



TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY

Lester and Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities  
The Stephen Roth Institute  
for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism



# *Antisemitism Worldwide 2008/9*



European Jewish Congress



Tel Aviv University  אוניברסיטת תל-אביב

Lester and Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities

The Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of  
Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism

# *Antisemitism Worldwide* 2008/9



European Jewish Congress



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The Stephen Roth Institute  
for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism  
Tel Aviv University  
ISSN 0703-1840

Printed by the Print Shop  
Tel Aviv University



The Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism is located in the Gilman Building, Tel Aviv University. Its extensive database monitors antisemitism and racism throughout the world, serving researchers and community, governmental and organizational workers in Israel and abroad, as well as human rights organizations and groups fighting racism.

The Institute works in cooperation with the European Jewish Congress (EJC), the umbrella organization of Jewish communities in 45 countries across Europe. The EJC was headed during 2008/9 by its re-elected president, Dr. Moshe (Viatcheslav) Kantor. The Coordination Forum for Countering Antisemitism, an Israeli state organization, collaborates with the Institute in data collection.

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## PREFACE

The annual publication *Antisemitism Worldwide* presents an analysis of antisemitism and racism around the world. The present volume consists of two parts: a general analysis of the year in review, as well as the beginning of 2009, specifically focusing on reactions to Operation Cast Lead (December 27, 2008–January 18, 2009); and a country-by-country survey, divided according to region, since each part of the world has its own characteristic problems in addition to those common to all countries. The survey provides information on extremist movements, antisemitic activities, attitudes toward the Nazi period and the Holocaust, and the struggle against antisemitism and racism. Countries where there was no evidence of antisemitism in 2008/9, or where it was not reported, are not included. It describes the phenomenon of antisemitism in the various countries without delving into their history, and focuses only on the situation during this period. A series of graphs in the appendices providing statistical data complements the picture for 2008.

Categorization of antisemitic activities sometimes varies from one source to another. Our classification scheme divides these activities into: a) all expressions and modes of propaganda, most notably Holocaust denial, b) violent acts without the use of a weapon, and c) attacks using violent means. It should be emphasized that the survey is based on reported cases only, and that the data presented in the appendices include only violent attacks intended to cause loss of life and cases of actual damage to property. In fact, many more hundreds of minor incidents, such as graffiti, slogans and swastikas painted on walls, as well as personal insults and harassment, were also registered by Jewish communities and individuals. In many cases, it is hard to assess whether the injury or damage was motivated by antisemitism, or was a straightforward criminal act or an act of hooliganism, since the identity of the perpetrators is often difficult to establish.

It should be noted that the variety of data and materials coming from different areas entails a diversified approach on the part of the authors and editors, thus ruling out complete uniformity in the presentation of the contents, especially with regard to names and references.

Israeli, Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, research institutes and individuals supply the relevant data and material, useful contacts, opinions and assessments, and above all the motivation, for combating antisemitism and racism. Thus, the annual review represents an



international effort in this regard. We conclude by expressing our deepest gratitude to all the organizations and individuals who have taken part in this undertaking.



## ITALY

*Sixty-nine antisemitic incidents were recorded in Italy in 2008 compared to 53 in 2007. A controversy triggered by a group of leftist intellectuals and politicians against the decision by Torino Book Fair organizers to invite a delegation of Israeli writers on the occasion of Israel's 60th anniversary became tainted by antisemitism. The large demonstrations held during Israel's operation in Gaza and organized chiefly by Arab-Islamic organizations were unprecedented in Italy for the large numbers they attracted and their virulent anti-Zionism.*

## THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Some 30,000 Jews live in Italy out of a total population of 57 million. The largest communities are in Rome (15,000) and Milan (10,000), and there are smaller ones in Turin, Florence, Livorno Trieste, Genoa and several other cities. Jews have been present in Italy for over two thousand years and have developed unique customs and traditions.

The Unione delle Comunità Ebraiche Italiane, UCEI (<http://moked.it/>), founded in 1930, is the roof organization of Italian Jewry. It represents the communities in official matters and provides religious, cultural and educational services. There are Jewish schools in Rome and Milan. The Jews of Rome publish a monthly journal, *Shalom* ([www.shalom.it](http://www.shalom.it)), and the Milan community puts out the monthly *Bollettino della Comunità ebraica di Milano* ([www.mosaico-cem.it](http://www.mosaico-cem.it)).

