



The Image of Israel on X and TikTok After 10/7

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the rise of antisemitism and negative sentiments toward Israel and Jews in online discourse following the October 7, 2023, Hamas massacre, with a focus on the platforms X (formerly Twitter) and TikTok. Using data samples collected before and after this event, the research analyzes the prevalence of antisemitic content, thematic shifts, and accusations against Israel, including allegations of genocide. Findings reveal a significant increase in antisemitic content in top tweets on X, peaking in May 2024, alongside a decline in posts denouncing such rhetoric. On TikTok, random posts with the keyword “genocide” predominantly accused Israel of genocide, while those featuring “Israel” displayed more diverse themes and sentiments. Thematic analysis highlights the Gaza war as a dominant subject across both platforms, illustrating a strong alignment between antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment in online discussions. This study underscores the role of social media algorithms in amplifying accusatory content against Israel, presenting critical implications for combating online hate and misinformation. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers addressing the interplay between antisemitism and anti-Israel discourse in the digital sphere.

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Introduction

This research report was produced in collaboration with students enrolled in the Fall 2024 course, *Israel on Social Media: Conceptions, Misconceptions, and Controversies* at Indiana University, taught by Gunther Jikeli. The study explores the intersection of views on Israel and Jews, which are often closely linked—particularly when it comes to negative perceptions. While antisemitism and anti-Zionism or anti-Israelism¹ are distinct phenomena, their convergence has become increasingly apparent,² especially following the Hamas massacre in Israel on October 7, 2023. The aftermath of October 7 (10/7) marked a significant escalation in negative sentiments toward Israel and a global rise in antisemitism. Country-level reports for 2023 highlight a sharp increase in antisemitic incidents. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) documented 8,873 antisemitic incidents in the United States, more than doubling the 3,698 reported in 2022.³ Similarly, the British Community Security Trust (CST) recorded 4,104 incidents in the UK, up from 1,662 in 2022, with October alone accounting for 1,330 incidents.⁴ In France, the Service de Protection de la Communauté Juive reported 1,676 incidents in 2023, a significant rise from the 436 recorded in 2022, with 563 of these incidents occurring in October.⁵

The online sphere has mirrored this alarming trend. Research and monitoring organizations report unprecedented levels of antisemitic rhetoric across both mainstream and fringe social media platforms, often featuring "open jubilation and joy over the deaths of Israeli Jews."⁶ The Institute for Strategic Dialogue highlighted in early 2024 that the surge in online antisemitism has fueled a pervasive sense of insecurity and fear within Jewish communities.⁷ The monitoring organization CyberWell compared flagged social media posts 11 months prior and after 10/7, finding an increase of posts that present Jews as enemies and evil. There was a shift within antisemitic discourses. While the share of dissemination of stereotypes about Jews was relatively smaller after 10/7 than prior, other the share of other forms increased, including calling for or justifying violence against Jews, Holocaust denial and distortion, and blaming Jews or Israel for Holocaust fabrication or distortion.

The monitoring organization CyberWell conducted a comparative analysis of flagged social media posts 11 months before and after October 7, 2023. Their findings revealed an increase in posts portraying Jews as enemies or inherently evil. There was a notable shift within antisemitic discourse. While the prevalence of stereotypes about Jews decreased in proportion, other forms of antisemitism surged. These included calls for or justifications of violence against Jews, Holocaust denial and distortion, accusations blaming Jews or Israel for fabricating or distorting Holocaust narratives, denial of the Jewish

¹ Elhanan Yakira, *Post-Zionism, Post-Holocaust: Three Essays on Denial, Forgetting, and the Delegitimation of Israel*, trans. Michael Swirsky (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

² Cary Nelson, ed., *Dreams Deferred: A Concise Guide to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and the Movement to Boycott Israel* (Bloomington, Indiana: Copublished by Indiana University Press, 2016), 37–48.

³ Anti-Defamation League (ADL), "Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2023," April 16, 2024, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/audit-antisemitic-incidents-2023>.

