



The Center for the Study of  
Contemporary European Jewry  
The Lester and Sally Entin  
Faculty of Humanities  
Tel Aviv University

*"[It] is one of the most important centers in Israeli academia."*

President Isaac Herzog, Jerusalem, 27.1.22

# Antisemitism Worldwide Report 2021







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The Center publishes annually the For a Righteous Cause Report on achievements in fighting antisemitism and radicalization, the Antisemitism Worldwide Report on the state of antisemitism across the globe, and eight issues of Perspectives – analytical essays on contemporary Jewish life.

Every year, the Center organizes international workshops for professionals (the most recent one, held in March in Nicosia in cooperation with the Israeli Foreign Ministry, informed 25 high ranking Cypriot officials and police officers about Jewish and Israeli history and trained them in combating antisemitism).

The Center organizes every year three seminars on topical issues open to the public (the most recent ones explored the debate about the definition of antisemitism, Vegetarianism and Judaism, Jews and the elections in France, and the Jewish dimension of the war in Ukraine).

The Center also hosts a three-day leadership seminar on Jewish and Israeli identity for promising international students and supports original research on Jewish history and culture.

## FOREWORD

The annual report on antisemitism worldwide for 2021, published on the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day, does not convey good news. It informs that with few exceptions, the largest Jewish populations outside Israel witnessed sharp increases in the number of recorded antisemitic incidents compared to 2020.

In several countries, the increase in incidents was substantial also in comparison to 2019, before Covid-19 restrictions on social gatherings were imposed.

These data result from the strengthening in some countries of the radical populist right and the anti-Zionist radical left. Covid-19 angsts, and the economic hardships that followed, unleashed voices of hatred and prejudice. So did the conflict in Gaza in May 2021. Social media, with the echo chambers it cultivates, popularizes destructive conspiracy theories on which antisemitism thrives.

The fight against antisemitism enjoys considerable funding today. It is the focus of more conferences, seminars, and legislation than ever before. There is no shortage of organizations dedicated to the cause, which gained the commitment of world leaders. The data presented in this report suggest that, despite all these efforts, something has gone terribly wrong.

The remedy often offered by professors is to invest more money, enact more laws, and deliver more speeches. That is not, however, what we suggest. Rather, we believe unsparing examination of the efficacy of existing strategies is required.

The report is the product of a six-month team effort by eleven researchers from Tel Aviv University and beyond it. Its first section, Global Overview, provides data on antisemitic incidents recorded by various organizations and agencies in 2021 and an analysis of the data.

The second section, In Focus, is dedicated to six case studies from 2021, which demonstrate the diverse challenges antisemitism poses in our world. It includes analyses of state-sponsored antisemitism in Belarus; the rise of antisemitism in the American radical right; the reluctance of the French judiciary to acknowledge Islamist antisemitism for what it is; the proliferation of antisemitism among the German anti-vaccination movement; antisemitic conspiracy theories introduced in the Arab world in response to the Abraham Accords; and antisemitism in Pakistan, where the scarcity of Jews does not prevent the proliferation of Jew-hatred.

The final drafts of this report were written with heavy hearts amidst news about continued Russian atrocities in Ukraine. Early in March, the Center's leading researchers published an unequivocal condemnation of the war crimes committed under the directives of the Russian dictator Vladimir Putin, as well as against his cynical distortion of the Holocaust.

Democracy, liberty, and the rule of law, which the Russian people are deprived of under Putin, are the foundation of peace and advancement. They have also proved historically to be the most credible long-term guarantee for the safety and prosperity of Jews, wherever they chose to live.



## Section I

# Global Overview

## Data

The data on antisemitic incidents in 2021 from across the Jewish world is discouraging. While the fight against antisemitism was fiercer than ever on different fronts, several of the countries with the largest Jewish minorities in the world witnessed a sharp rise in anti-Jewish attacks compared to 2020.

It would have been comforting to suggest that the relative increase results from the lifting of Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions. The data suggest this may be the case for some countries, but not for others, where the number of antisemitic incidents had also risen compared to 2019. The Israel-Hamas conflict in May 2021, in particular, served as a trigger for spikes in antisemitic incidents.

Not all countries witnessed a rise in antisemitic incidents. Italy, for example, registered a slight decline from 230 incidents in 2020 to 226 in 2021, while in Argentina, figures suggest the total number of incidents in 2021 will be similar to the 507 recorded in 2020.

In several countries with large Jewish populations, including Russia and Brazil, official documentation of antisemitic incidents is lacking, making it difficult to assess the actual situation in those countries. For example, Russia's SOVA Center for Information and Analysis recorded one antisemitic act of violence and three acts of vandalism in 2021 (the same as in 2020), a questionable figure, to say the least. The SOVA Center ignored the unchecked proliferation of antisemitic content on the Russian social media platform VKontakte (VK).

## United States (Jewish population 6,000,000)

Reports by police departments, Jewish organizations, and the media suggest antisemitism was on the rise in the United States in 2021 compared to 2020, and in some dimensions, also in comparison to 2019, before Covid-19 restrictions were imposed.

A survey of American media reports suggests 28 incidents of violent physical assaults against Jews took place in 2021, compared to 12 in 2020 and 36 in 2019.<sup>1</sup>

The New York Police Department (NYPD) and the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) also registered an alarming number of incidents. The two cities have the largest Jewish populations in the United States (and are the first and third largest Jewish cities in the world at large) – 1.5 million and 519,200, respectively.<sup>2</sup>

In 2021, the NYPD recorded 214 anti-Jewish hate crime reports compared to 126 in 2020 and 252 in 2019.<sup>3</sup> The LAPD recorded 79 anti-Jewish hate crime reports in the city of Los Angeles in 2021 compared to 40 in 2020 and 42 in 2019.<sup>4</sup>

In its annual survey of the American Jewish population on the state of antisemitism in the United States in 2021, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) found that 82% of Jewish respondents believed antisemitism in the United States had increased somewhat (45%) or a lot (37%) over the same period.<sup>5</sup>

According to the AJC, 24% of American Jews surveyed said they had been the targets of antisemitic physical attacks or remarks (in person, by phone, by mail, or online) over the past five years. According to the survey, 2.6% of American Jews said they had been the victims of antisemitic physical attacks over the past five years; 17% of American Jews said they had been the targets

<sup>1</sup> See, for example: Shira Hanau, “Orthodox Jewish Couple and Baby Visiting New York City Slashed in ‘Possible Bias Incident,’” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 1, 2021; available at <https://www.jta.org/quick-reads/orthodox-jewish-couple-and-baby-slashed-in-new-york-city-in-possible-bias-incident>, last accessed on March 30, 2022; Jewish Telegraphic Agency, “Nevada Jewish Man Stabbed in Head by Man Shouting Anti-Semitic Slurs,” *Times of Israel*, June 23, 2020; available at <https://www.timesofisrael.com/nevada-jewish-man-stabbed-in-head-by-man-shouting-anti-semitic-slurs/>, last accessed March 30, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> See Ira M. Sheskin and Arnold Dashefsky, “United States Jewish Population, 2020,” in *The American Jewish Yearbook, 2020, Volume 120*, eds. Arnold Dashefsky and Ira M. Sheskin (Cham, SU: Springer, 2020), 155–257.

<sup>3</sup> NYC OpenData, “NYPD Hate Crimes,” February 3, 2022; available at <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Public-Safety/NYPD-Hate-Crimes/bqiq-cu78/data>, last accessed on March 30, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Los Angeles Open Data, “Crime Data from 2020 to Present,” March 30, 2022; available at <https://data.lacity.org/Public-Safety/Crime-Data-from-2020-to-Present/2nrs-mtv8>, last accessed on March 30, 2022; Los Angeles Open Data, “Crime Data from 2010 to 2019,” March 30, 2022; available at <https://data.lacity.org/Public-Safety/Crime-Data-from-2010-to-2019/63jg-8b9z>, last accessed on March 30, 2022; and Lauren Whaley, “Record-breaking Hate Crimes in L.A.,” *Crosstown*, February 1, 2022; available at <https://xtown.la/2022/02/01/hate-crime-record-los-angeles-2021/>, last accessed on March 30, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> American Jewish Committee, “The State of Antisemitism in America 2021,” October 25, 2021; available at [https://www.ajc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2021-12/AJC2021StateofAntisemitisminAmericaReport\\_Reader-12.21.pdf](https://www.ajc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2021-12/AJC2021StateofAntisemitisminAmericaReport_Reader-12.21.pdf), last accessed on March 30, 2022.

of antisemitic remarks in person, by mail, or by phone over the past five years; and 12% said they had been the target of antisemitism online or on social media over the past five years.

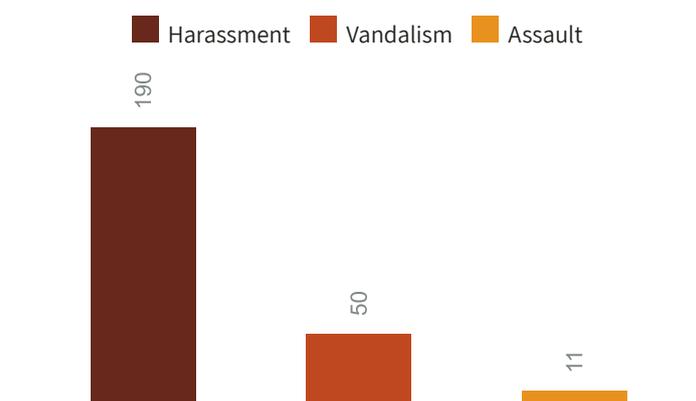
The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) recorded a particularly significant rise in antisemitic incidents from the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas conflict on May 11, 2021, until the end of the month. The 251 incidents (190 cases of harassment, 50 cases of vandalism, and 11 assaults) recorded during that period constituted an increase of 115% over the same period in 2020, when 117 incidents were recorded. The most dramatic increase was in the category of assault, which rose from zero between May 11-31, 2020, to 11 in the same period in May 2021 during the fighting.

The ADL recorded 352 incidents of white supremacist antisemitic propaganda in 2021, a 27% increase from the 277 incidents recorded in 2020 and a 113% increase from the 165 incidents recorded in 2019.

The increase in antisemitic propaganda distributions in 2021 is particularly concerning given that there was a slight decrease in the overall number of white supremacist propaganda distributions – from 5,125 incidents in 2020 to 4,851 incidents in 2021. Thus, white supremacist groups are increasing their use of propaganda narratives specifically targeting Jews and Jewish institutions.

The top distributors of antisemitic propaganda in the United States in 2021 were the New Jersey European Heritage Association (NJEHA) and the Folkish Resistance Movement (FRM, formerly Folks Front), which according to the report, were responsible for 16% and 50% of the 352 incidents recorded respectively. The report informs that NJEHA and FRM were also the leading distributors of antisemitic propaganda in 2020.<sup>6</sup>

#### ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES, MAY 11-31, 2021



SOURCE: ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE

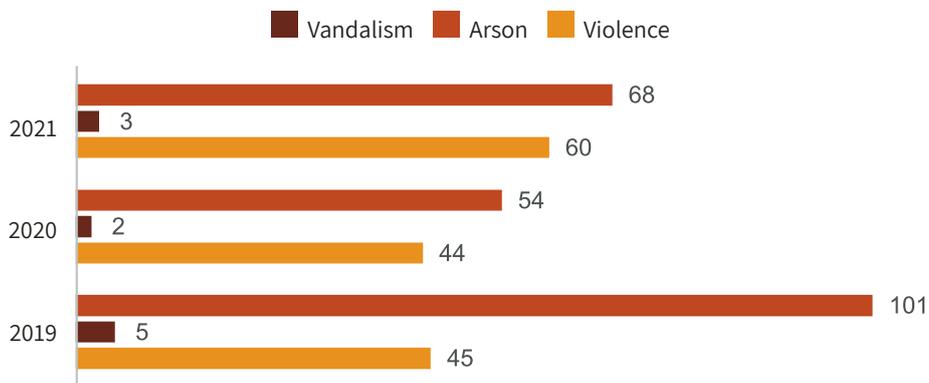
<sup>6</sup> See: Anti-Defamation League, “U.S. White Supremacist Propaganda Remained at Historic Levels in 2021, With 27 Percent Rise in Antisemitic Messaging,” March 3, 2022; available at <https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/us-white-supremacist-propaganda-2021>, last accessed on March 30, 2022; Anti-Defamation League, “Audit of Antisemitic Incidents – Year in Review 2020,” April 2020; available at <https://www.adl.org/media/16191/download>, last accessed March 30, 2022.

## France (Jewish population 446,000)

In cooperation with the French Ministry of Interior, the Service de Protection de la Communauté Juive (SPJC) recorded 589 antisemitic incidents in 2021, a 74% increase from the 339 incidents recorded in 2020 and a 14.3% decrease from the 687 incidents recorded in 2019.<sup>7</sup>

Antisemitic incidents involving physical violence (60) increased 36% from those recorded in 2020 (44) and 33% from those recorded in 2019 (45). The 68 incidents of vandalism in 2021 constituted an increase of 26% from the 54 incidents in 2020, but a 33% decrease from the 101 incidents in 2019, while the three incidents of arson were one more than in 2020, but two less than in 2019. The number of incidents in 2021 peaked in May during Israel’s operation “Guardian of the Walls” and in August after the French government implemented stricter health restrictions to address surging cases of Covid-19.

