



ASIA

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Israel donates Anne Frank books to Tokyo libraries

Israel's embassy in Japan has donated more than 300 Anne Frank-related books to public libraries in Tokyo, after many were found vandalised.

More than 100 copies of Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* were damaged. Pages were ripped from about 265 copies of the diary and related books.

It is not clear who was behind the vandalism.

But on Thursday the Israeli embassy in Japan - and members of Japan's Jewish community - donated more copies.

The mayor of Tokyo's Sugunami ward, which saw the worst of the vandalism, was presented with some of the books at a news conference.

Symbol of suffering

"Through this incident, I believe that people also learned about the horrid facts of history and of racism," Mayor Ryo Tanaka said.

"We fully trust the Japanese authorities to bring those responsible for these cowardly acts to justice," Peleg Lewi, deputy chief of mission at the Israeli embassy, said, adding that he believed the vandalism was a single act that did not represent Japanese sentiment.

Police are investigating the incident.

Anne Frank's diary was written during World War Two, while the teenager hid from the Nazis in occupied Amsterdam.

The book made her a symbol of the suffering of Jews during the war.

Correspondents say that for many Japanese the book forms the basis of their knowledge about the Holocaust.

But what might have motivated the attacks remains a mystery. Japan has no history of Jewish settlement and no real history of anti-Semitism, the BBC's Rupert Wingfield-Hayes in Tokyo reports.

Struggle of youth

The book was added to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's [Memory of the World Register](#) in 2009.

Anne Frank's diary was translated into Japanese in December 1952 and topped the bestseller lists in 1953.

Professor Rotem Kowner, an expert in Japanese history and culture at Israel's University of Haifa, told the BBC that the book had been exceptionally popular and successful in Japan.

He says that in terms of absolute numbers of copies of the book sold, Japan is second only to the US, and adds that for Japanese readers the story transcended its Jewish identity to symbolise more powerfully the struggle of youth for survival.

"It was a book about a war tragedy and the way youth experienced war... For many Japanese they would view this [the vandalism] as a tragic development," he said.

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