

**Anti-Semitism  
in Italy  
2018**

Annual Activity Report by *Osservatorio antisemitismo* of the CDEC Foundation in Milan, Italy.

In-depth analyses, news and images on anti-Semitism in Italy are available on the website: [www.osservatorioantisemitismo.it](http://www.osservatorioantisemitismo.it)

**ANTENNA ANTISEMITISMO**

Sei vittima o testimone  
di un episodio antisemita?

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## **Osservatorio antisemitismo** of the CDEC Foundation

The *Osservatorio antisemitismo* of the CDEC (Contemporary Jewish Documentation Center) Foundation in Milan collects, compiles and deals with data about anti-Semitic actions (incidents, offenses, public speeches, etc.) and episodes of anti-Semitic hostility. It performs in-depth analysis and studies on public opinion while providing focused essays on the subject. It deals also with monitoring – throughout the Italian Peninsula – such phenomenon and its diverse manifestations.

Data collection on different forms of anti-Semitic hostility is primarily gathered by monitoring the media and by the *Antenna Antisemitismo*. The latter is a facility established to record and analyze reports (voiced by phone or Web) of anti-Semitic incidents of enmity and intolerance. It is also performed by targeted social studies, as well as by opinion poll with simple size, high quality survey, *Focus Groups* (small number of people brought together with a moderator – to focus and discuss on different topics with concealed questions about anti-Semitism – whose aim is to produce qualitative data), inquiry on opinion leader and research on the Web.

The *Osservatorio antisemitismo* is particularly committed to monitoring the Web as anti-Semitism 2.0 has become a complex reality and a fundamental area – from the communicative and sociological point of view – because of its powerful consequences on social and media events. The ubiquitous and global nature of the Web and social networks has provided tools to spread it to the rest of the Internet. The *Osservatorio* quantifies the escalation and spread of posts about anti-Semitic rhetoric, anti-Zionism, Jewish conspiracy and Holocaust denial across the Web. This corpus of posts engenders defamation and disinformation which eventually degenerate into anti-Semitism.

The results provide a data-driven, quantitative framework for understanding online anti-Semitism. Collected data are available on the *Osservatorio antisemitismo* website, daily updated. The *Osservatorio* publishes the newsletter “*Antisemitismo NEWS – aggiornamenti sull’antisemitismo in Italia*” (Anti-Semitism NEWS – update on anti-Semitism in Italy) for UCEI (Union of Italian Jewish Communities) and for the Kantor Center (University of Tel Aviv).

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Antenna  
Antisemitismo

Monitoring  
online anti-  
Semitism

Antisemitismo  
NEWS

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ANTI-SEMITIC INCIDENTS IN 2018

## INTRODUCTION

The **Osservatorio Antisemitismo** defines as anti-Semitic incident any deliberate act against Jewish people, organizations or property in which there is evidence that the action has anti-Semitic motivations or contents, or that the victim has been targeted as Jewish or deemed so.

The *Osservatorio* gets to know anti-Semitic incidents occurred in Italy through the main media and through the reports to the **Antenna Antisemitismo**.

It is indisputable that the actual number of anti-Semitic incidents is higher than the recorded one, since their reporting or visibility varies from one type to another; it is more frequent in fact to hear about serious acts than about verbal or written offenses, more rarely reported.

In the last decades, racist and anti-Semitic prejudices have become by and large more legitimate.

The more we move away from the Second World War and the Shoah, the more the taboo of anti-Semitism is overcome.

The political climate with the recent strengthening of the far right in many European countries is characterized by slogans and symbols that recall - with due differences - the 1930s.

The electoral and political successes of the far right create concern, but it is important to pay attention also to the rise of leftist anti-Semitism, which supports Islamist instances and anti-Israeli Islamist attitudes expressed in anti-Semitic terms as in the BDS movement (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions).

The gradual return of accusations against the Jews – which go back to classical anti-Semitic stereotypes – is evident in the use of myths and symbols of anti-Judaism (e.g. deicide, blood accusation, exclusivism, hatred against mankind). In anti-Semitic discourses prevail conspiracy, anti-Zionism, trivialization and denial of the Holocaust.

Classification of anti-Semitic incidents

Legitimacy of anti-Semitism

Echoes from the Thirties

Return of archaic themes against the Jews

The theme of deicide, re-enacted in the Palestinian threat rhetoric, has re-emerged, while raising particular concern.

Whereas violent actions of anti-Jewish hostility distinguish the extremist political groups (right, left, Islamists), prejudice against Jews is widely spread among socio-cultural classes and political and ideological groups.

The Arab-Israeli conflict helps to feed antipathy towards the Jews.

The demonization of Israel and the dehumanization of the "Zionists" perpetuate the tradition of hostility towards the Jews, legitimizing anti-Semitism among people. Codification and dissemination of anti-Semitism are increasing at the global level, in particular because of the non-stop development of technological tools.

Messages against Jews are present both in the anti-Semitic as well as in mainstream websites and social networks (also in those of the main press services), where "offensive" comments are posted and shared with articles or videos dedicated to Jewish themes or to Israel. This is because postings is not generally controlled.