**INCIDENTS OF VANDALISM, ARSON, AND VIOLENCE IN FRANCE  
2019-2021**



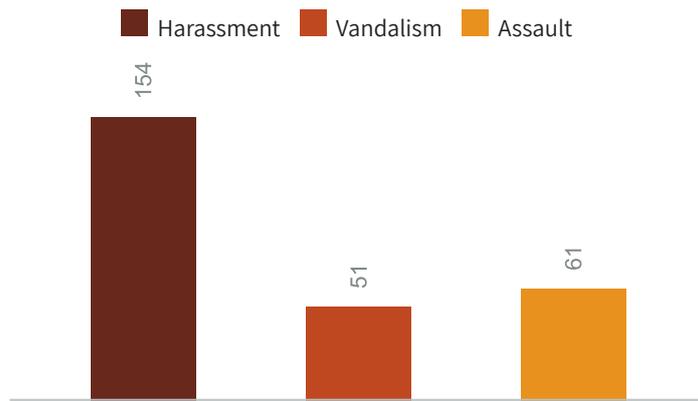
## Canada (Jewish population 393,500)

During the Israel-Hamas conflict in May 2021, B’nai Brith Canada recorded at least 266 antisemitic incidents, a 54% increase from the 173 incidents recorded during the same period in 2020. The total included 61 violent incidents and 51 incidents of vandalism.

The 61 violent incidents are the highest ever recorded in a single month by the organization since it began monitoring incidents in 1982 and constitutes a startling 578% increase over the nine violent incidents recorded in all of 2020 and a 336% increase over the 14 violent incidents recorded in all of 2019.

<sup>7</sup> For the SPJC’s annual antisemitic incidents reports, see <https://www.spcj.org/>.

**ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS IN CANADA, MAY 2021**



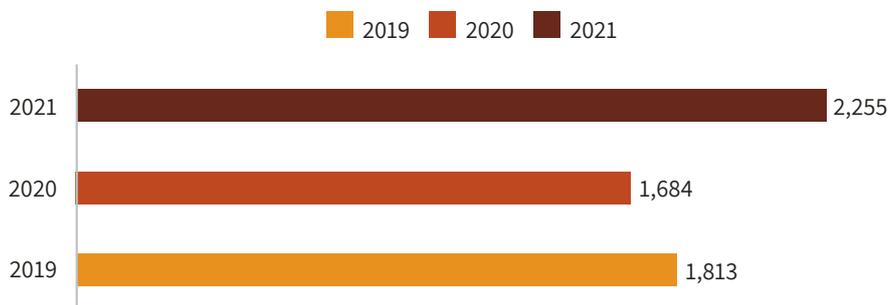
SOURCE: B'NAI BRITH CANADA

**United Kingdom (Jewish population 292,000)**

The Community Service Trust (CST) in the United Kingdom recorded 2,255 antisemitic incidents in 2021, a 34% increase from incidents recorded in 2020 (1,684) and 24% higher than the 1,813 incidents recorded in 2019, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>8</sup>

Incidents of assault in 2021 (173) increased 78% from the 97 assaults recorded in 2020 and increased 10.2% from the 157 assaults recorded in 2019. The 82 incidents of damage and desecration to Jewish property increased 11% from the 74 incidents in 2020 but constitute a 7% decrease from the 88 incidents recorded in 2019. In 2021, CST recorded three incidents of extreme violence (an attack with the potential or intention of causing death or grievous bodily harm), the same as in 2020, but two more than the single incident recorded in 2019. The CST recorded its highest monthly total of antisemitic incidents (661) ever in May during the Israel-Gaza conflict.

**TOTAL ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM 2019-2021**



<sup>8</sup> For the CST’s annual antisemitic incidents reports, see <https://cst.org.uk/>.

## Argentina (Jewish population 175,000)

The Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA) registered an estimated 500 antisemitic incidents in 2021. DAIA recorded an all-time high in total incidents (918) in 2019, and 507 in 2020, a 45% decrease.

The significant decrease was most likely due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions and closures. The similar number of estimated incidents in Argentina in 2021 (500) suggests Argentina continues to see a decrease in the number of antisemitic incidents.

However, DAIA notes two concerning trends: (a) antisemitic incidents are increasingly taking place online, and (b) though the total number of incidents appears to be declining, the number of legal cases involving antisemitic crimes is rising, suggesting the incidents are of greater significance.

## Russia (Jewish population 150,000)

In 2021, the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis recorded one antisemitic act of violence and three acts of vandalism.<sup>9</sup> The number of antisemitic acts of violence was the same in 2020 and 2019, representing no change. While the number of acts of vandalism in 2021 was the same as in 2020, it was two less than the five recorded in 2019.

Documentation of antisemitic incidents in Russia is lacking, leading to an unclear picture of the state of antisemitism in the country. The Russian Jewish Congress (RJC) and SOVA point to a decline in the number of antisemitic incidents of vandalism and violence in the country, but this decline does not apply to online manifestations of antisemitism or, generally, to expressions of antisemitism in public discourse.

The World Zionist Organization observed that VKontakte, the most popular social network in Russia, remains unregulated by the government in terms of countering the prevalence of antisemitic hate speech published on the platform.

## Germany (Jewish population 118,000)

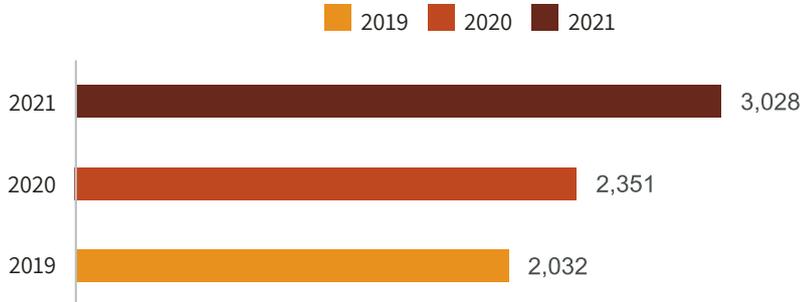
In Germany, the Criminal Police Notification Service – Politically Motivated Crimes (KPMD-PMK) collects data on antisemitic crimes and the number of antisemitic acts of violence.<sup>10</sup> In 2021, the KPMD-PMK recorded 3,028 politically motivated crimes with an antisemitic motive, the highest total to date. The total was a 29% increase from 2020 (2,351 incidents) and a 49% increase from 2019 (2,032 incidents), both of which were the previous high totals.

<sup>9</sup> For SOVA's database on hate crimes in Russia, see <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/database/>.

<sup>10</sup> For the KPMD-PMK's report, see <https://dip.bundestag.de/vorgang/antisemitische-straftaten-im-vierten-quartal-2021/284102>.

In 2021, KPMD-PMK recorded 63 acts of antisemitic violence, a 10.5% increase from the 57 acts of violence recorded in 2020 but a 13.7% decrease from the 73 recorded in 2019.

**POLITICALLY MOTIVATED CRIMES WITH ANTISEMITIC MOTIVE IN GERMANY  
2019-2021**

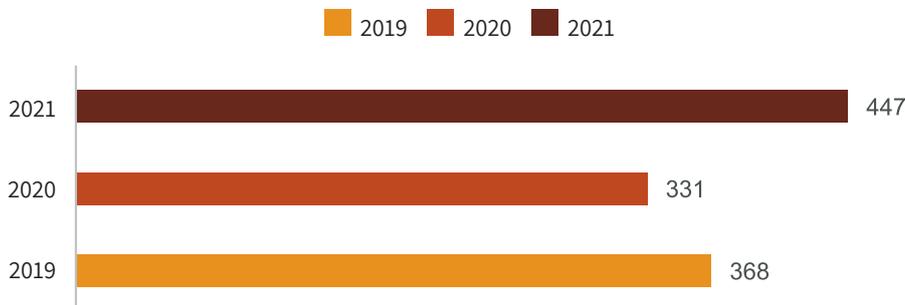


## Australia (Jewish population 118,000)

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), together with Community Security Groups (CSGs) and Jewish state roof bodies, recorded 447 antisemitic incidents in 2021, a 35% increase from incidents recorded in 2020 (331) and a 21.5% increase from the 368 incidents recorded in 2019.<sup>11</sup>

While the same number of physical assaults (8) occurred in 2020 and 2021, these are double the number of assaults in 2019 (4). In addition, in 2021, ECAJ recorded 147 incidents of abuse/harassment, a 15% increase from the 128 incidents in 2020 and a 29% increase from incidents in 2019. The 106 incidents of graffiti in 2021 increased 152% from the 42 recorded in 2020 and 11.6% from the 95 incidents recorded in 2019, while the 72 incidents of antisemitic stickers/posters constituted a 157% increase from the 28 incidents recorded in 2020 and a 323.5% increase from the 17 incidents recorded in 2019. The highest monthly incident total (88) was May 2021 during the Israel-Hamas conflict.

**TOTAL ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS IN AUSTRALIA  
2019-2021**



<sup>11</sup> For the ECAJ’s annual reports, see <https://www.ecaj.org.au/>. Incidents are divided into eight categories – four categories relate to physical attacks (verbal abuse, assault, graffiti, vandalism) and four to threats (email/online, mail, telephone, posters/stickers). Incidents recorded in ECAJ’s 2021 report occurred during a twelve-month period from October 1, 2020, to September 30, 2021 (previous years correspond to the same twelve-month periods).

## Brazil (Jewish population 91,500)

The Brazilian government and Brazilian Jewish organizations do not document antisemitic incidents in the country, making it difficult to assess the state of antisemitism in Brazil accurately.

According to a review of the press, there were five antisemitic incidents in Brazil in 2021, the same as in 2020.<sup>12</sup> No violent incidents were recorded in 2021, in contrast to the one incident of violence in 2020.<sup>13</sup> The remaining incidents in 2020 and 2021 involved harassment, with no acts of vandalism reported.

## Ukraine (Jewish Population 43,000)

The Security and Crisis Centre of the European Jewish Congress (SACC by EJC) recorded 38 antisemitic incidents in Ukraine in 2021, including four acts of violence and 21 acts of vandalism. The four acts of violence were one more than the three recorded in 2019, while acts of vandalism increased 162.5% from 2019 (8). In 2021, acts of vandalism increased during Hanukkah, as a number of publicly displayed menorahs were desecrated in different cities throughout the country.

## The Netherlands (Jewish population 30,000)

The Security and Crisis Centre of the European Jewish Congress (SACC by EJC) recorded thirteen antisemitic incidents in The Netherlands in 2021, eight acts of harassment and five acts of vandalism, compared to the eight incidents it recorded in 2020 (four acts of harassment and four acts of vandalism).

## Italy (Jewish population 27,000)

The Observatory of Antisemitism of the Contemporary Jewish Documentation Center (CDEC) recorded 226 incidents of antisemitism in 2021; 45 occurred in the “real-world” and 181 occurred online.<sup>14</sup> The total number of incidents in 2021 was 1.74% less than the 230 incidents

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Bianca Gomes, “After talking about ‘Killing a Lot of Jews’ on the radio, journalist is dismissed from Legislative Assembly and targeted by MPs,” *O Globo Brasil*, November 18, 2021 [in Portuguese]; available at <https://oglobo.globo.com/brasil/apos-falar-em-matar-um-monte-de-judeus-no-radio-jornalista-exonerado-da-alesp-alvo-do-mp-25280915>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

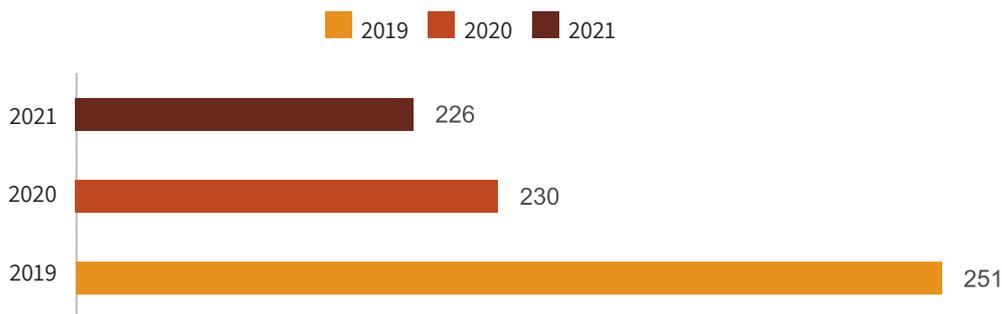
<sup>13</sup> Nathalia Kuhl, “‘Little Jew Worm’: A 57-Year-Old Man is Beaten by 3 Attackers,” *Metrópolis*, February 28, 2020 [in Portuguese]; available at <https://www.metropoles.com/brasil/policia-br/judeuzinho-verme-homem-de-57-anos-e-espocado-por-3-agressores>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>14</sup> For the CDEC Antisemitism Observatory’s annual antisemitic incidents reports, see <https://www.osservatorioantisemitismo.it/>. Italy’s National Office against Racial Discrimination (UNAR), in contrast, recorded 171 antisemitic incidents in 2021, of which 30 were online.

in 2020 and 9.96% less than the 251 incidents in 2019, continuing a downward trend in the total number of incidents.

CDEC recorded one case of extreme violence in 2021 (a Jewish man attacked and wounded with a knife) but had not recorded such an incident in 2019 or 2020. Similarly, there were five incidents of physical assault in 2021 as opposed to one in 2020 and two in 2019. The 26 threats in 2021 were a 100% increase from the 13 threats recorded in 2020 and a 189% increase from the nine threats recorded in 2019.

