



February 25, 2014

Japanese Authorities, Jewish Scholars Condemn Desecration of Anne Frank's Diaries

by Sarah Williams

Japanese authorities are looking for suspects responsible for defacing almost 300 copies of books by and about Anne Frank, the young Jewish girl whose famous *Diary* is considered one of the best-known testimonies about the Holocaust.

News of pages being torn from the books in 31 public libraries in Tokyo has left Jewish scholars shocked.

"We know that there are scores of libraries and at least hundreds and maybe more copies of the diary of Anne Frank and other books that deal with Anne Frank, that have been vandalized, ripped apart, desecrated," said Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles.

Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* was written in World War Two by the Jewish teenager as she lived in hiding with her family in Amsterdam, then occupied by Nazi Germany.

The family was discovered and sent to concentration camps. Anne died of typhus at Bergen-Belsen in 1945. Her father Otto was the only member of the immediate family to survive the war. He published Anne's diary in 1947 and it has sold millions of copies, becoming a symbol of the Holocaust.

The Wiesenthal Center issued a statement expressing its concern about the book's destruction in libraries in the Tokyo area.

"Obviously, you're not talking about one or two incidents, you're talking about a wide geographic location, and we're talking about some sort of organized effort," Cooper said.

Cooper is a frequent visitor to Japan, and after the news of the vandalizing broke, he contacted a member of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's staff to air his organization's concerns.

Cooper said the recent defacing campaign emerged earlier this month when Tokyo librarians noticed that numerous copies of the diary were damaged.

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga condemned the destruction of the books.

Rotem Kowner, professor of Japanese history and culture at the University of Haifa in Israel, said *Diary of a Young Girl* has been popular in Japan since its publication there in 1952.

"The popularity has not dwindled during all those years, I think by now more than five million copies have been sold, so this is probably one of the most popular books for youth in Japan throughout the postwar years," Kowner said.

The development also comes at a time when tensions concerning atrocities committed by

Japan during World War Two have risen, with critics in China and South Korea calling on Tokyo to do more to atone for its past.

Abe recently visited the Yasukuni Shrine, a monument to the country's war dead that also includes the remains of 14 convicted war criminals, an action that caused immediate condemnation from Beijing and Seoul.

“There is a huge internal debate and struggle within Japan, and of course across Asia, of coming to grips with what happened in the era of Imperial Japan and the atrocities that took place in Asia, and the current tensions between China and Japan,” Cooper said.

<http://www.voanews.com/content/japanese-authorities-jewish-historians-condemn-desecration-of-anne-franks-diaries/1859054.html>