The CDEC (Contemporary Jewish Documentation Center) Foundation in Milano ([www.cdec.it](http://www.cdec.it)) maintains the website L'Osservatorio sul pregiudizio antiebraico contemporaneo (Observatory of Contemporary Anti-Jewish Prejudice) ([www.osservatorioantisemitismo.it](http://www.osservatorioantisemitismo.it)).

## POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS

**Far Right and Populist Parties**

The Northern League for the Independence of Padania (Lega Nord per l'indipendenza della Padania – LN; general secretary, Umberto Bossi) combines ethnic and populist regionalism, strongly tainted by xenophobia, but less so by antisemitism. LN continues to cling to the separatist notion of a politically autonomous Padania in Northern Italy and opposes the symbols of the Italian unitary state. It has a strongly Christian identity with a certain proclivity to fundamentalism. With its aggressive style, sometimes peppered with direct insults, LN kindles social alarm regarding Roma people, illegal immigration and "the Muslim invasion," and assumes a direct link between immigration from non-European countries and crime and prostitution. LN fights the permanent



settlement of Muslims in Italy, and acts to prevent the erection of symbolic structures, such as mosques, which they claim are potential gathering places for terrorists. Some LN representatives have been strongly criticized for xenophobic and homophobic statements, as well as for comments against southern people and women. Giancarlo Gentilini, deputy mayor of Treviso, was charged with inciting racial hatred because of statements against Muslims and "black, brown or grey teachers." In September, another LN representative, Mario Borghezio, known for his past militancy in radical right movements, attended an international meeting of nationalist and radical right organizations against Islam in Köln. The meeting was stopped by the local authorities.

The Forza Nuova is represented in the European Parliament by its national secretary Roberto Fiore, formerly founder of the Third Position (Terza Posizione). Fiore replaced Alessandra Mussolini, who was elected to the House of Representatives as a representative of the Freedom Party (Partito della Libertà – PdL) in April 2008. In the Italian general election Forza Nuova got 0.30 percent of the vote for the House of Representatives and 0.26 percent for the Senate.

Based on Catholic fundamentalism, Forza Nuova is influenced by the Romanian Iron Guard. It is the most established movement on the Italian far right scene, with offices throughout the country, an efficient propaganda apparatus and work guild structures modeled on those established by the fascist regime. Forza Nuova seeks recruits among the Ultras (Italian football hooligans), who support the Lazio team in particular.

The party program includes abrogation of two "freedom-killing" laws: the Scelba Law (forbidding reorganization of the Fascist National Party) and the Mancino Law (against racial, ethnic and religious discrimination); the party claims to defend Italian history and the Italian religious and cultural heritage; it is against abortion and non-European immigrants, demanding their immediate repatriation; and it advocates a ban on Freemasonry and secret sects.

Forza Nuova's website includes an article about B'nai B'rith and Freemasonry extracted from the book *Mysteries and Secrets of B'nai B'rith*, by Emmanuel Ratier. The website also includes anti-Israel, anti-Zionist and other antisemitic texts. At a meeting between Italian businessmen and Iranian President Ahmadinejad, Roberto Fiore told the latter that Forza Nuova was against any war proposed by the Jewish-American lobbies.

The MS-FT (Movimento Sociale-Fiamma Tricolore – Social Movement-Three-Colored Flame) is led by national secretary Luca Romagnoli, Maurizio Boccacci (co-founder in 1991 of Base Autonoma, a



national skinhead network dissolved under the Mancino Law) and Piero Puschiavo (leader of the Veneto Skinhead Front – Veneto Fronte Skinhead).

In April 2008 Boccacci left the position of secretary in protest against the party's decision to vote for the Alleanza Nazionale (formerly, the neo-fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano – MSI; see *ASW 2004*) candidate Gianni Alemanno as mayor of Rome. (Alemanno was subsequently elected). In his resignation letter, Boccacci criticized Alemanno for what he termed his liberal, anti-social and philo-Zionist stance, and accused leaders of the political right of being "the new servants, dressed up with their kippot above their napes." In October and November, Boccacci used the "Militia" signature (a reference to the book by Catholic and philo-Nazi Belgian Leon Degrelle) on huge antisemitic wall banners affixed in Rome against the president of the Senate, Mayor Alemanno and the president of Jewish community of Rome, Riccardo Pacifici ("Alemanno is an infamous Zionist shit"; "Alemanno-Pacifici: Roma-Auschwitz one-way"; "Holocaust is history's Biggest Lie! Ahmadinejad"). He was arrested and charged under the Mancino Law.