**TOTAL ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS IN ITALY  
2019-2021**



## Switzerland (Jewish population 18,500)

According to the Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities (SIG), in collaboration with the GRA Foundation Against Racism and Antisemitism, and CICAD, 2021 saw a 21% increase in the number of “real-world” antisemitic incidents (as defined by them – assault, harassment, vandalism) in comparison to 2020 (2021: 75, 2020: 62); data for 2019 was not available.<sup>15</sup>

In 2021, the SIG recorded 53 “real-world” antisemitic incidents in Switzerland’s German, Italian and Romansh language areas, a 13% increase from the previous year (2020: 47). There were 16 incidents of verbal abuse, seven of graffiti, and one of property damage. No physical assaults were reported.

In contrast to the low number of “real-world” incidents, SIG recorded 806 online incidents in 2021, particularly on social media and in the comments sections of media outlets, in contrast to 485 in 2020, a 66% increase. This increase, however, may be due to better monitoring and reporting and does not necessarily reflect an actual increase in the number of online incidents.

In 2021, CICAD recorded 22 “real-world” antisemitic incidents in the French language area of Switzerland, a 47% increase from the 15 incidents recorded in 2020. There were seven incidents of “serious acts” (graffiti, insults, letters) and five “grave acts” (assault, harassment, desecration, arson, targeted threats), compared to three serious acts and three grave acts in 2020.

<sup>15</sup> For the annual report, see <https://swissjews.ch/en/>.

However, the number of serious and grave acts remains lower than in 2019 (eight and six, respectively). In contrast to the low number of “real-world” incidents, CICAD recorded 143 online incidents in 2021 compared to 132 online incidents in 2020, an 8% increase.

According to CICAD, the main drivers for antisemitism in French-speaking Switzerland are an active far-right movement, the continued dissemination of Covid-19 conspiracy theories and the May Israel-Gaza conflict.

## **Sweden (Jewish population 15,000)**

The Security and Crisis Centre of the European Jewish Congress (SACC by EJC) recorded seven antisemitic incidents in Sweden in 2021, five acts of harassment, one act of vandalism, and one act of violence, compared to the four incidents it recorded in 2020 (three acts of harassment and one act of vandalism).

## **Spain (Jewish population 13,000)**

The Security and Crisis Centre of the European Jewish Congress (SACC by EJC) recorded 19 antisemitic incidents in Spain in 2021, eight acts of harassment and eleven acts of vandalism, compared to the nine incidents recorded in 2020 (three acts of harassment and six acts of vandalism).

## **Austria (Jewish population 10,000)**

The antisemitism reporting office of the Vienna Jewish Community’s (Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Wien (IKG)) semi-annual report covering the period of January 1, 2021, to June 30, 2021, informs that in the first half of 2021, the IKG recorded a total of 562 antisemitic incidents in Austria, a 119% increase from the 257 incidents recorded during the same period of 2020.<sup>16</sup>

Further, the total number of incidents in the first half of 2021 exceeded the total of incidents recorded during 2019 (550, an increase of 2.18%) and is only 4% less than the 585 incidents recorded during 2020.

According to the IKG, the high number of incidents in the first half of 2021, including eight physical attacks, 11 threats, and 331 incidents of abusive behavior, was due to protests against Covid-19 measures and the Israel-Gaza conflict. The eight physical attacks were 33% more than the total number of physical attacks in 2019 and 28% fewer than the total number of physical attacks in 2020.

<sup>16</sup> For the IKG’s annual and biannual reports, see <https://www.antisemitismus-meldestelle.at/>.

## **Romania (Jewish population 9,000)**

According to data received from the Romanian Police, three incidents of antisemitic crimes were recorded in 2020 and three in 2021. No details were provided on the nature of the incidents, just the total number.

## **Denmark (Jewish population 6,400)**

The Security and Crisis Centre of the European Jewish Congress (SACC by EJC) recorded two antisemitic incidents in Denmark in 2021, one act of harassment and one act of vandalism, the same as recorded in 2020.

## **Czech Republic (Jewish population 3,900)**

According to data from the Police Presidium of the Czech Republic, in 2021, there were a total of 37 criminal offenses against Jews in the country compared to 23 in 2020, an increase of 61%.

Crimes in connection to the Jewish community are categorized according to Czech Criminal Code. In 2021, there was one criminal case involving threatening an individual or group of people with death or bodily harm, compared to zero in 2020 and two in 2019 (§352). In 2021, there were three incidents of desecration or attacking another compared to zero in 2020 (§358), while there were 26 incidents involving crimes against humanity<sup>17</sup> in 2021 compared to 15 in 2020, an increase of 73%.

## **Lithuania (Jewish population 2,600)**

The Security and Crisis Centre of the European Jewish Congress (SACC by EJC) recorded seven antisemitic incidents in Lithuania in 2021, five acts of harassment and two acts of vandalism, compared to the two incidents it recorded in 2020 (both acts of vandalism).

## **Norway (Jewish population 1,300)**

According to hate crime data received from Norway's National Police Directorate, in 2021, there were 19 hate crimes motivated by antisemitism compared to 15 in 2020, a 27% increase.

<sup>17</sup> These incidents fall under §400, 401,405, 402, 403, 403a, and 404 of the Czech criminal code. They refer to genocide; attacks against humanity; discrimination; establishing, promoting, or supporting movements aimed at suppressing human rights; genocide denial; and expressing sympathies with movements aiming to suppress human rights.

## **Portugal (Jewish population 600)**

The Security and Crisis Centre of the European Jewish Congress (SACC by EJC) recorded two antisemitic incidents in Portugal in 2021, one act of harassment and one act of vandalism, compared to the single incident recorded in 2020.

– ***Dr. Carl Yonker***

***Assisting Interns: Dario Chaquin and Anna Merkord***

## Analysis: Why the Rise?

Since 1994, when our research teams began analyzing the reasons for increases and decreases in the number of documented antisemitic incidents worldwide, we have learned that diverse and complex developments trigger these trends.

This is also the case for 2021, a year in which antisemitic incidents increased dramatically compared to 2020 (and, in some cases, also compared to 2019, before the imposition of Covid-19 restrictions) in a majority of the largest Jewish populations around the world.

Several reasons account for the alarming trend.

**The conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza in May 2021** saw a particularly sharp rise in antisemitic incidents. The conflict exposed an unacceptable reality – when Israel defends itself from rocket attacks against civilian targets, Jews across the world become the target of incitement and hate crimes.

Social media played an exceptionally alarming role in the process. According to the Israeli Diaspora Ministry, 431,000 antisemitic posts were published globally during the Guardian of the Walls Operation and the month preceding it.<sup>1</sup>

The data raise concerns regarding the utility of legislation and agreements reached with social media companies on banning antisemitic expressions from their platforms. The gravest concern is the dark web, which shelters extremists and where antisemitic content is freely and openly spread.

Iran's efforts to promote antisemitic content are of particular concern. In June 2021, *Time Magazine* revealed that the Iranian government invests substantial time and funding in spreading antisemitic and anti-Israeli messages online, focusing their campaigns on the United States and Latin America, among other locales.<sup>2</sup>

American intelligence services exposed increased Iranian activity in May 2021 during the Gaza conflict and detected a sharp rise in slogans such as “Hitler was right” and “kill all Jews.” Former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that the antisemitic wave that accompanied the operation was heavily funded but did not disclose its source.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, “Antisemitism – Annual Report 2021,” Government of Israel, January 24, 2022, p. 14 [in Hebrew]; available at <https://diaspora.digitaler.co.il/annual-assessment-2021-heb/14/>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Brian Bennett, “Exclusive: Iran Steps up Efforts to Sow Discord Inside the U.S.,” *Time*, June 7, 2021; available at <https://time.com/6071615/iran-disinformation-united-states/>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

Ayatollah Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, has a personal Twitter account from which he attacks Israel's existence and its Jewish supporters, blaming them for all present troubles in the world.<sup>4</sup>

**Covid-19 also significantly contributed to the negative trend in antisemitic incidents.** Last year was the second year that the virus dominated the international community's agenda, people's lives, and the global economy.

One of the first and immediate reactions to the pandemic was the accusation, voiced as early as March 2020, that Jews – and Israeli Jews specifically – had engineered the virus and spread it around the world with a clear sinister goal: to be the first to find a cure, sell it to the ailing world, and become rich.

This libel quickly became widespread, accompanied by a host of vicious caricatures, and enhanced the age-old image of the Jew as a well-poisoner and malady spreader.

Covid-19 antisemitic allegations were built on the dangerous grounds of past accusations. During the Black Plague in the fourth century in medieval Europe, Jews were accused of poisoning water sources. Nazi propaganda spared no effort in obsessively depicting the Jews as lice, mice, and rats, the notoriously known sources of contagious diseases. Stalin accused Jewish doctors of plotting to poison him and the Soviet elite.<sup>5</sup>

Covid-19 started a vicious cycle, which continued well into 2021. The lockdowns kept potential perpetrators – and potential victims – at home, making physical attacks harder to carry out. Yet, at the same time, the enforced closures glued more people to their screens, thereby strengthening the power, impact, and daily use of social media.

The gradual easing of the lockdowns brought physical violence back to the streets – Germany and the United States are two prominent examples (as noted in pages 4–15). Yet the use of social media did not diminish. On the contrary, it had become the leading guide and definer of identity for some, particularly the young.

The expression “Judeovirus,” which antisemites spread online, encapsulated the deep-seated superstitions against Jews. True, there were other culprits mentioned and attacked as the source of trouble – China and Bill Gates, for example. But Jews were frequently and repeatedly blamed.

Anti-vaccination opponents introduced flawed comparisons to the worst crime the world has ever known – the Holocaust.

<sup>4</sup> Liora Hendelman-Baavur, “Iran,” in *Antisemitism Worldwide 2020*, Kantor Center, April 2020, p. 130; available at <https://kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Antisemitism-Worldwide-2020.pdf>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Dina Porat, “Blaming the Jews and Israel for the Coronavirus Pandemic – Historical Background and Current-Day Reactions,” *Kantor Center Position Papers* no. 3, July 26, 2020; available at [https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/sites/humanities\\_en.tau.ac.il/files/media\\_server/Humanities/PP\\_DP\\_260720.pdf](https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/sites/humanities_en.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/Humanities/PP_DP_260720.pdf), last accessed on March 20, 2022.

One could argue that these comparisons, repeatedly articulated by protestors during 2021, are a form of identification with Jewish suffering and are not necessarily antisemitic in nature. Yet, the result has been the trivialization of the Holocaust, and the complete distortion of the meaning of Nazi crimes and the lessons humanity should have learned from those crimes.

Moreover, the comparisons were often accompanied by accusations against Jews for allegedly being the wind in the virus' sails. For example, a Greek newspaper published a photo of Albert Bourla, the Pfizer CEO and son of Auschwitz survivors from Greece, alongside that of Joseph Mengele as if to say that both experiment on human beings.<sup>6</sup>

The success of the vaccines, coupled with Israel's efficient and digitized vaccination campaign, reinforced the false accusations of anti-vaccination antisemites: Israelis and Jews joined hands so that Israel would recover first from the pandemic while the rest of the world stands in line begging them for help.

The Buchenwald Museum, where the history of one of the earliest and largest concentration camps is presented to the public, announced that only vaccinated or recovered would be allowed entry to a new exhibition titled "Bans and Violence 1937-1945." Little time passed before the museum's authorities were flooded with hundreds of calls protesting that the museum banned a group of people from an exhibition dealing with bans. Some of the callers did not spare the museum from vicious antisemitic remarks.<sup>7</sup>

Another factor contributing to the negative trend of a rise in antisemitic attacks is that **some human-right activists began to exclude Jews and Israel from their struggles consciously.** These activists believe that Jews do not apriori belong to their agenda, and thus the fight against antisemitism is not part of their larger struggle against racism. Racism, they argue, concerns African-Americans and African-Europeans, Roma, LBGTQs, indigenous minorities, asylum seekers, and foreign workers, but not Jews.

Prof. Irwin Cotler, Canada's Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism, claims there is a "laundering" of antisemitism under the guise of human rights, international law, and the struggle against racism. The reason is that Jews are perceived as part of the ruling class and the oppressors, the white privileged elite.

According to Cotler, the same goes for Israel, which some Western academics describe as racist and colonialist for being the national home of the Jewish people. There is often an antisemitic sentiment in suggesting that Jews, and Jews only, do not have the right to self-determination and to live peacefully in their nation-state.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Michael Navoth, "Greece," in *Antisemitism Worldwide 2020*, Kantor Center, April 2020, p. 128; available at <https://kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Antisemitism-Worldwide-2020.pdf>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Ze'ev Avrahami, "Vaccine Opponents and the Appalling Use of Holocaust Symbols," *Yediot Ahronoth*, December 12, 2021 [in Hebrew]; available at <https://www.yediot.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-6044524,00.html>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Jessica Mundie, "Irwin Cotler Controversy Renews Anti-Semitism Debate at University of Toronto," *The National Post*, March 11, 2022; available at <https://nationalpost.com/news/toronto/human-rights-expert-irwin-cotler-accused-of-anti-palestinian-racism-over-speech-on-anti-semitism>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

The rise of anti-Zionism with antisemitic overtones is particularly evident on North American campuses, where Jewish students constantly face attacks and intimidations for backing Israel or preserving their heritage.

The AMCHA Initiative, an American organization that combats antisemitism on university campuses, noted 2021 as an alarming year. Campuses had become politically charged and polarized as never before, “with zero tolerance for individuals whose identities, beliefs or opinions run afoul of dominant campus ideologies [...] university administrators are downplaying the harassment of Jewish and pro-Israel students, while promptly and vigorously addressing similar behavior targeting other identity groups.”<sup>9</sup>

The Working Definition of Antisemitism (WDO) has become a subject for fierce campus debate. First formulated in 2004 and adopted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2005, it was re-adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in 2016.

