar of the parish church in Clères, led the local bishop to issue a public statement expressing concern about growing hostilities against Christian places of worship.Two Austrian and one German church were required to close outside of worship hours following a series of vandalism incidents, reflecting the disruptive effect of repeated attacks on access to places of worship.

Attacks on nativity scenes also continued into January. In one incident in Rome, Italy, a nativity scene inside a church was set on fire. In another incident in Le Passage, France, a nativity scene inside a church was vandalised; the statue of the infant Jesus was decapitated and dismembered, and additional figures were damaged.

3. Incidents by countries

Italy. Among the ten cases recorded in Italy in January 2026 were three cases of arson attacks[1]. In one of those incidents an unknown perpetrator set fire to a liturgical missal in the Chiesa del Monserrato in Alessandria. In another arson-related case inside San Giacomo in Rome a nativity scene was set on fire. Firefighters had to evacuate those present in the parish and bring the fire under control.

One case of vandalism was recorded at St Peter's Basilica in Rome, where a man threw sacred objects from the altar during Eucharistic adoration[2].

At Chiesa S. Maria Assunta, a Sunday Mass was disrupted when a man entered the church, shouted, and vandalised the nativity scene as well as statues of the Christ Child and the Madonna. However, this incident was not included in the statistical count due to the perpetrator's known mental health condition.

Other cases involved vandalism[3], desecration[4] and thefts of nativity scene figures[5].

In addition, fifteen cases of theft were recorded in January, including acts of property damage and five break-ins.

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[1] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10872, https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10890, https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10889

[2] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10876

[3] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10876, https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10857, https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10836, https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10843

[4] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10819

[5] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10870, https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10829

Germany. Among the eight cases recorded in Germany in January 2026 were four cases of arson[6].

At the Protestant Christuskirche in Neunkirchen, Saarland, two suspects were arrested following a fire. It was further confirmed that the church had previously been targeted in two additional arson attacks. At St. Josef Church in Allershausen, Bavaria, an unknown perpetrator removed prayer cards from a donation box and placed them on lit candles, causing the rapid ignition of paper. At St. Peter's Church in Huttenheim, Baden-Württemberg, two deliberately set fires were recorded, including one lit directly on the altar. St. Laurentius Church in North Rhine-Westphalia was temporarily closed following repeated acts of vandalism, including arson, damage to pews, and theft of items from the interior.

A particularly concerning case of desecration in a church in Bad Marienberg involved ashes scattered across interior surfaces and a wooden cross turned upside down, signifying an anti-Christian symbol[7]. Other recorded cases of vandalism[8] and desecration included the defacing of prayer and altar books[9].

In addition, six break-ins and five thefts were documented.

France. A total of seven anti-Christian hate crimes were recorded in France in January 2026. In Clères, Normandy, an attempted arson attack was recorded at the parish church, marking the third time a church in the region was targeted within a period of 15 days, prompting a warning by the local Bishop[10]. In Le Passage, Nouvelle-Aquitaine, a nativity scene inside a church was vandalised; the statue of the infant Jesus was decapitated and dismembered, and additional figures were damaged.[11]

Other cases involved the vandalism of churches[12] and a religious statues[13] and thefts of an altar cross[14] and consecrated hosts[15].

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[6] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10784, https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10852, https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10909, https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10922

[7] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10861

[8] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10897, https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10807

[9] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10816

[10] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10947

[11] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10818

[12] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10873,

[13] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10789, https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10883

[14] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10923

[15] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10849

In addition, twelve cases of thefts and break-ins were recorded during January and one case of a church fire with an unknown cause.

According to a **recent report by the Ministry of the Interior**, 538 thefts of religious objects were recorded on the territory in 2025, an increase of 11% compared to 2024.[16]

Spain. Three cases of vandalism were recorded in January. In Alcalá de Henares, a nativity scene was reported vandalised[17]. In Zamora, the churches Iglesia de Santiago el Burgo[18] and Santa María la Nueva[19] were defaced with hostile slogans.

Austria. Two cases of vandalism were recorded in Austria in January 2026, both reflecting repeated targeting and resulting church closure.

In Feldkirchen, the Maria im Dorn church was vandalised for the third time within a short period. The interior was found heavily damaged, with destruction to liturgical furnishings, leading to the temporary closure of the church.[20] In Steyr, a series of vandalism incidents affecting several churches has been recorded since December, including the setting on fire of a confessional, also prompting a closure of the church outside services.[21]

The Netherlands. One case involving violence against a Christian individual was recorded in January. In Utrecht, a street preacher was assaulted during a public evangelising activity.

According to reports, the incident occurred when the evangelist was confronted by a Muslim man who objected to his message about Jesus. The assailant struck the preacher and reportedly shouted, “Jesus is a human”, before bystanders intervened to prevent further escalation.[22]

Poland. One case of desecration was recorded in Nowy Tomyśl, where a woman removed a prayer book from a church and subsequently set it on fire.[23] In addition, four cases of theft were documented in January, including the targeting of a roadside shrine in the Bródno district of Warsaw, from which a statue of the Virgin Mary was stolen.

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[16] https://www.franceinfo.fr/societe/religion/eglises-face-aux-vols-de-plus-en-plus-nombreux-les-paroisses-revoient-leurs-habitudes_7700362.html
[17] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10905
[18] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10851
[19] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10824
[20] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10911
[21] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10815
[22] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10800
[23] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10936

Additional significant cases. Further recorded cases include an arson attack on a church in Novi Sad, **Serbia**[24]. In Brașov, **Romania**, a woman selling candles at a church was physically assaulted and injured; the assailant subsequently set fire to the building[25]. In **Portugal**, a historic church in Viseu was targeted by vandals who painted an offensive message on the exterior walls.[26]

Outside the European Union, three additional cases were documented. In West Sussex, **United Kingdom**, All Saints Church was extensively vandalised, with the majority of windows smashed and interior fixtures damaged. In London, the Metropolitan Police prohibited a planned "Walk With Jesus" march in Whitechapel, citing a risk of serious disorder due to anticipated hostile reactions from the local community.

In **Ukraine**, the Holy Dormition Sviatohirsk Lavra was targeted by a group of individuals in an incident involving vandalism, desecration, and theft.

4. Conclusion

The incidents recorded in January 2026 demonstrate that attacks on Christian places of worship in Europe continue to take diverse forms, ranging from vandalism and desecration to arson-related attacks and violence against individuals. The comparatively high number of recorded arson incidents, as well as the repeated targeting of specific churches within short timeframes, is particularly concerning. In several cases, the attacks resulted in temporary closures, evacuation of worshippers, or lasting damage to liturgical spaces, directly affecting the ability of local communities to access and use their places of worship.

While the figures presented reflect only the cases documented by OIDAC Europe and do not capture the full scope of unreported incidents, the patterns observed point to the need for sustained monitoring, effective preventive measures, and proportionate law enforcement responses. Ensuring the protection of places of worship and the free and safe exercise of religion remains a core obligation of states under European human rights standards and an essential component of social cohesion and pluralism.

[24] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10814
[25] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10908
[26] https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/index.php?id=12&case=10954