Skinhead MS-FT member Andrea Miglioranza, a former activist of Veneto Fronte Skinhead, has become the party leader in Verona city council. In addition, following a Nazi-type blog filled with antisemitic and Holocaust-denying references in the October 2008 Trento provincial election campaign, which included statements such as "Jews are enemies of God and enemies of our holy religion," a MS-FT candidate was expelled from the party.

### **Skinheads and Other Far Right Groups**

According to a report of the Internal Security and Information Agency, northeast Italy has "the highest density of skinhead militants in the country" and Veneto Fronte Skinhead has hundreds of activists. The report claims that most of the 20,000 hard-core football hooligans in recent years are far right supporters (65 Ultras groups with about 15,000 members). The Ultras have learnt how to militarize their groups during their years of hooligan fights in stadiums.

Skinheads partially overlap with Ultras; their antisemitism is expressed through slogans chanted at football matches and wall graffiti. Small neo-Nazi inspired groups – many linked also to Ultras – commit acts of violence against immigrants, Southern Italians and leftists or those "who look like leftists" in several areas of the country. Following an escalation of such attacks, police in Bolzano arrested 16 neo-Nazis and charged 62 people with violation of the Mancino Law in May 2008. According to political commentators, this tendency is due to the AN



moving to the center of the political axis, leaving political representation of the far right to others.

Dozens of Italian songs with antisemitic and Holocaust denying lyrics can be found on YouTube. Concerts are promoted by far right cultural centers or small political parties such as MS-FT and Forza Nuova. Clips of the band 99 Fosse appear on YouTube. The band is well-known on the Italian extreme right and skinhead scene. Their songs are parodies of Italian hit pop songs reworked with antisemitic words. At the end of the 1990s, 99 Fosse collected their songs in the album *Zyklon B*, which though not actually published has been circulating on the web since then. In 2008 the Public Prosecutor's office opened a file against them for violation of the Mancino Law.

Casa Pound Italia (CP), founded in 2003 in Rome, now has branches in major Italian cities. Led by Gianluca Iannone, its goals is to disseminate far right culture mainly through social and cultural activities (concerts, conferences, books presentations). Such activity enables the organization to attract recruits among the poorer classes and in schools. CP offices are often established in squatter dwellings, which are converted into houses for homeless families and become popular gathering centers. CP claims to have fascist roots. It organizes concerts with far right bands and sometimes its members are charged with violent acts.

Similar goals are pursued by other groups, such as Casa d'Italia Prati in Rome, Cuore Nero in Milan and Skinhouse in Bollate (Milan).

### **Islam in Italy**

The Italian Islamic community totals some 1.2 million residents. In absolute figures, Islam is the second religion of Italy behind Catholicism. The most established Muslim entity representing "organized Islam" in the country is the Unione delle Comunità ed Organizzazioni Islamiche in Italia – Onlus (Union of Islamic Communities and Organizations in Italy – UCOII; [www.islam-ucoui.it](http://www.islam-ucoui.it)). The Islamist-inspired UCOII is a member of FIOE (Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe), the umbrella association of European organizations which is influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood.

The president of UCOII is Mohammad Nur Dachan, a Syrian heart surgeon with Italian citizenship and the "spokesman" (director of Social Affairs and Human Rights Department) is El Zir Izzedine. Former UCOII spokesman, Roberto Hamza Piccardo, manages the UCOII publishing house (Al Hikma) and its unofficial on-line bookshop [www.libreriaislamica.it](http://www.libreriaislamica.it), both of which sell antisemitic books.



UCOII radicalism prompted Minister of European Affairs Andrea Ronchi to state, in December 2008, that UCOII must be "prevented from managing mosques, and those [mosques] that are coordinated by this organization must be blocked" and that "these people must be culturally isolated." In a March 2008 report, the Central Direction of Prevention Police stressed the risks of fundamentalism in UCOI-run mosques.