To date, the definition has been embraced by 867 governments, parliaments, universities, municipalities, sports teams, and other organizations.

Some adoptions took place in recent years due to the increase in hate that Covid-19 brought. Based on the IHRA definition, the European Union published a detailed handbook recommending a correct and comprehensive use of IHRA terminologies as part of a general decision to make combatting antisemitism part of the agenda. In the United States, one of President Biden’s first steps was to warmly adopt the definition.<sup>10</sup>

The more the definition was adopted, the more criticism and opposition to its implementations strengthened. The main opponents are intellectuals and academics. Their main concern is the four examples in the definition, which spell out the cases in which anti-Zionism should be considered antisemitism. These examples became the focal point of heated debates on campuses in North America, which, in some cases, give voice to antisemitic expressions.

Following a recent speech by Prof. Cotler at the University of Toronto (UoT) at an event commemorating International Holocaust Memorial Day in January, 45 faculty members signed a letter criticizing him for urging the WDA’s adoption. They argued that it “reinforced anti-Palestinian racism in a way that is consistent with a broader pattern of silencing and erasure of Palestinian voices.”

More than 300 Jewish faculty members signed a letter suggesting that the anti-Cotler petition relied on “antisemitic stereotypes” and called it “an attack on Jewish faculty members and the Jewish community.” The signatories argued that the petitioners “portray Mr. Cotler’s defense

<sup>9</sup> Faygie Holt, “South Florida Fraternity Suspended for Swastika Incident amid National Wave of Campus Anti-Semitism,” *Jewish News Syndicate*, February 28, 2022; available at <https://www.jns.org/south-florida-fraternity-suspended-for-swastika-incident-amid-national-wave-of-campus-anti-semitism/>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Zvika Klein, “865 Entities Have Adopted or Endorsed IHRA Definition of Antisemitism,” *The Jerusalem Post*, March 16, 2022; available at <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-701485>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

of Jews as anti-Palestinian racism; thereby perpetuating an antisemitic tradition of accusing Jews who defend themselves for erasing the voices and suppressing the lives of other [...] taken in its entirety, their letter is an example of the very antisemitism that Mr. Cotler dismantled in his presentation.”<sup>11</sup>

The University of Toronto reacted by reiterating its commitment to academic freedom and not censoring or setting preconditions on what invited speakers may or may not say. The last word in this debate has probably not been said – as in the fight against antisemitism at large.

**– Prof. Dina Porat**

<sup>11</sup> Dion J. Pierre, “More Than 300 Jewish University of Toronto Faculty Denounce ‘Attack’ on Antisemitism Envoy Irwin Cotler,” *The Algemeiner*, March 9, 2022; available at <https://www.algemeiner.com/2022/03/09/more-than-300-jewish-university-of-toronto-faculty-denounce-attack-on-antisemitism-envoy-irwin-cotler/>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.



## Section II

# In Focus

### **Belarus:**

## **State Antisemitism in a European Dictatorship**

Throughout 2021, the Belarusian regime used public antisemitic statements as part of its campaign against opposition supporters.

Prior to the outbreak of anti-government protests in 2020-2021, antisemitic expressions by politicians, though not unheard of, were uncommon in Belarus. One example is the diplomatic row with Israel stirred by the fraudulently elected president, Alexander Lukashenko. He accused Jews of turning the Belarusian city of Bobruisk into a pigsty before they migrated to “their” Israel.<sup>1</sup>

The August 9, 2020, presidential election sparked a protest movement of unprecedented size to which Lukashenko and his government responded with repressive measures. It was clear that a majority of Belarusians were tired of rigged elections and decades of economic stagnation and political repression.

In its propaganda against the massive opposition, the Belarusian regime insisted that foreigners stood behind the movement and, among other accusations, alleged that Jewish outsiders were supporting the protest movement to advance various nefarious agendas.

<sup>1</sup> For Lukashenko’s press conference remarks, see “Israel Slams Belarus Leader for anti-Semitism,” *Reuters*, October 9, 2007; available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-belarus-idUSL193654620071019>, last accessed March 20, 2022.

A Telegram channel propagating Lukashenko's views noted the Semitic facial features of a flower seller whose brutalization by the police during a protest drew much international attention. The head of the opposition, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, was wrongly rumored to have Israeli citizenship. Andrei Mukovozchik, one of the journalists who regularly defends the Belarusian regime, noted the numerous non-Belarusian names among opposition supporters.<sup>2</sup>

In October 2021, Andrey Zeltser, a 31-year-old computer programmer who opposed the government, was killed by the Belarusian KGB during a raid on his home. Justifying his killing, Ryhor Azaryonok, a news anchor on STV, a state television station, characterized Zeltser, who worked for an American software company, as traitorous, implying he was a greedy, selfish Jew. Azaryonok stated, "This was a cosmopolitan enjoying state benefits to fatten himself up and live in two countries, to make money here to spend it there." Zeltser, in fact, was not Jewish, despite his Jewish-sounding surname.<sup>3</sup>

Following the arrest of Daniel Plashchinskii, a computer programmer and Israeli citizen, for visiting allegedly "extremist Telegram channels," Belarusian authorities published a photo of Plashchinskii's passport against the background of the opposition's flag. Also pictured was a gun, sending a message that the uprising was part of a violent foreign Jewish conspiracy.

The depiction of world Jewry as hostile to Lukashenko's regime also extended to the entertainment industry. In the film *Killing the President*, broadcast on Belarus state television, a "circle of Jews" is behind a fictitious assassination plot against Lukashenko and his family.

The detention of Aleksandr Fruman, an Israeli vacationing in Minsk, was another demonstration of the direction the Belarusian regime was taking. Although Fruman had not participated in the protests, he was detained for three days, beaten, and threatened with an "additional circumcision." The assumption behind his arrest was that he was one of the protests' foreign organizers. The threat to circumcise him again indicated that the police considered his Jewishness relevant to their perception that he was, indeed, an active supporter of the opposition.<sup>4</sup>

The resurgence of state antisemitic articulations is even more alarming when considering Belarus' genocide denial law that claims that the Nazis committed a holocaust against the Belarusian people during the Second World War and forbids denial of such a holocaust.

<sup>2</sup> David Baron, "The Demon of Antisemitism Has Been Released," *Israel Hayom*, October 7, 2021 [in Hebrew]; available at <https://www.israelhayom.co.il/magazine/hashavua/article/4927007>, last accessed March 20, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> David Baron, "Harsh Reality of State Antisemitism Rears its Head in Belarus," *Israel Hayom*, October 13, 2021; available at <https://www.israelhayom.com/2021/10/13/harsh-reality-of-state-antisemitism-rears-its-head-in-belarus/>, last accessed March 20, 2022. See also Canaan Liphshitz, "Death of Jewish Dissident During Home Raid Prompts Protests and Arrests," *The Jerusalem Post*, October 7, 2021; available at <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/death-of-jewish-dissident-during-home-raid-prompts-protests-and-arrests-681266>, last accessed March 20, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Leonid Nevzlin, "The Silence Over Lukashenko's Antisemitism," *Haaretz*, December 20, 2021; available at <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-the-silence-over-lukashenko-s-antisemitism-1.10479332>, last accessed March 20, 2022.

The law, “On the Genocide of the Belarusian People,” was passed on December 4, 2021. It draws no distinction between the Holocaust and Nazi crimes committed against the Belarusian people. At the time of its passage, the Belarusian regime claimed that distinguishing between Nazi victims based on ethnicity was racist; thus, the mass murder of Jews and Roma is not referenced in the law.<sup>5</sup>

Given the upsurge in the regime’s use of antisemitism, the claim made by some Israeli historians when the law was passed that its goal was not inclusiveness, but to downplay the suffering of the Jews and the Roma, has gained substantial credence.<sup>6</sup>

Lukashenko’s comments revealed and explained the antisemitic sentiment behind the law. The dictator claimed that Jews “succeeded in causing the entire world to kneel to them and no one will dare raise a voice and deny the Holocaust.” Belarusians, in contrast, “are so tolerant, so good, we did not want to offend anyone, and we have thus come to being insulted.”<sup>7</sup>

Lukashenko’s point was that Belarus, which lost about one-fifth of its population during the Second World War, never had its victimhood recognized since it, unlike the Jews, was never aggressive or manipulative enough to force the world to acknowledge it deserves such recognition. Demanding recognition of Belarusian victimhood is, of course, hardly antisemitic, but the claim that the Jews managed to bully and manipulate the world into recognizing the Holocaust is.<sup>8</sup>

Yaakov Falkov and Leonid Smilovitsky, historians at Tel Aviv University, emphasized where Lukashenko was wrong: about four-fifths of the Jewish population of Belarus was exterminated during the Second World War as part of the Nazi’s overall plan to exterminate all the Jews. There was no such plan to exterminate the Belarusians.<sup>9</sup>

**– Dr. Inna Shtakser**

<sup>5</sup> Liza Rozovsky, “Belarus Under Fire for Law Equating Holocaust With Nazi Crimes Against Nationals,” *Haaretz*, December 19, 2021; available at <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-israeli-historians-belarus-blurring-holocaust-with-genocide-legislation-1.10477485>, last accessed March 20, 2022. See also, Alexander Friedman, “The Law ‘On the Genocide of the Belarusian People:’ When a Tragedy is Turned into Immoral Politics,” *Deutsche Welle*, December 27, 2021 [in Russian]; <https://www.dw.com/ru/chto-ne-tak-s-zakonom-o-genocide-belorusskogo-naroda/a-60251597>, last accessed March 20, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> “Belarus Leader: Jews Caused the World ‘To Kneel’ before Them,” *The Times of Israel*, July 6, 2021; available at <https://www.timesofisrael.com/belarus-leader-jews-caused-the-world-to-kneel-before-them/>, last accessed March 20, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Liza Ruzovsky, “Lukashenko Wants to Prove That There Was a Belarusian Genocide, but He Minimizes the Holocaust,” *Haaretz*, December 18, 2021 [in Hebrew]; available at <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/world/europe/.premium.HIGHLIGHT-MAGAZINE-1.10476603>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

# The United States: Antisemites Attack Democracy

The violent, subversive attack on the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021, by an array of domestic extremists constituted a watershed moment not only in American political history but in the history of the American right.

As Robert Pape observed, for the first time, “individuals who had previously come to simply protest at ‘Stop the Steal’ rallies [making the false claim that Donald Trump won the 2020 election] and had no affiliations with far-right groups, joined with them to commit an act of political violence in an attempt to overturn an election.”<sup>1</sup>

Among the rioters were members of various far-right anti-government militia movements, such as the Oath Keepers and Three Percenters, and white supremacists associated with different radical groups.<sup>2</sup>

Despite their ideological and structural diversity, these far-right movements and organizations not only embrace radical nationalism but support anti-democratic, xenophobic, misogynistic, and racist tendencies – including more and less explicit antisemitic ones.

The embrace of conspiracies is the most prominent indicator for violent action and discrimination and, as such, has acted as a binding glue between American extremist groups.<sup>3</sup>

The far-right conspiracies, including antisemitic ones, are not themselves new in those organizations’ discourse. For example, the 1978 racist and antisemitic conspiracy novel “The Turner Diaries,” published by neo-Nazi leader William Luther Pierce, predicted an uprising against the US government to overthrow it. Earl Turner, the novel’s narrator, wrote some phrases that were perceived to be as accurate and true for 2021 Capitol rioters as they were for the fictional rioters in the novel: “The real value of all our attacks today lies in the psychological

<sup>1</sup> Sarah Slobin and Sam Hart, “When the Right Wing Rallies,” *Reuters*, April 15, 2021; available at <https://graphics.reuters.com/USA-CAPITOL/SECURITY/xegpbxoadpq/>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> As of January 1, 2022, according to a study conducted by the University of Chicago, 14% of the 716 rioters charged were affiliated with far-right militias and groups, a much higher proportion when compared to the percentage of militia affiliates among Trump voters (3.5%). Of the 716 rioters charged, 51 were Proud Boys, 24 were Oath Keepers, 18 were Three Percenters, and 9 belonged to various groups, including the Aryan Nations. These numbers may change as charges continue to be filed. See: Chicago Project on Security and Threats, “American Face of Insurrection: Analysis of Individuals Charged for Storming the US Capitol on January 6, 2021,” University of Chicago, January 5, 2022, p. 12; available at [https://d3qi0qp55mx5f5.cloudfront.net/cpost/i/docs/Pape\\_-\\_American\\_Face\\_of\\_Insurrection\\_\(2022-01-05\)\\_1.pdf?mtime=1641481428](https://d3qi0qp55mx5f5.cloudfront.net/cpost/i/docs/Pape_-_American_Face_of_Insurrection_(2022-01-05)_1.pdf?mtime=1641481428), last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> See, generally, Jonathan Fox and Lev Topor, *Why Do People Discriminate Against Jews?* (Oxford University Press, 2021).

impact, not the immediate casualties”; “They learned this afternoon that not one of them is beyond our reach.”<sup>4</sup>

The extent to which previously fringe antisemitic far-right narratives and ideas have seeped and blended into mainstream conservative American discourse, particularly in and around the events of the 2020 election and January 6, 2021, riots, is unprecedented. Some far-right protestors who stormed the Capitol embraced antisemitic conspiratorial views as a central ideological narrative, casting Jews as enemy and the threat to the white race and America – a threat that must be eliminated.

