

CONFRONTING ANTISEMITISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

Combating antisemitism is a central plank of the SAJBD's mandate. For over a hundred years, it is the Board that Jews in South Africa have looked to when it comes to confronting anti-Jewish prejudice and behavior. This it has effectively done through a variety of methods, including legal action, education, political lobbying and media activism.

In the early 1990s, the Board was responsible for establishing the Community Security Organisation (CSO). Today, it works closely with the CSO in monitoring and appropriately responding all instances of antisemitism in the country.

In order to perform this crucial role effectively, it is vital for the SAJBD to be timely informed of any antisemitic acts that might occur. All those who have any information on such incidents, whether they have experienced them personally or whether they are aware of others who have been targeted, are urged to bring it to the Board's attention. This includes not only abusive acts against Jewish individuals, but also all instances of derogatory and defamatory information about Jews that surface in the broader society, including in the media, cultural and educational spheres.

You are our eyes and ears! With your help, we can identify and effectively deal with the scourge of antisemitism whenever it surfaces in our country.

SOUTH AFRICA ANTISEMITISM UPDATE: REPORT FOR 2011

1. General Overview

- There was a 33% decline in recorded antisemitic incidents in SA in 2011, testifying again to a quiet year for Israel and its relationship with its neighbors. 42 incidents were logged, compared to 66 in 2010 and 102 in 2009, the lowest total since 2004.
- Of the antisemitic incidents recorded, 55% involved face-to-face abuse (verbal insults, offensive gestures – 24, with three including threats), 30% hate mail (12) and the remainder comprising graffiti, social media postings or printed matter.
- Antisemitism levels in South Africa are very low compared with other Diaspora communities (see below) and are usually of a non-violent nature. Nevertheless, members of the Jewish community regularly report being subjected to demeaning and/or threatening behavior because of their religious and ethnic background.

2. Noteworthy Incidents – January-December 2011

- March: Market Theatre Laboratory head Matjamela Motloung fired following racist and antisemitic statements made on Facebook, viz. “OK even when tries to remain civil there is always a Jew lurking and hoping to screw you UP, I am growing tired and irritated by how Black theatre producers have to be f***ked over by WHITE mostly JEW producers in the South African Theatre Industry. It saddens me even more when BLACK writers/directors/actors succumb to this reverse holocaust, that is why we continue to die paupers and they are legends”.
- September: Jewish businessman receives abusive and threatening emails from a former business associate. The culprit apologized in writing after SAJBD wrote to him, warning of the possible consequences of his illegal hate speech.
- April-September: A flurry of offensive emails emanating from Snowy Smith, a Durban-based individual known for his rantings against Jews and Freemason, widely circulated. Recipients included Jewish lawyers in Durban, a Herzlia teacher in Cape Town and various newspapers. Typical comments were, “There is only ONE Group of TERRORISTS in the World today and they are the ZIONIST JEWS” and “The ZIONIST JEWS taking over the World”

- June: Mail & Guardian trainee reporter Ngoako Matsha suspended for posting an antisemitic comment on Facebook. He first responded to a posting by Benji Shulman asking people to suggest a "basic decent history of apartheid", writing: "Petty apartheid is building tall walls to separate Israel from Palestine." When Shulman responded: "Thanks for that piece of pseudo-politics but I need something that will stand up to logical argument," he wrote: "You racists! No wonder Hitler killed all the Jews, because you're all a bunch of racists."
- August: Pretoria University's Tuks FM radio station sent out a message (tweet) on a social networking group including a link to a blog which encouraged viewers to 'go Nazi' - "act of displaying oneself in random places in a standing position while your right hand is in the air, and you left hand makes a fake mustache [sic]". The blog was subsequently removed and an apology made to the SAJBD. Thereafter, the Board met with the university and arranged for JHB Holocaust and Genocide Centre's Tali Nates to give a seminar to the station's staff.
- November: Minister of Sport and Recreation Fikile Mbalula was reported, re the crisis in SA cricket, as saying, "We have been told that this one belongs to the Indians and this one belongs to the Jews. Let the truth be told, is it Jew or Indian? We want the truth". Zev Krengel and Wendy Kahn met with Mbalula, after which a press release was issued stating: "The Minister reassured the SA Jewish community that these remarks were incorrectly communicated and that they were not a reflection of his beliefs and his intention. He reiterated his commitment to the values of non-racialism and tolerance. He acknowledged the role, the Jewish community played in the struggle in SA and the contribution towards SA cricket".

3. International Comparisons

United Kingdom: While the UK again saw a drop in antisemitic incidents in 2011, it was still the fourth-highest annual total since recording began in 1984. According to the Community Security Trust, there was a 9% drop, with 586 incidents recorded compared to 645 in 2010. Incident types were 92 violent antisemitic assaults (a fall of 19% from the 114 reported in 2010), 63 cases of desecration of Jewish property (down from 83), and 394 incidents of abusive behavior, including verbal abuse, graffiti and hate mail.

Australia: Antisemitism rose more than 30% between 1/10/2010-30/09/2011 according to the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, with 517 incidents logged (38% above the post-1989 average). This included 17 cases of physical assault or property damage and 128 of direct harassment and intimidation (largely due to a proliferation of hate e-mail).

France: 2011 saw a 16.5% drop in antisemitism, with 389 incidents compared to 466 in 2010, the lowest number in ten years. However, the number of violent incidents remained

the same as in 2010, and there was a rise in the severity of the violence. There were 127, including damage to property, vandalism and direct violent attacks, 144 cases of malicious threats, threatening actions and curses, and 46 antisemitic publications.

Canada: No figures for 2011 are as yet available. In 2010, B'nai Brith's League for Human Rights reported 1306 anti-Jewish incidents, comprising 965 cases of harassment, 317 incidents of vandalism and 24 cases of violence.

Argentina: Approximately 300 antisemitic incidents are reported annually.