### **The Far Left**

Far left parties were clearly defeated in the April 2008 general election: as a result, no party based on this ideology had any candidate elected to the Italian Parliament. The Italian far left rejects the Jews as a nation and thus their right to a state. Its anti-Israelism and anti-Zionism is linked to anti-Americanism, philo-Arabism, philo-Islamism, anti-westernism and Third-Worldism. In line with this approach, the conflict between the Arab-Islamic world and the State of Israel and Zionism amounts to a Manichean clash in which all good is embodied in the Muslims (and particularly the Palestinians) while Israelis/Zionists represent all that is evil

Holocaust denial is almost absent from the propaganda of the far left. However, by continuously suggesting – in the context of demonizing Israel – a comparison between the Shoah and the "Palestinian holocaust," the far left's discourse leads to relativization of the genocide of the Jews. According to the far left, Israel is a colonialist, genocidal and racist entity on a par with Nazi Germany and Apartheid South Africa. It ascribes racist feelings and genocidal tendencies to every Israeli prime minister, regardless of their politics, as well as to a large portion of Israeli politicians while military operations carried out by Israeli armed forces are equated to the massacres perpetrated by the Nazis during WWII. Such expressions were marked in particular during Operation Cast Lead (see below).

### **Catholic Fundamentalists**

A few Catholic fundamentalist circles, marginal even in the Catholic traditionalist world, disseminate religious antisemitism. Although their periodicals reflect the pre-Conciliar (pre-1965 Vatican Council) rejection of the Jews, they have modified their polemics in recent years. Militia Christi is a small fundamentalist Catholic movement present mainly in Rome, whose circulation of antisemitic and anti-Zionist leaflets goes almost unnoticed. It also runs a website. It supports a "Christian fight against Zionism [which includes only a subset of the Jewish people] and



Freemasonry," which are both "hidden and willful enemies of Catholic Church and of the Peoples of the Earth."

The decision taken by Pope Benedictus XVI in July 2007 to liberalize the celebration of a pre-Conciliar mass in Latin according to a 1962 rite – forbidden after the Second Vatican Council – has revived the question of the Good Friday prayer *Oremus pro judaeis*, included in that rite. In the prayer, God is asked to "take away that people...from its darkness" and to remove its "blindness." Following protests from the Jewish communities, in February 2008 the Pope decided to modify the prayer in the Latin rite also, without renouncing, however, the invocation to convert the Jews.

The decision to modify the prayer stirred up protests from the pre-Conciliar traditionalist Catholic world, among them, Lefebvrian circles, which complained that rules establishing worship in the Church were being determined by suggestions from the synagogue. *Sodalitium*, the periodical of a small group of Lefebvrians who are particularly critical of the modernization introduced by the Second Vatican Council, protested that the teaching of the Church "is dictated or at least influenced by those who are irrelevant or even opposed to the Church," and claimed that "the religion of the Jews is a fake" and "the Jews are aggressive as per usual."

#### ANTISEMITIC ACTIVITY

Sixty-nine antisemitic incidents were recorded by the Observatory on Anti-Jewish Prejudice of the CDEC Foundation in 2008 compared to 53 in 2007. They included vandalism, offensive graffiti and emails against Jewish individuals and institutions.

A May 2008 report by Italian Intelligence (Aisi) foresaw a resurgence of antisemitism and a new phenomenon of antisemitic slogans chanted at football matches coming not only from skinheads and football Ultras, but also from the far left.

The most serious incident occurred in December when a 14-year-old boy was physically assaulted on the regional Genoa-Savona train by a 17-year-old youth who called him "Dirty Jew," and said, "This train is going to Auschwitz." The attacker was reported to the police. In January, some tombstones were destroyed in the Jewish cemetery in Scandiano (Reggio Emilia).

Twenty-one of the incidents were reports of graffiti (2007: 26), nine of which were in Rome. Most denied the Holocaust and ended with the "Militia" signature. For example: In July, neo-Nazi graffiti against Jews and Roma appeared on the walls bordering the Jewish cemetery in the Borgo Venezia neighbourhood of Verona. In March, posters advertising



a concert in Rome of Australian pianist of Jewish origin David Helfgott were defaced with the words "Jew, leave Rome" or were ripped off the walls.

Of the 33 insulting emails received, 28 were sent by the same individual (2007: 12 emails, all sent by the same individual).

Only one antisemitic incident was reported in sport, down from the previous year. This could be a result of the educational campaign carried out by the Interior Ministry in response to violence by football supporters. During a match between Barga and Ghivizzano in the Football Amateur League held in Barga (Lucca) some Ghivizzano supporters chanted choruses praising the extermination of Jews and homosexuals and comparing them to the players and supporters of the opposing team.