Ascertaining the exact number of antisemites among the overall number of January 6 protestors is not possible. Still, conspiratorial antisemitic views and signs of antisemitism were manifested online and on the ground before, during, and after the storming of the Capitol. Online antisemitic hate symbols appeared on rioters’ clothes, hats, and bags.

Prior to the storming of the US Capitol, antisemitic rhetoric was heard among the crowds gathered to protest a “stolen election” and ensure President Trump, who lost the popular vote by seven million votes, remained in power.

The day before the Capitol was stormed, a former reporter for the right-wing Breitbart News spoke at a “Stop the Steal” rally in which she railed against “evil globalists such as George Soros” and accused globalists of “owning [politicians],”<sup>5</sup> referring to the common antisemitic conspiracy by which Jews control the global media and common politicians.

That same day, Robert Gieswein, a Colorado-based member of the Three Percenters militia, accused Joe Biden, the Clintons, and other Democrats of destroying America and selling it to “the Rothschilds and Rockefellers.”<sup>6</sup> He participated in the Capitol riots the following day, dressed in tactical gear, and was subsequently arrested by the FBI and charged with six felony offenses.

During the riots, participants openly displayed antisemitic symbols. One breacher, Robert Keith Packer, wore a “Camp Auschwitz” sweatshirt featuring a skull and crossbones, signaling his support for the murderous Holocaust.<sup>7</sup>

Also seen during the Capitol breach were individuals carrying and waving the green flag of “Kekistan,” the fictional white ethnostate created by alt-right individuals on message boards

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Alter, “How ‘The Turner Diaries’ Incites White Supremacists,” *New York Times*, January 12, 2021; available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/12/books/turner-diaries-white-supremacists.html>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Aaron Rugar (@atrupar), “These people are out of their minds,” *Twitter*, January 5, 2021, 9:20 p.m.; available at <https://twitter.com/atrupar/status/1346537112787681292>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> *United States of America v. Robert Gieswein*, Criminal Complaint, January 16, 2021, p. 11; available at <https://www.justice.gov/opa/page/file/1360831/download>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Jorge Fitz-Gibbon, “Neo-Nazis among Protestors Who Stormed US Capitol,” *New York Post*, January 6, 2021; available at <https://nypost.com/2021/01/06/neo-nazis-among-protesters-who-stormed-us-capitol/>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

like 4chan and other alt-right forums online. The flag mimics a Nazi battle flag with the Kek symbol replacing the swastika and green replacing the red.<sup>8</sup>

Members of the white supremacist New Jersey European Heritage Association (NJEHA) posted a flier near the Capitol with the picture of a kippah and the phrase “small hats, big problems” written next to it.<sup>9</sup>

The infamous “QAnon Shaman” Jake Angeli strutted around the Capitol shirtless while wearing a buffalo headdress, his bare chest prominently featuring tattoos of two Norse symbols adopted by white supremacists, including the Valknot (“knot of the slain,” a symbol for the Norse god Odin). The symbol is associated with the Wotansvolk (Odin’s Folk), a white nationalist neo-paganist religion founded in the 1990s by white supremacist David Lane, a member of The Order domestic terrorist group, and several others.

After January 6, some far-right movements, organizations, and individuals began promoting antisemitic narratives that linked Jews and “Zionists” to the breach of the Capitol. Some online users on the dark web, in Telegram groups, and even on mainstream social media platforms accused radical leftist ANTIFA activists and Jews of organizing and promoting the riots.

The white supremacist Patriot Front, for example, accused Jews and Zionists of being behind the rally in a tweet.<sup>10</sup> Anonymous Telegram users have shared text, videos, and pictures blaming Jews and Israel for controlling the American people and the world and accused them of being behind the Capitol riot. These conspiracies were disseminated on Telegram in explicitly antisemitic groups like “4Chan - /POL/HIS/INT/” and in general anti-government groups like “Stop The Steal #StoptheSteal.”

On January 7, “4Chan - /POL/HIS/INT/” posted a picture of the Capitol with the title “Big banks on Wall Street condemn protesters at US Capitol,” referring to the antisemitic conspiracy that Jews control the economy, the banks, and condemn people’s attempts to resist.

On dark web sites like Nein Chan or 8Chan, anonymous users not only disseminated information, live updates, and instructions for rioters but also blamed the Jewish people explicitly. One

<sup>8</sup> David Neiwert, “What the Kek: Explaining the Alt-Right ‘Deity’ Behind Their ‘Meme Magic,’” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, May 9, 2017; available at <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/05/08/what-kek-explaining-alt-right-deity-behind-their-meme-magic>, last accessed on March 20, 2022. See also, Lindsay Ayling (@AylingLindsay), “Overt white nationalists were present at the Capitol yesterday. I personally saw two people waving Kekistan flags. Kekistan is a fictional white ethnostate,” *Twitter*, January 7, 2021, 7:21 p.m.; available at <https://twitter.com/AylingLindsay/status/1347232004652335105?s=20&t=0FdocPQmQLaqtzpzSd213g>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Anti-Defamation League, “Antisemites Implicate Jews, Zionists in DC Violence,” *ADL Blog*, January 7, 2021; available at <https://www.adl.org/blog/antisemites-implicate-jews-zionists-in-dc-violence>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

anonymous user wrote: “Don’t fear the Jew, anons. Stand up and fight.... push the yid back into the oven.”<sup>11</sup>

In the following months, extremists made conscious efforts to expose and attract Trump supporters and other Republicans to fringe white supremacist notions.

Nick Fuentes, the white nationalist whose followers are known as Groypers and who played an instrumental role in organizing the “Stop the Steal” movement, has openly stated he hopes to push the Republican Party further to the right.<sup>12</sup>

Fuentes has been openly supported by Paul Gosar, an Arizona Republican Congressman, who aligned with Fuentes over “Stop the Steal.” Meanwhile, allusions to the white supremacist “great replacement” conspiracy theory suggesting “elites” are trying to wipe out the white race in America have been given a platform on Fox News by Tucker Carlson.<sup>13</sup>

Though antisemitism has been associated with the QAnon conspiracy from its inception in 2017 on 4Chan, the American Defamation League noted that the theory’s most popular influencer today, GhostEzra, posted more antisemitic content in 2021 than in previous years with little pushback from his followers.<sup>14</sup>

QAnon and its antisemitism continue to expand into the mainstream. According to a November 2021 PRRI poll, around one in five Americans agree with three core tenets of the QAnon conspiracy theory: that the elites will soon be swept from power, that government, media, and the financial world are controlled by devil-worshipping pedophiles, and that “American patriots” may have to resort to violence to save the country.

One in four Republicans (26%) are QAnon believers, with those numbers shifting significantly depending on the type of news one consumes. Republicans who mainly trust Fox News (30%) or far-right news outlets (44%) are more likely than those who mainly trust mainstream news (16%) to be QAnon believers.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Anonymous, post to “/pol/ - Politically Incorrect,” 8Chan, January 7, 2021, 7:34 a.m.; available at <http://4usoirvpy52lmc4mgn2h34cmfilslesthr56yttv2pxudd3dapqciyd.onion/pol/res/6144.html>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Edison Hayden, “One Year After Jan. 6, the Hard Right Digs In,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, December 30, 2021; available at <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2021/12/30/one-year-after-jan-6-hard-right-digs>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Dan Primack and Russell Contreras, “A Racist Conspiracy Theory Goes Mainstream,” *Axios*, September 29, 2021; available at <https://www.axios.com/white-replacement-theory-gains-ground-among-gop-b171e37d-3f27-43f2-bc25-a084c9fe7aad.html>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Anti-Defamation League, “QAnon’s Antisemitism and What Comes Next,” ADL Reports; available at <https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/qanons-antisemitism-and-what-comes-next-introduction>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Public Religion Research Institute, “Competing Visions of America: An Evolving Identity or a Culture Under Attack? Findings from the 2021 American Values Survey,” PRRI Research, November 2021; available at <https://www.prrri.org/research/competing-visions-of-america-an-evolving-identity-or-a-culture-under-attack/>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

While Donald Trump reluctantly condemned the January 6 attack, he later changed course and issued statements that ignored the gravity of the assault and showed sympathy for the offenders. The Republican Party declared the January 6 events “legitimate political discourse” and has worked to undermine efforts to hold responsible those who stormed the Capitol.<sup>16</sup> In a highly polarized political atmosphere, as exists in the United States today, even a violent assault on democracy joined by demonstrable antisemites becomes a partisan matter.

**– Dr. Carl Yonker and Dr. Lev Topor**

<sup>16</sup> “Trump Condemns Capitol Hill Violence in Video That Does Not Mention Impeachment,” *Reuters*, January 13, 2021; available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-remarks-idUSKBN29I37G>, last accessed on March 20, 2022. See also, Jill Colvin, “One Year Ago, Republicans Condemned Jan. 6 Insurrection. Yesterday, Their Response Was Far More Muted,” *Associated Press*, January 7, 2022; available at <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/one-year-ago-republicans-condemned-jan-6-insurrection-yesterday-their-response-was-far-more-muted>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

## France and Britain: Islamist Antisemitism and the Courts

In the early morning of April 4, 2017, Kobili Traore, a 27-year-old French-Muslim man of Malian origin, broke into Sarah Halimi's apartment in east Paris.

Traore brutally beat Halimi, smashed her skull, repeatedly cried out "Allah Akbar," and then threw her off the balcony. After this, he proclaimed, "I killed Satan."<sup>1</sup>

While Mrs. Halimi's neighbors heard her crying out and called police, the three officers who responded, and arrived before Mrs. Halimi died, did nothing to save her.

In January 2020, the first court ruled Traore had killed Mrs. Halimi because she was Jewish but that Traore could not be held responsible for his actions since he had been in a delirious state caused by his use of cannabis before the event. Therefore, he was not fit to stand trial.<sup>2</sup>

The Halimi family appealed the ruling.

In April 2021, the Court of Cassation dismissed the appeal, upholding the lower court's ruling and reiterating that French law does not hold a person criminally liable for an act committed during a psychotic state, nor does it take into account the underlying reason for arriving at this state (in this case, the person's own drug use).

The Court sent Traore to detention in a psychiatric institution.<sup>3</sup>

President Macron told *Le Figaro*, "[d]eciding to take narcotics and then 'going mad' should not, in my view, remove your criminal responsibility."<sup>4</sup> The President and French state senators called to amend the law to avoid future travesties of justice so that a person suffering from a psychic disturbance caused by a drug would be held responsible for violent acts.<sup>5</sup>

1 James McAuley, "How the Murders of Two Elderly Jewish Women Shook France," *The Guardian*, November 27, 2018; available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/27/how-the-murders-of-two-elderly-jewish-women-shook-france-antisemitism-mireille-knoll-sarah-halimi>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

2 Philippe Theise, "Hundreds Rally in Paris to Seek Justice for Murdered Jewish Woman Sarah Halimi," *France24*, January 5, 2020; available at <https://www.france24.com/en/20200105-hundreds-rally-in-paris-to-seek-justice-for-murdered-jewish-woman-sarah-halimi>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

3 "French Top Court Rules against Trying Muslim Who Killed Sarah Halimi," *The Times of Israel*, April 14, 2021; available at [https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog\\_entry/french-top-court-rules-against-trying-muslim-who-killed-sarah-halimi/](https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/french-top-court-rules-against-trying-muslim-who-killed-sarah-halimi/), last accessed on March 20, 2022.

4 "Macron Wants Change in Law after Jewish Woman's Killer Deemed 'Not Criminally Responsible,'" *France24*, April 19, 2021; available at <https://www.france24.com/en/france/20210419-macron-wants-change-in-law-after-jewish-woman-s-killer-deemed-not-criminally-responsible>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

5 Roger Cohen, "Highest French Court Rules Killer of Jewish Woman Cannot Stand Trial," *The New York Times*, April 17, 2021; available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/17/world/europe/sarah-halimi-murder-trial.html>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

Following the highest court’s decision, Halimi’s family said they would appeal the ruling in Israel (According to Israeli criminal law, Israel has jurisdiction over offenses against Israeli citizens or Israeli residents that occurred abroad).<sup>6</sup>

In September 2021, a French parliamentary committee began investigating possible misconduct by law enforcement and the judiciary in handling the case.<sup>7</sup> Along with testimonies about police indifference, testimony was also given that Traore did not receive any medications for any mental illness “that would prevent him from being prosecuted” and that he was in a stable mental state.

Nevertheless, the commission declared that the police and judiciary had followed all necessary procedures.<sup>8</sup>

The Halimi case anguished the French Jewish community for several reasons, chief among them, law enforcement and the French media’s prolonged reluctance even to address the brutal murder of an elderly Orthodox Jewish woman as an Islamist antisemitic attack. The sense of outrage was compounded by the French judiciary’s subsequent insistence on adhering to the letter of the law – resulting, inexplicably, in an exoneration for a horrific act.

While it was the most publicized, the Halimi murder was not an isolated tragedy. Since 2003, twelve Jews have been killed in France due to antisemitic motivations. Media reports inform that, at least in several of these cases, the perpetrators were connected to Islamist ideology.<sup>9</sup>

The most recent case was on March 23, 2018. An 85-year-old Holocaust survivor, Mireille Knoll, was stabbed eleven times, and then her house was set on fire by two men, Alex Carrimbacus and Yacine Mihoub, the latter her neighbor and a French-Muslim. This time, only several days after the event, the authorities were quick to investigate it as an antisemitic hate crime.