The evidence of verbal radicalization and the lowering of the taboo threshold clearly emerge through the language, load of violence, climate of anti-conformism and desecration, racist sarcasm.

In the discourse about and portrayal of the Jews, the anti-Semitic clichés feed a negative and stereotypical image. The Web makes it possible to modernize and globalize the dissemination of anti-Semitic theses and discourses.

Web 2.0 has allowed the development of a culture in which anti-Semitism has been socially accepted, particularly among young people. In such environment, the promotion of conspiracy theories, the demonization of Jews / Zionists and the Jewish state, the use of the Jews / Zionists as a scapegoat has become the norm. They may lead, as consequence, to fierce actions against the Jews. The organized attempt to legitimize the anti-Semitism – the core of anti-Semitism 2.0 – affects the defenses that society has erected against racism.

Deicide with  
Palestinian tone

Prejudice  
dissemination

Dehumanization  
of the  
«Zionists»

Forum are not  
controlled

Normalization of  
anti-Semitism

Collapse of the  
social defenses  
erected against  
racism e  
anti-Semitism

## January – December 2018

### **ANTI-SEMITIC INCIDENTS**

In 2018 the *Osservatorio Antisemitismo* of the CDEC Foundation recorded 197 anti-Semitic incidents, a significantly higher number compared to 2017 and 2016, when 130 (+ 66%) were recorded. No case of physical violence or proven discrimination has been reported.

2018  
Growth of  
anti-Semitic  
incidents

	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>
January	14	13	17
February	13	10	14
March	8	3	14
April	24	8	5
May	24	10	13
June	25	10	12
July	20	19	8
August	14	4	4
September	13	14	12
October	16	9	7
November	13	21	9
December	13	9	15
<b>Totale</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>130</b>

### **INCIDENT TYPES**

Anti-Semitism on the Web	131
Defamation and insults	36
Graffiti and graphics	12
Threats to people	7
Vandalism	4
Anti-Semitism in the mass-media	2
Other	3

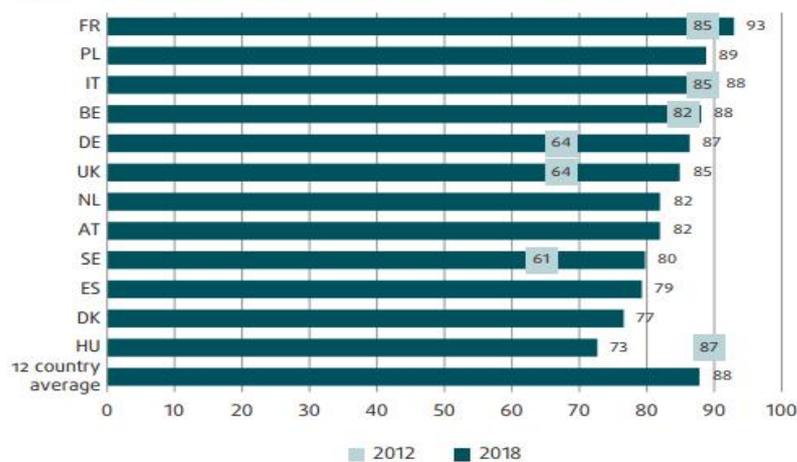
Table 2: Assessment of manifestations of antisemitism against Jewish community as a problem, by EU Member State (%)<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

	AT	BE	DE	DK	ES	FR	HU	IT	NL	PL	SE	UK	12 country average
Antisemitism on the internet, including social media	85	92	89	71	86	95	81	90	80	92	81	84	89
Expressions of hostility towards Jews in the street or other public places	46	81	80	47	52	91	46	51	71	37	69	52	73
Antisemitism in the media	51	84	68	51	85	80	69	73	63	73	63	61	71
Antisemitism in political life	63	69	61	37	66	67	74	55	49	77	58	84	70
Vandalism of Jewish buildings or institutions	31	68	61	45	45	88	35	48	57	39	60	45	66
Antisemitic graffiti	36	64	53	28	54	83	58	66	38	71	48	45	64
Desecration of Jewish cemeteries	40	53	61	20	31	83	53	51	37	51	48	45	63

- Notes:
- <sup>a</sup> Out of all respondents (n=16,395); country results are unweighted, 12 country average is weighted.
  - <sup>b</sup> Question: B04a. To what extent do you think the following are a problem in [COUNTRY] (Items as listed in the table)?
  - <sup>c</sup> Answers in the table are a sum of answer categories 'a very big problem' and 'a fairly big problem'.
  - <sup>d</sup> The items are listed in descending order according to the average of the 12 countries.
  - <sup>e</sup> For each country, the three most serious manifestations of antisemitism – as assessed by the respondents – are highlighted in the table.