### Propaganda

In the first half of 2008, a controversy triggered by a group of leftist intellectuals and politicians against the decision by Torino Book Fair organizers to invite a delegation of Israeli writers on the occasion of Israel's 60th anniversary became tainted by antisemitism. It began with a letter from the provincial secretary of the Party of Italian Communists in Torino to the presidents of Piedmont region and Torino province, to the mayor of Torino, Sergio Chiamparino, and to the president of the Torino Book Fair Foundation, demanding that representatives of the Palestinian state also be invited. The debate between supporters and critics of boycotting the book fair sometimes crossed the line from anti-Israel to antisemitic statements. Considering the media too pro-Israel, philosopher Gianni Vattimo, for example, declared that he had "re-evaluated" *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and now felt they basically reflected the truth about the Jews.

In another serious affair, a list of 162 "Jewish" university professors was posted in February on a blog hosted by the web platform Il Cannocchiale (for freely loading messages and documents). The author of the post, who reportedly compiled the "list" from a petition submitted by the professors in response to an antisemitic incident, accused them of "lobbying for the Zionists" and called it "the list of Jewish top brass in Italian universities." He was investigated by the Public Prosecutor's Office in Rome for violation of privacy and for vilification. The blogger had a previous record of antisemitic commentaries and had signed a petition in favor of French Holocaust denier Robert Faurisson.

In response to the Madoff fraud (see *USA*), anthropologist Ida Magli, a columnist for the daily *il Giornale*, posted an article on her website



Italiani Liberi (Free Italians) claiming the "Jewish manipulators" were controlling world finances.

In May 2008, during a protest march in Torino against Israel organized by the association "Free Palestine," the secretary of the Communist Workers' Party (Partito Comunista dei Lavoratori – PCL), Marco Ferrando, stated: "Refoundation [the Communist Refoundation Party] and the others are not here because they hope to return to power soon, and to do that they need the support of the Zionist lobby." Earlier, on January 4, he had said: "PCL feels committed to fully supporting the armed resistance of the Palestinian people against the occupation troops of the Zionist state... PCL proclaims itself proudly anti-Zionist... so turning that colonial page from which the State of Israel was born in 1948, with terror and anti-Arab ethnic cleansing methods.

Although it is difficult to document evidence of antisemitic prejudice among Italian Muslims, sermons in some mosques and Muslim cultural centers closest to Islamism reportedly combine anti-western and "jihadist" themes with antisemitism. UCOII spokesman El Zir Izzedine stated during the KlausCondicio show broadcast on YouTube, that "the Palestinian question is a forgotten Holocaust" and compared the Palestinian tragedy to the "Jewish Holocaust." Dagoberto Husayn Bellucci, a Shiite Muslim, managing director of the Islam Italia press agency, contributor to the quarterly review *Eurasia* of the neo-Nazi monthly *Avanguardia* ([www.avanguardia.tv](http://www.avanguardia.tv)), and author of a venomously antisemitic pamphlet and several antisemitic articles, stated during a long interview to the online periodical *Iniziativa Meridionale* (Southern Initiative; [www.iniziativameridionale.it](http://www.iniziativameridionale.it)) that "in Italy we have to say clearly that politics now wears a kippah"; he also referred to "the Zionist occupation government" (see also below).

## Books

Nine anti-Jewish books were published in 2008, two denying the Holocaust. Their publishing houses are: Effepi edizioni, Effedieffe, edizioni di AR, Controcorrente Edizioni, Roberto Chiaramonte Editore and Helvetia Editrice. The first three publish anti-Jewish material on a regular basis; Controcorrente has published some antisemitic and conspiracy theory books, while the last two had never published antisemitic works before.

The most active is Effepi (<http://www.libroelibri.com/Italia-Effepi.htm>), a small publishing house in Genova with headquarters in the owner's house. Effepi's catalogue includes almost only antisemitic, Holocaust denying and Nazi books. The most significant anti-Jewish book published by Effepi in 2008 was *Dal giudaismo rabbinico al*



*giudeoamericanismo* (From Rabbinical Judaism to Judaeo-Americanism), by Catholic priest don Curzio Nitoglia ([www.doncurzionitoglia.com](http://www.doncurzionitoglia.com)), who specializes in anti-Judaic polemics. The central thesis of Nitoglia's book is that Jews profess a degenerate religion ("rabbinical Judaism" or "talmudism") aimed at conquering and dominating the world. Effepi also published two books denying the Holocaust in 2008.