<sup>6</sup> “Sarah Halimi: Frenchwoman’s Sister Seeks Trial in Israel over Killing,” *BBC*, April 22, 2021; available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56845041>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Eldad Beck, “Halimi Murder Made Me Realize France’s Justice System Is Dead,” *Israel Hayom*, December 23, 2021; available at <https://www.israelhayom.com/2021/12/23/sarah-halimi-affair-made-me-realize-frances-justice-system-is-dead/>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Cnaan Liphshitz, “French Parliamentary Report on the Sarah Halimi Murder Case Reopens the Wound It Sought to Heal,” *The Jerusalem Post*, January 22, 2022; available at <https://www.jpost.com/international/article-694215>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> According to a report in *The Guardian*, “France is the only country in Europe where Jews are periodically murdered for being Jewish. No fewer than 12 Jews have been killed in France in six separate incidents since 2003: Sébastien Selam, Ilan Halimi, Jonathan Sandler, Gabriel Sandler, Aryeh Sandler, Myriam Monsonégo, Yohan Cohen, Philippe Braham, François-Michel Saada, Yoav Hattab, Lucie Attal and Mireille Knoll. In each of these cases, at least one of the perpetrators was from what the French call *minorités visibles*, or “visible minorities,” which typically refers to those of north African or west African descent; in most cases, the perpetrators have been linked with some form of extremist Islam.” James McAuley, “How the Murders of Two Elderly Jewish Women Shook France,” *op. cit.*

Mr. Carrimbacus testified against his co-conspirator. He stated that Mr. Mihoub had shouted “God is great” during the attack, had spoken of the “wealth of Jews,” doubted the Holocaust, and had an “ambivalent” stance on radical Islamism. The court trial began on October 26, 2021.<sup>10</sup>

On November 10, 2021, both men were convicted of committing antisemitic hate crimes. Mr. Mihoub was sentenced to life imprisonment, and Mr. Carrimbacus received fifteen years in prison for the robbery.<sup>11</sup>

While antisemitic hate crimes are recognized under French laws and allow for harsher punishments, French officials have been reluctant to identify the perpetrators as Muslims in cases involving Islamist radicals and thus fully acknowledge this specific type of antisemitism.

This reluctance stems, in part, from the country’s universalist and republican convictions – a deeply held persuasion that there are only French citizens and that any ethnic or religious identities should not be held onto too tightly, or at least not be relevant in the public sphere.

This policy informs the country’s data collection laws. Data on ethnic or religious differences are not registered, and law enforcement does not maintain statistics on perpetrators’ ethnicity or race.

Another reason for the reluctance is that French Muslims are the largest minority in the country, a minority already subjected to vilification by far-right political parties. Islamist antisemitism is indeed used as a cudgel by the far-right in France, a pretext for a sweeping Islamophobia that, in turn, causes the left to spurn any such rhetoric. As noted in one media report:

For much of the left, this [identifying the Muslim identity of people involved in hate crimes] amounts to a dangerously crude generalization about France’s largest minority group, which itself is the target of a constant stream of hateful rhetoric, from the covers of Charlie Hebdo to the regular pronouncements of sitting members of the French government. Muslims, too, are frequent victims of hate crimes.

Simply put, Muslim-related antisemitism is politically volatile in France. It is a complicated situation: antisemitic violence is perpetrated against the Jewish minority by some in the Muslim minority that suffers discrimination.

<sup>10</sup> “French Trial Starts over Brutal Murder of Holocaust Survivor Mireille Knoll,” *France24*, October 26, 2021; available at <https://www.france24.com/en/france/20211026-french-trial-starts-over-brutal-murder-of-holocaust-survivor-mireille-knoll>, last accessed on March 20, 2022. See also, Constant Méheut, “Trial Begins for Men Accused in Killing of Holocaust Survivor in France,” *The New York Times*, October 26, 2021; available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/26/world/europe/france-murder-trial-holocaust-survivor-mireille-knoll.html>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Constant Méheut, “French Court Convicts Man in the Murder of a Holocaust Survivor,” *The New York Times*, November 10, 2021; available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/10/world/europe/knoll-france-murder.html>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

As Alain Finkelkraut put it, “[f]or a long time, we didn’t want to stigmatize fragile youth from bad neighborhoods, so we minimized the effect.”<sup>12</sup> Naming this specific type of crime would further stoke the flames against Muslims, but not doing so leaves the Jewish minority unprotected.

Still, French authorities’ quick pronouncement to investigate the case of Mireille Knoll as an antisemitic hate crime possibly marked a notable shift, as did the court ruling in late 2021.

Islamophobia and antisemitism are both problems in France. Islamist antisemitic crime should be acknowledged without any equivocation. Still, it must not be done in a manner serving far-right political interests or used to incite hatred against the entire Muslim minority further. It should be clearly pointed to in order to formulate tailor-made solutions for this specific type of antisemitism and protect the Jewish community.

In the United Kingdom, courts shined this year for speaking clearly. On June 23, 2021, the Queen’s Bench Division overturned a lower tribunal’s ruling that had decided that statements made during a pro-Palestinian rally were not antisemitic.<sup>13</sup>

The case involved comments made about Zionists by Mr. Nazim Ali during a speech delivered at an al-Quds Day rally in June 2017, including the following: (a) It’s in their genes. The Zionists are here to occupy Regent Street. It’s in their genes, it’s in their genetic code. (b) [...] Remember, brothers and sisters, Zionists are not Jews. (c) Any Zionist, any Jew, coming into your center supporting Israel, any Jew coming into your center who is a Zionist. Any Jew coming into your center who is a member of the Board of Deputies is not a Rabbi; he’s an imposter. (d) They are responsible for the murder of the people in Grenfell. The Zionist supporters of the Tory party.

As Mr. Ali was a registered pharmacist with the General Pharmaceutical Council, it received complaints that his statements were antisemitic and offensive.

The Council’s committee considered the matter and decided that his words were indeed offensive but not antisemitic. He received a warning.

In its decision, the committee noted that Mr. Ali had attended a “pro-Palestine, anti-Zionist rally,” and he had stated, essentially, that “‘Zionists’ and ‘Jews’ must not be conflated [...]” The committee discussed the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism but also considered Mr. Ali’s intent and character.<sup>14</sup>

The decision was appealed before the Queen’s Bench Court by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care. They argued that the Pharmaceutical Council’s committee had taken the “wrong approach” in concluding that Mr. Ali’s statements were not antisemitic.

In a ruling given on June 23, 2021, the court stated that the committee had taken the wrong approach in not considering the four statements as a whole and in the weight it had given to Mr.

<sup>12</sup> Rachel Donadio, “The Meaning of France’s March Against Anti-Semitism,” *The Atlantic*, March 28, 2019; available at <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/03/the-murder-of-mireille-knoll-in-france-might-be-the-last-straw-for-french-jews/556796/>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Case No: CO/4878/2020, High Court of Justice Queen’s Bench Division Administrative Court [2021] EWHC 1692 (Admin), 2021 WL 02555547, before Justice Johnson, June 23, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

Ali's character. The Court noted the committee should have examined the objective meaning of the statements. The court, therefore, accepted the appeal and ordered the committee to re-examine the case again.

The Court noted that Mr. Ali was careful to distinguish between Zionists, toward whom one could lawfully express hatred, and Jews, toward whom one cannot. But, according to the ruling, it is a slippery slope, and statements such as “it's in their blood” and being “imposters” seem to trickle in, unconsciously. The first instance thus found it difficult to ignore the antisemitism mired in anti-Zionist rhetoric.

This case, too, is an example of an initial hesitance to recognize antisemitism when it is obscured by anti-Zionist speech and underscores the necessity to identify the classic antisemitic elements, particularly within the context of anti-Zionist statements. Not all anti-Zionist rhetoric is antisemitic, but the anti-Zionist activist should be mindful not to slip into age-old antisemitic motifs, which happens all too often.

**– Talia Naamat, Adv.**

# Germany: A New Form of Holocaust Trivialization

As happened in other parts of the Western world, familiar forms of anti-Jewish hatred erupted in Germany during the May 2021 military confrontation between Hamas and Israel. Protests in Berlin, Cologne, and Mannheim drew massive crowds, including Hamas supporters.<sup>1</sup>

While anti-Israel sentiments are not *per se* a form of anti-Jewish hatred, they often facilitate antisemitic rhetoric and attacks. Two hundred sixty-one antisemitic incidents were documented during the protests organized across Germany between May 9th and 24th. These included anti-Jewish chants, attacks on Jews, and abuse of Holocaust imagery in criticizing Israel.<sup>2</sup> Synagogues in Bonn, Münster, and Düsseldorf were vandalized by pro-Palestinian protestors.<sup>3</sup>

Classic antisemitic notions, such as the blood-libel, were also used online to accuse Israel of being child-killers, while other accusations attributed Nazi-like behavior to Israel.<sup>4</sup>

Germany witnessed in 2021 another alarming phenomenon: the trivialization and abuse of the Holocaust in response to Covid-19 restrictions.

Already in 2020, participants in anti-vaccination protests wore the yellow star, replacing “Jude” (Jew) with “Ungeimpft” (unvaccinated). Antisemitism State Commissioner Felix Klein declared this act constituted a “taboo-break,” while the Munich municipality prohibited the use of the yellow star in Covid-19 related demonstrations.<sup>5</sup> Still, abusive exhibitions of the yellow star extended to other protests, including against the governmental restriction of diesel fuel.

The District Court of Saarbrücken passed a first-of-its-kind ruling on the issue. An Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) activist posted online yellow stars with the phrases “unvaccinated,”

<sup>1</sup> Kate Connolly, “Anti-Israel Protests in Germany Prompt Calls for Antisemitism Crackdown,” *The Guardian*, May 17, 2021; available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/17/anti-israel-protests-in-germany-prompt-calls-for-antisemitism-crackdown>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Bundesverband Research and Information on Antisemitism (RIAS) and International Institute for Education and Research on Antisemitism (IIBSA), “Mobilisierungen von israelbezogenem Antisemitismus im Bundesgebiet 2021,” Monitoring Report, November 24, 2021, pp. 52-66 [in German]; available at [https://report-antisemitism.de/en/documents/Bundesverband\\_RIAS\\_-\\_Mobilisierungen\\_von\\_israelbezogenem\\_Antisemitismus\\_im\\_Bundesgebiet\\_2021.pdf](https://report-antisemitism.de/en/documents/Bundesverband_RIAS_-_Mobilisierungen_von_israelbezogenem_Antisemitismus_im_Bundesgebiet_2021.pdf), last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Jansen, “Brennende Israel-Fahnen vor Synagogen Zentralrat der Juden entsetzt über Angriffe auf Gotteshäuser,” *Der Tagespiegel*, May 12, 2021 [in German]; available at <https://m.tagesspiegel.de/politik/brennende-israel-fahnen-vor-synagogen-zentralrat-der-juden-entsetzt-ueber-angriffe-auf-gotteshaeuser/27183626.html>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> RIAS-Berlin, “‘Stop doing what Hitler did to you’ – Die Eskalation im israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikt als Gelegenheitsstruktur für antisemitische Vorfälle,” Monitoring Report, November 24, 2021 [in German]; available at [https://report-antisemitism.de/en/documents/RIAS\\_Berlin\\_-\\_Monitoring\\_-\\_Stop\\_doing\\_what\\_Hitler\\_did\\_to\\_you.pdf](https://report-antisemitism.de/en/documents/RIAS_Berlin_-_Monitoring_-_Stop_doing_what_Hitler_did_to_you.pdf), last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Helmut Reister, “Ein konsequenter Schritt,” *Jüdische Allgemeine*, June 11, 2020 [in German]; available at <https://www.juedische-allgemeine.de/unsere-woche/ein-konsequenter-schritt/>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

“AfD voter,” “SUV driver,” and “Islamophobe.” The court ruled that although this act of protest trivializes the victims of Nazi persecution, the use of the yellow star does not constitute hate speech because it is not intended to advance violence.<sup>6</sup>

The anti-government protests brought together diverse social and political voices, from the AfD to anti-vaccination activists, from the far left to Islamists. By 2021, a new movement sprang from this ideological mix, known as “Querdenken” (lateral thinking). The ability of this movement to mobilize thousands of people from diverse political backgrounds concerned the security services, which consider some of its elements as potential risks for social stability.<sup>7</sup>

The *Querdenken* movement emerged from a marginal protest in Stuttgart where public opposition to anti-Covid-19 measures was presented as fighting for citizens’ liberties.<sup>8</sup> A study conducted by Basel University and the Heinrich Böll Foundation found that the movement amalgamates the extreme right, green activists, and anthroposophist activists, who share common feelings of alienation and anti-government defiance.<sup>9</sup>

The victimizing discourse promoted by the movement portrays anti-vaccine activists as victims of systemic and deliberate marginalization and discrimination. Manipulating the ideal of liberty, the activists compare victims of Nazi persecution and non-vaccinated people, as though both groups faced the same form of social exclusion and restriction of rights.

AfD activist Stefan Bauer compared the anti-Covid-19 vaccination to the Zyklon B poison used by Nazis in extermination camps. He shared his views, among other platforms, in a video published on YouTube in March 2021 and shot in the Mauthausen Nazi camp in Upper Austria, drawing an unveiled comparison between medical experiments conducted by Nazi officials and the vaccines produced by pharmaceutical companies.<sup>10</sup> The AfD banned Bauer from the party, and the Austrian authorities opened an investigation.

Covid-19 days also saw the revival of old and vicious antisemitic allegations that Jews are responsible for and profit from a pandemic. A vegan chef and media personality, the Turkish-German Attila Hildmann, popularized conspiracy theories through his Telegram channel.