Source: FRA, 2018

Figure 4: Perceptions of changes in the level of expressions of antisemitism on the internet in the country over the past five years, by EU Member State (%)<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>



- Notes:
- <sup>a</sup> Out of all respondents (n=16,395); country results are unweighted, 12 country average is weighted.
  - <sup>b</sup> Question: B04b. Over the past five years, have the following increased, stayed the same or decreased in [COUNTRY]? Answer: G. Antisemitism on the internet, including social media.
  - <sup>c</sup> Answers include 'increased a lot' and 'increased a little'.
  - <sup>d</sup> The values in light blue squares refer to the respective findings of the 2012 survey in seven Member States.

Source: FRA, 2018

Graphs taken from: *Experiences and perceptions of anti-Semitism - Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU*, FRA, December 2018

Over the period considered, 131 cases out of a total of 197 appeared on the Internet.  
 In detail: 70 Facebook, 25 Twitter, 9 YouTube, 28 Websites, 1 WhatsApp.

Experiences and perceptions of anti-Semitism –  
 Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU  
 FRA, 2018

Web as privileged channel

The high number of anti-Semitic incidents recorded throughout the year reflects the political and economic climate; many cases are related – as usual – to events that see the Jews and / or the State of Israel at the center of attention:

- ✓ Day of Remembrance (January 27th)
- ✓ *Giro di'Italia* (Grand Tour) started from Israel
- ✓ Celebration of the 70th anniversari of Israel
- ✓ Murder of Mireille Knoll
- ✓ Clashes in Gaza
- ✓ Liliana Segre named Life Senator
- ✓ Liliana Segre Law Proposal against online hate
- ✓ Vandalization of stumbling stones

The anti-Semitic incidents of 2018 relate, in order of importance, to: conspiracy, anti-Zionism, neo-Nazism, trivialization of the Holocaust (mockery of the Shoah), anti-Judaism (Christian and religious anti-Semitism).

In particular, the themes of anti-Judaism (blood accusation, deicide, etc.) have been experiencing a strong resurgence over the last few months.

While the denial of the Shoah (typical of neo-Nazism) or the blood accusation (characteristic of anti-Judaism) are wide spread only in the sphere of neo-Nazism, the same myths adapted to Israeli reality gather consensus in more heterogeneous areas: far left, ethno-regionalism, ecology, anti-elite galaxy, Islamism.

Conspiracy, which has become more and more the “glue” of anti-Semitism *tout court*, is structured in three great themes of accusation towards the Jews or the Zionists:

- ✓ They dominate in the West, they are rich and powerful, they own all banks (Goldman Sachs, Rothschild), they preside over places of power (Bilderberg Group, Trilateral Commission, EU), they govern and manipulate information.
- ✓ They are racist, especially in the Middle East, where they behave – like / worse than the Nazis – against the Palestinians, which are currently victims of a genocide («worse than the Shoah»).
- ✓ They have a strong, occult and behind-the-scenes influence, they rule the world public opinion and or-

Factors  
connected  
to anti-Semitic  
acts

Increase of anti-  
Judaism

Holocaust  
denial and anti-  
Zionism

Conspiracy

chestrated and plotted everywhere in the world: the attack of September 11, 2001, the wars in the Middle East and Africa, the jihadist terrorism, al Qaeda and ISIS are “their” work.

Online anti-Semitism is openly conveyed and expressed while using extremely aggressive and demonizing iconographic and lexical forms.

The major *providers* have become more attentive to the problem of hate on Internet and more effective in erasing the contents of hatred. Still, Internet remains the privileged place for the dissemination of hate speech, a place where anti-Semitism is now fully legitimized.

*Facebook* is the most popular social networking site used by haters. The one that publishes the most brutally anti-Semitic material is the Russian social site *VK*, which, due to its permissiveness, has become the online shelter of the most virulent anti-Semites.

Defamation and insults (36 incidents) against Jewish people and institutions. In detail: 20 cases affect Jews or phantasmal “Zionists”, 9 concern Jewish Institutions – mainly UCEI and *Osservatorio antisemitismo* of the CDEC Foundation – 7 individuals, including a rabbi. Public figures such as Gad Lerner, Emanuele Fiano, Sandro Parenzo, Enrico Mentana and Liliana Segre are often victims of anti-Semitic invective especially on social media.

Graffiti and graphics (12). Graffiti writers come mainly from neo-Nazism. It clearly emerges from the symbolism used (swastikas) and from stadium anti-Semitism. Slogans and writings are often re-launched through social media.

Threats to people (7). Half of the recorded incidents are offenses, threats and harassment against people identified as Jews. A case of incitement to homicide concerns the neo-Nazi Massimiliano Z. whose posting on Facebook incites to kill Jews.

Vandalism(4). Acts of vandalism are directed exclusively against symbols that remind the Holocaust, mainly the stumbling stones.

Brutality of digital anti-Semitism

Facebook the most used, VK the most provocative

Liliana Segre insulted

Graffiti and graphics as neo-Nazi instruments

Vandalism against Shoah symbols

Click on the link below to view the complete list:

<https://www.osservatorioantisemitismo.it/notizie/episodi-di-antisemitismo-in-italia/?anno=2018>