Effedieffe ([www.uffedieffe.com](http://www.uffedieffe.com)), a publishing house of "Catholic orientation" based in the Viterbo area, issued the 400-page *Omicidio rituale ebraico. Storia di un'accusa* (Jewish Ritual Murder. History of an Accusation) by Domenico Savino, which analyzes the "Jewish blood libel," and infers that Jews have repeatedly committed it. Effedieffe has an online daily newspaper edited by journalist Maurizio Blondet, which regularly posts anti-Jewish articles (often written by Blondet himself). Savino is also a regular contributor.

Edizioni di AR (<http://www.edizionidiar.com/>), founded by neo-Nazi Franco Freda in 1963 and active since 1964, is the oldest publishing house of the Italian radical right. In 2008 it published an anthology of the monumental work of antisemitic polemics *Giudaismo svelato* (Judaism Unveiled), by 17th century German Orientalist Johann Andreas Eisenmenger.

Controcorrente Edizioni ([www.controcorrentedizioni.it](http://www.controcorrentedizioni.it)), based in Naples, publishes texts by Julius Evola and books supporting fascism and the Italian Social Republic. In 2008 Controcorrente published an updated version of *Massoneria e sette segrete. La faccia occulta della storia* (Freemasonry and Secret Sects: The Hidden Face of History) by Epiphanius.

Roberto Chiaramonte Editore ([www.chiaramonteeditore.it](http://www.chiaramonteeditore.it)), a small publishing house in Piedmont, published an unannotated reprint of the 1921 edition of the Italian version of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The Afterword, written by publisher Roberto Chiaramonte, has strong antisemitic overtones.

The Veneto-based Helvetia Editrice ([www.edizionihelvetia.com](http://www.edizionihelvetia.com)) published the fictional work *L'ebreo nazista* (The Nazi Jew), written by Padova doctor Alessandro Moro. The thesis of the book is that all the main representatives of National Socialism, starting from the Führer, were Jews and that their racism was inspired by Jewish religious texts.

### Websites

The extremely antisemitic Holywar website ([www.holywar.org](http://www.holywar.org)) appears mainly in Italian and English. Although Catholic-inspired, it accuses the contemporary Church of having betrayed its original apostolic mission and having become a slave of the "Jewish mafia." The website includes a



huge quantity of anti-Jewish material: hundreds of cartoons, *The Protocols of Elders of Zion*, documents accusing Jews of ritual murder, and even the Nazi film *The Jew Süß*.

The name Thule in [www.thule-toscana.com](http://www.thule-toscana.com) derives from the far right German secret society which was the first unit of Hitler's National Socialist Party. Managed by one person, it includes many sections and pages with a huge quantity of material denying the Holocaust, as well as a large selection of Nazi and fascist posters.

Italian Islamic-inspired websites are characterized by virulent anti-Zionism and anti-Israelism. Antisemitic stereotypes are rare and generally disguised in anti-imperialist rhetoric. Comparisons between the State of Israel and Nazi Germany or Apartheid South Africa are common, as well as use of terms such as genocide and ethnic cleansing. The websites <http://www.islam-online.it/> and <http://www.ilpuroislam.net/>, in particular, are aimed almost exclusively at demonizing the Jewish state and Zionism. Radio Tehran (which broadcasts two hours daily of Italian speaking programs) has a website <http://italian.trib.ir/>, which reflects the regime's information strategy: Holocaust denial and anti-Israel and anti-US propaganda. Among the site's contributors are well-known Italian journalists and intellectuals.

### Surveys

According to a survey conducted in 2008 by the Ispo Institute directed by Professor Renato Mannheimer on behalf of the Monferrato Cult, which organizes a Jewish culture festival, one Italian out of three thinks Jews are unpleasant people, while one Italian out of four does not consider them "fully Italian." The study, which was based on a sample of 1000 individuals, related to other populations as well. Accordingly, the Roma are the least loved ethnic group (81 percent of Italians).

Mannheimer distinguished three kinds of antisemitism: "classical" religious antisemitism (expressed by 10 percent of pollees); the "new" antisemitism, linked to attitudes toward Israel (11 percent); and absolute antisemitism (11 percent). Based on an analysis of answers, the antisemitic individual tends to be mainly male, aged 50-60, self-employed, leftist and secular.

### Operation Cast Lead

At the beginning of January 2009, the entrance gates to the villa of Emanuel Segre Amar, vice-president of the Italy-Israel Association, were defaced with the slogan "Zionist Murderer" and red paint poured on the ground and on the bars of the gate. Dozens of leaflets proclaiming "Free Palestine" were also scattered in the vicinity.