<sup>6</sup> Saarländisches Oberlandesgericht Saarbrücken 1. Strafsenat, Ss 72/2020 (2/21), March 8, 2021 [in German]; available at <https://recht.saarland.de/bssl/document/KORE210022021>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> “German Spy Agency Watches Querdenker anti-Lockdown Movement,” *BBC*, April 28, 2021; available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56912882>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Marcel Fürstenau, “Meet Germany’s ‘Querdenker’ COVID Protest Movement,” *Deutsche Welle*, April 3, 2021; available at <https://www.dw.com/en/meet-germanys-querdenker-covid-protest-movement/a-57049985>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Nadine Frei and Oliver Nachtwey, “Quellen des «Querdenkertums». Eine politische Soziologie der Corona-Proteste in Baden-Württemberg,” Faculty of Sociology at Basel University, December 2021 [in German]; available at [https://www.boell-bw.de/sites/default/files/2022-01/Quellen%20des%20Querdenkertums\\_Frei\\_Nachtwey.pdf](https://www.boell-bw.de/sites/default/files/2022-01/Quellen%20des%20Querdenkertums_Frei_Nachtwey.pdf), last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> “AfD-Mitglied nach Vergleich von Impfstoff mit Zyklon B ausgeschlossen,” *Die Presse*, March 9, 2021 [in German]; available at <https://www.diepresse.com/5948601/afd-mitglied-nach-vergleich-von-impfstoff-mit-zyklon-b-ausgeschlossen>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

Hildmann expressed a variety of antisemitic views. He portrayed George Soros as a mastermind of the Covid-19 conspiracy and conducted mock polls suggesting that Zionists were among the financiers of the Holocaust and that Jews are “lying parasites.”<sup>11</sup>

In February 2021, Hildmann fled from Germany to Turkey after German police opened an investigation against him for alleged hate speech and incitement to violence and issued a warrant for his arrest. One of his Telegram channels, which had over 100,000 users, was blocked in June 2021.

**– The Research Team**

<sup>11</sup> Ben Cohen, “Former Celebrity Chef Turned Antisemitic Agitator Flees to Turkey to Escape German Arrest Warrant,” *The Algemeiner*, March 30, 2021; available at <https://www.algemeiner.com/2021/03/30/former-celebrity-chef-turned-antisemitic-agitator-flees-to-turkey-to-escape-german-arrest-warrant/>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

## The Arab World: Antisemitic Attacks on Normalization

The announcement of the Abraham Accords in August 2020 awakened dormant conspiracy theories in the Arab world. The most popular, which combined several blatantly antisemitic arguments, suggested a Jewish-Zionist-American plot to create a new religion called “al-Ibrahimiyya,” which would harm Islam, was behind the Accords.

This conspiracy theory surfaced in manifestos, *fatwas*, articles, books, and conferences and was voiced by clerics, academics, and commentators from Cairo to London. Certain variations were based on fake pamphlets and selective interpretations of the Quran, according to which the Jews are satanic demons, the earthly representatives of evil.

The conspiracy theory regarding the new “Ibrahamic religion” developed as a response to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) decision to establish the “Abrahamic Family House” in Abu Dhabi, announced during the events of the 2019 “Year of Tolerance.” The complex is designed to house a mosque, a church, and a synagogue.

The Abraham Accords reflected the new Emirati “discourse on tolerance” and were presented, from the very beginning, as the foundation for interfaith and intercultural relations. They involved an unprecedented recognition of Judaism as both a religion and a nation, and Jews as a native people of the Middle East.<sup>1</sup>

The Israeli-Emirati accord states that both countries recognize “that the Arab and Jewish peoples are descendants of a common ancestor, Abraham.” According to the accord, Abraham serves as the inspiration for fostering coexistence in the Middle East between Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

Emirati clerics, led by Sheikh ‘Abdullah bin Bayyah, a Mauritanian who serves as the director of the UAE Fatwa Council, justified peace with Israel as a manifestation of commonly held human values advanced by Moses, Jesus, and Muhammed.<sup>2</sup>

The opponents of the Abraham Accords decried the narrative calling for fraternal bonds between Jews and Muslims. Exiled Emirati opposition activists identified with the al-Islah Association, the Muslim Brothers’ branch in the UAE (banned in 2014), claimed that trust should not be

<sup>1</sup> Ofer Zalzberg, “The Abraham Accords: In Praise of Tradition,” *Kelman Institute*, August 30, 2021; available at <https://www.kelmaninstitute.org/2021/08/29/the-abraham-accords-in-praise-of-tradition/>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> “Ibn Bayyah Yushariku fi Multaqa al-Mubadara al-Ibrahimiyya [Ibn Bayyah Participated in the Abrahamic Initiative Forum],” *al-Ittihad*, December 3, 2020 [in Arabic]; available at <https://bit.ly/3eXAgS4>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

placed in the Jews, “the murderers of the prophets, nor should peace be made with people whose history is founded on aggression against all of the world’s nations.”<sup>3</sup>

Activists in the Emirati opposition were among the first to mention the danger of an “Ibrahimi religion.” Ahmad al-Shayba al-Nu‘aymi, the chairman of the Emirati Resistance Union against Normalization, who resides in London, accused “Zionism, its sponsors, and its collaborators” of trying to “create a new religion called Ibrahimiyya.”

In an article entitled “Distorting the religion in order to achieve normalization with the Zionists,” al-Nu‘aymi warned of the plot to weaken Islam, the religion of the Arab-Muslim nation, a religion that stands as a “fortified wall against plots to normalize, commit treachery, and do away with the Palestinian problem.”<sup>4</sup>

A manifesto authored by thirty-two Islamic organizations and published in February 2021 regarding the so-called “Ibrahimi religion” stated that following the ways of the Ibrahimi faith amounts to a repudiation of Islam.

The manifesto claimed that the Quran teaches that the Jews’ contempt for Muslims began at the time of Muhammad, that it still exists, and that it will continue.

According to the manifesto, one contemporary manifestation of that contempt is the attempt made by modern-day Jews to take over the Arab world by launching a tourism initiative that would ostensibly include Abraham’s life journey. This is in addition to a Jewish plot to return to their native Arab homelands, where they would be a fifth column.

Similarly, a statement issued that month by the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS), established by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a 96-year-old Egyptian-born and Qatar-based Islamist leader, called upon Muslim scholars to make Muslims aware of the risk posed by the Ibrahimi religion.<sup>5</sup>

Fear of the so-called “Ibrahimi religion” created a rare moment of agreement between Islamist organizations associated with the Muslim Brothers and al-Azhar, the most important Islamic university in the world, whose leadership supports the Egyptian regime.

In a 2021 speech, Ahmad al-Tayyib, Sheikh al-Azhar, warned against “the call for the Ibrahimi faith.” However, al-Tayyib did not explicitly link it with the Abraham Accords, presumably to avoid harming his close ties with the Emirati regime.

<sup>3</sup> Sa‘id al-Tunayji, “Rasa’il fi al-Wa‘i: Al-Bina’ al-‘Uqadi fi Muwajahat al-Tatbi’ [Messages of Awareness: The Doctrinal Construction Against the Normalization],” Emirati Association against Normalization, October 7, 2020 [in Arabic]; available at <https://uae4palestine.com/posts/29>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Ahmad al-Shayba al-Nu‘aymi, “Tahrif al-Din lil-Tatbi’ ma‘a al-Sahayna [Distortion of religion for the sake of normalization with the Zionists],” *AlKhaleej Online*, October 10, 2020 [in Arabic]; available at <http://khaleejonline/KMK19R>, accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> “Al-Bayan al-Khitami li-Mu’tamar Mawqif al-Umma al-Islamiyya min al-Diyana al-Ibrahimiyya [Concluding Remarks of the Conference about the Position of the Islamic Nation on the Ibrahimi Religion],” *IUMS*, February 22, 2021 [in Arabic]; available at <https://iumsonline.org/ar/ContentDetails.aspx?ID=16112>, accessed on March 20, 2022.

According to al-Tayyib, preaching a united Ibrahimi religion may lead to the creation of a “colorless, flavorless and odorless new religion” and may harm religious pluralism. Observers in Egypt interpreted his words as voicing reservations about normalization with Israel.<sup>6</sup>

Other Egyptians also played a pivotal role in disseminating the claim that the Ibrahimi idea is a Jewish-Zionist plot. Under the guise of academic prestige, their lectures, writings, and interviews were infused with explicit antisemitic motifs.

The most outspoken Egyptian mouthpiece of the so-called resistance of the Jewish conspiracy has been Dr. Hiba Jamal al-Din, a social sciences lecturer at the Institute of National Planning and a member of the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs (ECFA). In the wake of the Abraham Accords, she published two books purporting to expose “the greatest imperialist plot of the 21st century.”

Jamal al-Din’s books are dedicated to substantiating the claim that the efforts invested by American scholars to highlight the commonalities in the monotheistic faiths are a form of “spiritual diplomacy.” This “spiritual diplomacy” is bent on marginalizing the Palestinian problem, eliminating the demand to exercise Palestinian rights, and whitewashing the Zionist occupation.

Jamal al-Din made numerous other claims to prove what she views as an imperialist plot to create a new Ibrahimi Middle East,<sup>7</sup> establish a new regional entity called “the United Ibrahimi States,”<sup>8</sup> and transform Arab-Islamic identity into a so-called “Ibrahimi” identity.<sup>9</sup>

Several of her claims contained antisemitic undertones. For example, in an interview she gave to Egyptian media after the Abraham Accords were announced, Jamal al-Din likened Israel to

<sup>6</sup> “Al-Azhar wal-Ibrahimiyya: Ma Huwa ‘al-Din al-Jadid’ Alladhi Rafadahu al-Imam Ahmad al-Tayyib? Wa-Ma ‘Alaqtuhu bi-Isra’ il wal-Imarat? [Al-Azhar and the Ibrahimiyya: What is the ‘New Religion’ That was Rejected by Imam Ahmad al-Tayyib? And What Its Connection to Israel and the UAE?],” *BBC News in Arabic*, November 10, 2021 [in Arabic]; available at <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/trending-59235483>, accessed on March 20, 2022. Ahmad ‘Alaa’, “Azhari ‘an al-Diyana al-Ibrahimiyya: Lam Na‘ lam Inna Tramb Rasul min ‘inda Allah [Al-Azhar Cleric on the Ibrahimi Religion: We did not know that Trump is God’s Messenger],” *al-Shuruq*, November 11, 2021 [in Arabic]; available at <https://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=11112021&id=6ce45056-38df-4574-a66c-968ef9686aa1>, accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Ahmad Abu Ful and Hiba Jamal al-Din, “Ittifaqat Abraham: Taqdim al-Diblumasiyya al-Rawhiyya, al-Isti‘ mar al-Jadid wa-‘Asr al-Qanun al-Dawli al-Turati al-Jadid [The Abraham Accords: Introducing the Spiritual Diplomacy, the New Colonialism and the Era of the New International Law of the Torah],” *Vist*, January 9, 2021 [in Arabic]; available at <https://vistinternational.org/ar/law-ar/اتفاقات-أبراهام-الدبلوماسية-الروحية/>, accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad Taha, “Bahitha: ‘Al-Salam al-Ibrahimi’ Khutta Isra’iliyya li-Tasyis al-Din fi Khidmat al-Siyasa [Researcher: The Ibrahimi Peace is an Israeli Plot to Politicize Religion],” *al-Masri al-Yawm*, September 3, 2021 [in Arabic]; available at <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/2410007>, accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> “Anwar al-Musawi Yuhawiru D. Hiba Jamal al-Din ‘an al-Masar al-Ibrahimi wa-Mashru‘ al-Tatbi‘ [Anwar al-Musawi Interviews Dr. Hiba Jamal al-Din on the Ibrahimi Route and the Normalization Project],” *al-Muththaqaf*, September 19, 2021 [in Arabic]; available at <https://www.almothaqaf.com/c/d2/958213%202410007>, accessed on March 20, 2022.

“a viper that changes its shape and color and wishes to devour the region as a whole, using diverse means, some of which we know of, and most of which we can’t even imagine.”<sup>10</sup>

Egyptian scholar Mursi al-Adham published a poisonous antisemitic conspiracy book entitled “The Ibrahimi-Jewish plots: Destroying the monotheistic religions and subjugating humanity.”

In the book, Jews are portrayed as devils. According to the author, the Jewish religion commands its adherents to destroy humanity, enslave and bestialize gentile nations, debase Arabian kings to the level of shoe shiners for the Jews, steal Arab lands from the Nile to the Euphrates, murder children and the elderly, rip out live fetuses, and rape women.

According to al-Adham, these practices had been noted throughout Jewish history, in ancient times and modern times. Al-Adham based his claim, among other things, on the “Franklin Document,” an antisemitic Nazi forgery from 1935 that permeated Arab discourse, in which the American statesman had supposedly warned of the risk inherent in the Jews and called for expelling them from their host countries.<sup>11</sup>

In his book, al-Adham attacked the plan to establish an “Abrahamic Family House” and the “Document on Human Fraternity,” signed in 2019 during a visit by the Pope and Sheikh al-Azhar in the UAE. It sought to promote dialogue and friendly ties between the faithful.

Despite al-Adham’s implied criticism of Sheikh al-Azhar for promoting the UAE policy, his book was received positively by the Egyptian media, including the widely read daily *al-Masri al-Yawm*. A book launch was even arranged for him in 2021 at the Cairo International Book Fair. Dar al-Ma’arif, a prestigious publishing house, distributed the book and hosted a discussion on the book at its booth at the fair.

There were also Arab intellectuals and officials who spoke against the conspiracy theory. For instance, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Salam, the secretary-general of the UAE-based Higher Committee of Human Fraternity, stated that there was no conspiracy to create a global religion behind the push to establish the “Abrahamic Family House” in Abu Dhabi. On the contrary: its purpose was to highlight what makes each religion unique.<sup>12</sup>

‘Abd al-Qadir al-Zawi, a former Moroccan ambassador to the UAE, accused the International Union of Muslim Scholars of disseminating fake news, with the aim of taking a swipe at the states that normalized their ties with Israel. He decried the conflation of Judaism, a monotheistic

<sup>10</sup> Hiba Jamal al-Din, “al-Ittifaq al-Ibrahimi wa-Mahiyyat al-Ibrahimiyya wal-Siyasat al-Wiqa’iyya al-Lazima [The Abraham Accords, the Essence of Ibrahimiyya and the Required Defense Policies,” *al-Taqarub*, August 18, 2020 [in Arabic]; available at <https://www.altaqarub.com/d-hbtt-jmal-alden-kttb-alatfaq-alabraheme-wmahett-alabrahemett-walseasat-alwqaaeett-allazmtt/>, accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Mursi al-Adham, *Mu’amarat al-Ibrahimiyya al-Yahudiyya* [The Conspiracies of the Jewish Ibrahimiyya], (Cairo: Dar al-Ma’arif, 2021), pp. 32-33 [in Arabic].

<sup>12</sup> Mohamed Abdelsalam, “The Abrahamic Family House is Not About Merging Faiths,” *The National*, January 22, 2022 [in Arabic]; available at <https://www.thenationalnews.com/opinion/comment/2022/01/22/the-abrahamic-family-house-is-not-about-merging-faiths/>, accessed on March 20, 2022.

religion, with the State of Israel, an UN-recognized political entity (in his words) with which the Abraham Accords were signed.<sup>13</sup>

Egyptian commentator Jamal Abu al-Hasan lambasted Sheikh al-Azhar’s comments on the alleged Ibrahimi faith. That faith, he argued, is “a fib that no one is talking about or preaching, and as far as we know, no entity or institution has espoused it.”<sup>14</sup>

Critical discussion of peace accords is legitimate political discourse. However, conspiracy theories with antisemitic undertones are a dangerous poison. The champions of peace and truth must combat this poison, both in Israel and the Arab world.

**– Dr. Ofir Winter and Ella Aphek**

<sup>13</sup> ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Zawi, “‘al-Diyana al-Ibrahimiyya’: Tahamul wa-Iftira’ fi Bayan ‘Ulama’ [“Ibrahimiic Religion”: Prejudice and Slander in a Statement by Ulama’], *al-Majalla*, December 17, 2021 [in Arabic]; available at <https://arb.majalla.com/node/185161/>, accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Jamal Abu al-Hasan, “Fi Sha’n ‘al-Diyana al-Ibrahimiyya’ [On the Issue of the “Ibrahimiic Religion”],” *al-Masri al-Yawm*, November 22, 2021 [in Arabic], <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/2467523>, accessed on March 20, 2022.

## Pakistan: Antisemitism with Few Jews

Antisemitism does not need a Jewish community to flourish.

Antisemitism without, or with few Jews, is a phenomenon that *New York Times* journalist John Darnton defined in 1981 as the “Polish Riddle.”<sup>1</sup> He and others used the phrase to refer to the endurance of antisemitic sentiments in post-Communist Poland even after a sizable Jewish community was no longer present.<sup>2</sup>

A similar phenomenon also developed among some Muslim societies in Asia, including Pakistan, with the internationalization of Israel-related anti-Jewish sentiments.<sup>3</sup>

Under the British Raj, a thriving Jewish community comprising Persian and Afghan Jews, as well as Indian Jews from the “Bene Israel,” was concentrated in Karachi, Rawalpindi, and Peshawar.

Most Jews left newborn Pakistan for Israel following the surge of antisemitic violence after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Due to the rise of Islamist forces during the 1970s and 1980s, the small Jewish community remaining in Karachi has lived there secretly.

Antisemitism in Pakistan is inherently connected to political Islam and Islamic revivalists, whose proponents, like Abu A’la al-Maududi, combine Quranic references to Jews with an ideological vision of Islam opposed to the Western world and Zionism.

In this respect, the late scholar Esther Webman explained that anti-Israel rhetoric is imbued with an anti-Jewish sentiment that construes Muslim-Jewish relations as an irresolvable conflict; hence, the struggle against Israel becomes both a theological and political imperative.<sup>4</sup>

Indian scholar Navras Afridi went as far as suggesting that Middle Eastern Islamist jihadism and its antisemitic expressions are rooted in Asian Islamic thought, which influenced both Shia and Sunni Islamist ideologues such as Iranian Ruhollah Khomeini and Egyptian Sayyid Qutb.<sup>5</sup>

Islamist discourse on Zionism and Israel has adopted Western antisemitic and conspiratorial articulations, first popularized in the 19th century by Arab translations of European antisemitic

<sup>1</sup> John Darnton, “Anti-Semitism Without Jews? A Polish Riddle,” *The New York Times*, March 15, 1981, Section 4, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Alina Cała, “Antisemitism Without Jews and Without Antisemites,” *Jewish Studies at the Central European University 2002-2003*, (2003): 39-51, available at <https://archive.jpr.org.uk/object-857>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Moshe Yegar, “Malaysia: Anti-Semitism Without Jews,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 18, no. 3/4 (2006): 81–97.

<sup>4</sup> Esther Webman, “Rethinking the Role of Religion in Arab Antisemitic Discourses,” *Religions* 10, no. 7 (2019): 415.

<sup>5</sup> Navraas J. Aafreedi, “Antisemitism in the Muslim Intellectual Discourse in South Asia,” *Religions* 10, no. 7 (2019): 442; available at <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10070442>.

texts.<sup>6</sup> Conspiracy theories of Jewish global domination, and moral and social corruption, found their way into Islamist thought on Israel and the conflict.

One such notion appears in the view that Israel aims to destroy the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. This belief originated in the late 1920s, when Hajj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, mobilized Arab masses in anti-Jewish riots by propagandizing an alleged Zionist attack on al-Aqsa.

The defense of al-Aqsa as an Islamic symbol was internationalized in 1931 by the World Islamic Conference,<sup>7</sup> sponsored by Shawkat Ali, the leader of the Islamic Khilafat, an Indian pan-Islamic organization seeking to revive the Caliphate after its abolition in 1924.<sup>8</sup>

The process of normalization between Israel and Arab states in the aftermath of the 2020 Abraham Accords gave rise to antisemitic expressions among some Pakistani Islamists; so did the Israel-Hamas military confrontation in May 2021. When tensions in Jerusalem rose in May 2021, Pakistani Islamist groups began urging Muslims to defend al-Aqsa and promised to redeem it from what was perceived as a direct attack by Israel.

As the conflict with Hamas escalated, Maulana Fazal-ur-Rahman, the leader of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), a Deobandi Sunni political movement, called on Jews, Zionists, and the entire international community to “be ashamed” and to “apologize” for what he defined as an attack on Muslims during the month of Ramadan.<sup>9</sup>

Despite their weak political performance in elections, religious movements such as the JUI enjoy popular support, as demonstrated by mass mobilization for rallies and local elections.<sup>10</sup>

Conflating Jews, Zionists, and Israelis is common in Pakistani Islamist discourse. This was reflected in the speeches during the Million-Man March protest organized in Peshawar on May 30 by another Pakistani Islamist organization, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI). The movement aims to transform Pakistan into an Islamic state. It builds popular support by providing services through a network of charity associations and educational institutions.

<sup>6</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Semites and anti-Semites – An Inquiry into Conflict and Prejudice*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), pp. 192-200.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholas E. Roberts, “Making Jerusalem the Centre of the Muslim World: Pan-Islam and the World Islamic congress of 1931,” *Contemporary Levant* 4, no. 1 (2019): 52-63.

<sup>8</sup> Erik Freas, “Hajj Amin Al-Husayni and the Haram al-Sharif: A Pan-Islamic or Palestinian Nationalist Cause?” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 39, no. 1 (2012): 19–51.

<sup>9</sup> Maulana Fazal-ur-Rahman, “Leader of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Expressed Solidarity with Palestinian Muslims, Condemned Israeli Atrocities and Launched a Special Appeal to the Muslim Ummah,” *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Pakistan*, May 10, 2021 [in Urdu], video available at <https://juipak.org.pk/maulanavideomessage/>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Jamal Shah, Zahir Shah and Syed Ali Shah, “An Assessment of the Emergence of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, in the 2002 General Elections,” *Global Political Review* 6, no. 1 (2021): 142-153.

During the protest, JI leader Saraj-ul-Haq called for jihad against Israelis and Jews who attack Muslims, as well as against Jewish and Zionist attempts to deprive al-Aqsa of its Muslim identity.<sup>11</sup> Saraj-ul-Haq had previously called on Muslims to declare jihad against Israel, attributing brutalities to “Jewish forces” against Muslims.<sup>12</sup>

A common antisemitic concept that emerged in Pakistan is the belief that Jews are enemies of the country, constantly scheming to undermine Pakistan’s Islamic identity. Two main antisemitic ideas are expressed: a Jewish plot to subvert Pakistan and Jewish domination of the media and economy.

When the international press first noted the possibility of Pakistan’s recognition of Israel in 2019, Islamists accused Prime Minister Imran Khan of being a “Jewish agent.” He was accused of acting against the national interest, doing so under the control of “Jewish lobbies” seeking to alter Pakistan’s Islamic identity.<sup>13</sup>

After the first wave of normalization agreements between Arab states and Israel during 2020, the perception of an Israeli danger increased. Fazl-ur-Rahman rehashed the idea that PM Khan is a Jewish agent and opposed any form of recognition of Israel during the JUI Shura Council meeting in January 2021.<sup>14</sup>

Discrediting political adversaries by defining them as “Jews” is common to other Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, which used similar accusations against Egyptian President ‘Abd al-Fatah al-Sisi. In Pakistan, this form of antisemitic speech acquires a further political dimension related to the regional conflict with India.

According to Pakistani Islamists, Jewish or Israeli lobbies, together with India, pressure Pakistan to recognize Israel and succumb to Indian demands regarding the conflict in Kashmir.<sup>15</sup> Analogizing the Palestinian cause to the conflict in Kashmir also serves as means to Islamize Pakistan’s national and territorial conflict with India.<sup>16</sup>

11 Jamat-e-Islami, “Jamiat-e-Islam Labaik al-Quds Million March Live,” *Facebook*, 30 May 2021; available at <https://www.facebook.com/JIOfficial1/videos/پشاور-جماعت-اسلامی-کا-لیک-القدس-ملین-مارچ-پشاور-سے-براہ-راست/534074984272477/>.

12 “Jihad Against Israel Should be Declared, Saraj-ul-Haq,” *Jang*, May 23, 2021 [in Urdu]; available at <https://jang.com.pk/news/930918>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

13 “Speakers Criticize Government, Army, Judiciary – Full Report of the JUI-F Million March,” *Islamic Times*, January 28, 2019 [in Urdu]; available at <https://www.islamtimes.org/ur/article/774644-جے-یو-اے-ف-کے-ملین-مارچ-کا-مکمل-احوال>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

14 “Palestine and Jerusalem Are Occupied, While We Are Discussing not to Recognize Israel,” *Urdu Khabrain*, January 21, 2021 [in Urdu]; available at <https://urdukhabrain.pk/palestine-and-jerusalem-are-occupied-while-we-talk-of-not-recognizing-israel-fazal-ur-rehman/>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

15 See the speeches given at the JUI event in 21 January 2021, JUI, “Karachi: Israel is Unacceptable,” *Facebook*, January 21, 2021; video available at <https://www.facebook.com/Jui106791347782637/videos/کراچی-پیشین-237867104493043/اسرائیل-نامنظور-ملین-مارچ-سے>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

16 Maulana Siraj-ul-Haq also expressed similar views in his speech at the Peshawar Million March, see note no. 8. See also, “Israel’s Next Target is Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan,” *Hum News*, May 23, 2021 [in Urdu]; available at <https://www.humnews.pk/latest/324834/>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

Other conspiracy theories also abound. In criticizing the government for not turning Pakistan into an Islamic state, JI Siraj-ul-Haq stated on December 2021 that Pakistan’s economy is controlled by “the Jewish system.”<sup>17</sup>

This belief is not common only among Islamist circles. The antisemitic prejudice depicting Jews as rich and influential was at the center of an international polemic involving Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureishi.

In an interview with CNN in May 2021, Qureishi discussed the Hamas-Israel confrontation and maintained that Israel was losing the media war despite the wealth and the influence over the media at its disposal, using the expression “deep pockets.”<sup>18</sup>

The impact of this antisemitic rhetoric goes beyond Pakistan. Pakistani Islamic thinkers and ideologues have some influence on Asian Muslim communities in Europe and America. This being the case, the rise of antisemitism among Pakistani Muslims is not good news for the future of interfaith relations in the West.

**– Dr. Giovanni Quer**

<sup>17</sup> “Efforts To Impede a Bearded Man from Becoming Prime Minister” *Ruzname Dunya*, December 23, 2021 [in Urdu]; available at <https://dunya.com.pk/index.php/pakistan/2021-12-23/1927793>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

<sup>18</sup> Byanna Golodryga and Emmet Lyons, “Pakistan’s top diplomat makes anti-Semitic remark during CNN interview about Gaza conflict,” *CNN*, May 22, 2021; available at <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/05/21/world/pakistan-diplomat-gaza-interview-intl/index.html>, last accessed on March 20, 2022.

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