Large anti-Zionist demonstrations organized principally by Arab-Islamic associations in Milan, Bologna, Rome, Torino, Brescia and Vicenza, were unprecedented in Italy for the large numbers they attracted and their virulent anti-Zionism. Thousands of people, mostly of Arab descent, marched, together with Italian squatter leftists and anarchists and far left activists. Carrying banners showing the Magen David equated with the swastika and waving Hamas flags, many shouted slogans against the "Nazi-Zionist regime" and for the destruction of the Jewish state. One of the most serious incidents occurred in Mestre, where five hooded youths broke into the headquarters of the Israeli shipping company Zim and smeared the offices with antisemitic graffiti; anti-Israeli insults written in red paint and signed with a hammer and sickle and a five-pointed star also appeared on the walls in downtown Mestre.

Marco Rizzo, leader of the Party of Italian Communists (Partito dei Comunisti Italiani) said: "When Nazis killed people on a one to ten ratio they called it retaliation, today Israel's government kills on a one to hundred ratio and everyone is silent." In the same vein, the extreme leftist, anti-Zionist daily *il Manifesto*, which leads the anti-Israel campaign, wrote of "dozens and dozens of poor bodies of young men, crushed and piled up in front of the barracks" (Ali Rashid, *il Manifesto*, December 28, 2008). It should be noted that on March 13, *il Manifesto* also published an antisemitic caricature of Jewish parliamentary candidate, Fiamma Nirenstein as "Frankenstein," with fascist insignia, a campaign button and a Star of David.

Giancarlo Desiderati, provincial secretary of Flaica – Uniti – Cub, a trade union with some 8,000 members working in large-scale retail and catering in Rome, proposed boycotting all Roman shops managed by Jews and drawing up lists of Jewish-owned shops to be avoided, because of "what is happening in Gaza." After being severely reprimanded by leading Italian politicians and intellectuals, Desiderati replied: "When faced with what is happening in Gaza we have to respond; in war there are no rules... We have been caring about Jews for fifty years because they suffered the Holocaust, now we have to care about Palestinians who are today's Jews." Flaica website includes instructions for boycotting products made in Israel.

#### ATTITUDES TOWARD THE HOLOCAUST AND THE NAZI ERA Commemoration

In September Gianfranco Fini, president of Alleanza Nazionale, who was appointed president of the House of Representatives on April 30, 2008, restated that fascism is absolute evil, that "the Right must



recognize itself, in freedom, equality and solidarity – antifascist values – without ambiguity and without reticence" and that "those who fought for the right cause, the cause of freedom, can't be equated with those who were on the wrong side."

In October, Mayor of Rome Gianni Alemanno, speaking to students and teachers who were going to visit Auschwitz in November, stressed the need to close down websites inciting antisemitism and clearly condemned fascism and Nazism. His statement was made a few weeks after the heated controversy he triggered during a visit to Israel's Yad Vashem when he spoke of "absolute evil," fascism and racial laws ("Racial laws demanded by fascism were the absolute evil. Fascism was a more complex phenomenon. Many people joined it with good intentions and I don't feel like labeling them with that definition").

Holocaust Memorial Day, established in 2000 by state law and observed every January 27, was marked in 2008 throughout Italy, but especially in central and northern areas. As in previous years, the programs were spread over a span of two months. State institutions – including the Presidency of the Republic, the Senate and the House of Representatives as well as regional, provincial and municipal administrations – organized, sponsored and joined dozens of ceremonies, conferences, educational exhibitions, trips to Auschwitz, national competitions, stage performances, testimonies, movies, essays, novels and art exhibitions. Tuscany regional administration alone promoted more than 250 initiatives.

As in previous years, educational institutions were among the most active, using the occasion to stress democracy and tolerance. The Holocaust is dealt with not only by referring to the deportations but also, in several Italian cities, to the contribution made to their hometowns by deported Jewish citizens. For example, the Senate set up an exhibition celebrating two Jewish senators, Vito Volterra and Carlo Levi. Some Italian Righteous among the Nations are honored, as well as the Jewish Brigade. The persecution of Roma and the disabled are also remembered, and occasionally, political deportees.

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary in 2008 of the promulgation of the Racial Laws a conference was held in the House of Representatives, which was attended also by its president Gianfranco Fini; there were also several exhibits, including one in Rome, promoted by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage.

### **Holocaust Denial**

Dissemination of Holocaust denial in Italy has remained unchanged over the past few years: apart from the Italian website Thule-Toscana.com



and the Italian pages in two international websites, Aaargh and Radioislam, texts denying the Holocaust are posted and commented mainly in blogs and in graffiti. Holocaust denial propaganda is spread mostly by the radical right, as well as by some of the Catholic fundamentalist fringe and a few individuals.

In 2008 two new books denying the Holocaust were published, both by Effepi in Genova: *Il processo della Risiera di San Sabba. Messa in scena per uno sterminio* (The Trial of Risiera di San Sabba: Mise-en-Scene for a Mass-Murder,) by Ugo Fabbri, and *Il dottor Mengele e i gemelli di Auschwitz* (Doctor Mengele and the Auschwitz Twins), by Carlo Mattogno.

Denial of the Holocaust meets with strong disapproval by the authorities and in public opinion. For example, an art school teacher was suspended in November by the Regional School Office in Rome, after making statements such as: "The Holocaust was a British invention"; "there is no concrete evidence"; "enough with this Zionist culture. Jews are not even Italians"; and in January 2009, after echoing the Holocaust denying statements made by Bishop Williamson on January 27, Lefebvrian priest don Floriano Abrahamovicz of the Brotherhood of Saint Pius X in Treviso was expelled from the order "for serious disciplinary reasons." He had said during an interview with a Treviso newspaper that he knew the gas chambers had been used for disinfection, but did not know whether they had killed people or not, because he hadn't investigated the matter.

## RESPONSES TO ANTISEMITISM AND RACISM

### National and Local Initiatives

In September, on the occasion of the ninth European Day of Jewish Culture, representatives of Coreis (Comunità Religiosa Islamica Italiana – Italian Religious Islamic Community) visited synagogues and Jewish sites to reaffirm dialogue against antisemitic and islamophobic stereotypes and "to renew the values of religious brotherhood and spiritual connection shared all along with the Jewish Community."

In December all parties in the House of Representatives approved a motion on the initiatives prepared for the UN Conference against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance that was to be held in Geneva in April 2009. Among others, the motion, committed the government to exert maximum vigilance and act concretely so that the conference would actually be aimed at promoting the struggle against racism and every kind of discrimination, rather than be used to incite hatred against some people, states and ethnic or religious minorities, specifically mentioning the "campaign of moral, political and religious lynching against the Jewish people and the state of Israel."



In April, the Jewish community of Mantova established an "Observatory on Discrimination" called Article 3 (referring to equality of all citizens as prescribed in the Italian Constitution), together with two Mantova associations dealing with Sinti and Roma, a gay committee and the Mantova Institute of Contemporary History.

In January, police headquarters of Nuoro in Sardinia launched an inter-cultural educational campaign for teenagers, based on meetings in schools and the distribution of 34,000 copies of a leaflet to students of secondary schools. The initiative is aimed at fighting racism, antisemitism, xenophobia and intolerance.

### Legal Action

The editor of the far right antisemitic review *Avanguardia* was to face trial on the charge of racial discrimination against Jewish progeny and the State of Israel. The decision was taken by the court of appeal in Palermo, which also confirmed his acquittal, issued by the preliminary hearing judge, on charges of defense and reconstitution of the Fascist National Party.

The trial against 18 skinheads charged with forming a criminal organization based on Nazi-fascist ideology and aimed at inciting racial hatred began in September 2008. The group allegedly attacked non-European, gay and Jewish individuals, stirred up fights at the football stadium with opposing Ultras, and established contacts with neo-Nazi groups.

In May, 16 skinheads were arrested and 60 more in the area around Merano (Alto Adige) were charged with violation of the Mancino Law and judged socially dangerous. A veritable "neo Nazi International," with an almost military structure, came to light as a result of investigations.

In October, the Court of Cassation sentenced the editor of the website Holywarvszog to four months imprisonment for spreading racist ideas. On the site, the "holy war" against "Zionist racism" and the "government of Jewish minorities over society" was invoked in the name of the Movement of Popular Resistance, Christian Alternative. The sentence was subsequently commuted to charity work in a hospital.

In May, the Prosecutor's Office in Bologna acquitted leading UCOII officials of the charge of "inciting racial hatred and disseminating news based on racial hatred" for an ad published in August 2006 in the newspapers of the Riffeser Group (*Giorno, Nazione, Resto del Carlino*), entitled "Nazi Bloodshed Yesterday, Israeli Bloodshed Today"; the ad ended with the equation "Marzabotto=Gaza=Ardeatine Caves=Lebanon."