⁴ Community Security Trust (CST), "Antisemitic Incidents. Report 2023," February 15, 2024, https://cst.org.uk/data/file/9/f/Antisemitic_Incidents_Report_2023.1707834969.pdf.

⁵ Service de Protection de la Communauté Juive (SPCJ), "Figures for Antisemitism in France in 2023," 2024, <https://www.spcj.org/antis%C3%A9mitisme/figures-for-antisemitism-france-2023>.

⁶ Matthias J. Becker et al., "Decoding Antisemitism: An AI-Driven Study on Hate Speech and Imagery Online," Discourse Report (Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technical University Berlin, 2024).

⁷ "The Fragility of Freedom. Online Holocaust Denial and Distortion" (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2024), <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/The-Fragility-of-Freedom.pdf>.

right to self-determination, projecting classic antisemitism on to Israel or Israelis, comparing Israel to the Nazis, and holding Jews responsible for the actions of Israel.⁸ Furthermore, a focused study on Holocaust distortion and antisemitic narratives post-10/7 on platforms like YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), Truth Social, Gab, and 4chan revealed a disturbing increase in radicalized messages, including explicit calls for violence and mass murder.⁹ The use of AI technology can lead to further dissemination of hateful rhetoric, including Holocaust denial and antisemitism.¹⁰

Quantifying the rise in online antisemitism poses challenges due to the evolving and dynamic nature of digital platforms. Nonetheless, this study seeks to provide critical insights into how perceptions of Israel and Jews have developed and diverged since October 7, 2023. By examining the trends, themes, and narratives dominating online spaces, this research contributes to the broader understanding of the growing entanglement between antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment.

Methods

We compiled and analyzed four data samples from the social media platform X and two samples from TikTok.

X Samples

The X samples were compiled manually using the platform's Advanced Search tool with a fresh account, ensuring no prior search history influenced the results. The Advanced Search feature enabled keyword searches within specific time frames. We used the keyword "Jews" for four distinct periods: September 7–13, 2023; October 7–13, 2023; May 1–6, 2024; and September 7–13, 2024. For each time frame, we collected the first 75 "Top Tweets."

These samples were annotated by three annotators per dataset. Annotations included:

- Classification of tweets as antisemitic based on the Working Definition of Antisemitism by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).
- Identification of tweets that denounce or call out antisemitism.
- Sentiment analysis toward Israel and Jews (positive or negative).
- A thematic analysis and categorization of accusations against Israel.

The detailed annotation scheme is provided in the annex. Annotators resolved discrepancies through discussion, particularly regarding whether tweets were antisemitic or if they called out antisemitism. Statistical analysis of these classifications relied on consensus among all three annotators. For sentiments, themes, and accusations against Israel, the statistical analysis was based on the average classification across annotators (accumulated for all posts and divided by the number of annotators).

⁸ CyberWell, "The Evolution of Online Antisemitism. Pre- & Post October 7," October 7, 2024, <https://cyberwell.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/CyberWell-Report-Evolution-of-Online-Antisemitism-Pre-and-Post-Oct-7.pdf>.

⁹ Gunther Jikeli, "Manipulation of Symbols: Holocaust Denial and Distortion on Social Media Platforms After the October 7 Massacre in Israel," *KODIKAS/CODE 42*, no. 2–4 (2024): 111–32.

¹⁰ UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), *AI and the Holocaust: Rewriting History? The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Understanding the Holocaust* (UNESCO, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.54675/ZHJC6844>.

TikTok Samples

TikTok samples were compiled using the TikTok Research API. Searches were conducted using the keywords "genocide" and "Israel" for the period October 1-14, 2024, approximately one year after the October 7, 2023 massacre. For each day, we retrieved the first file from an API query for TikToks originating in the U.S. that contained the keywords "genocide" or "Israel," respectively. The keyword query captures words and hashtags in the description. Each file was expected to include 100 posts, representing the last 100 posts of the day, since TikTok IDs are assigned chronologically. However, the query returned files with fewer than 100 posts, resulting in a total of 1,220 posts. From this dataset, we randomly selected a sample of 300 posts, from which we took the top 100 posts based on follower count.

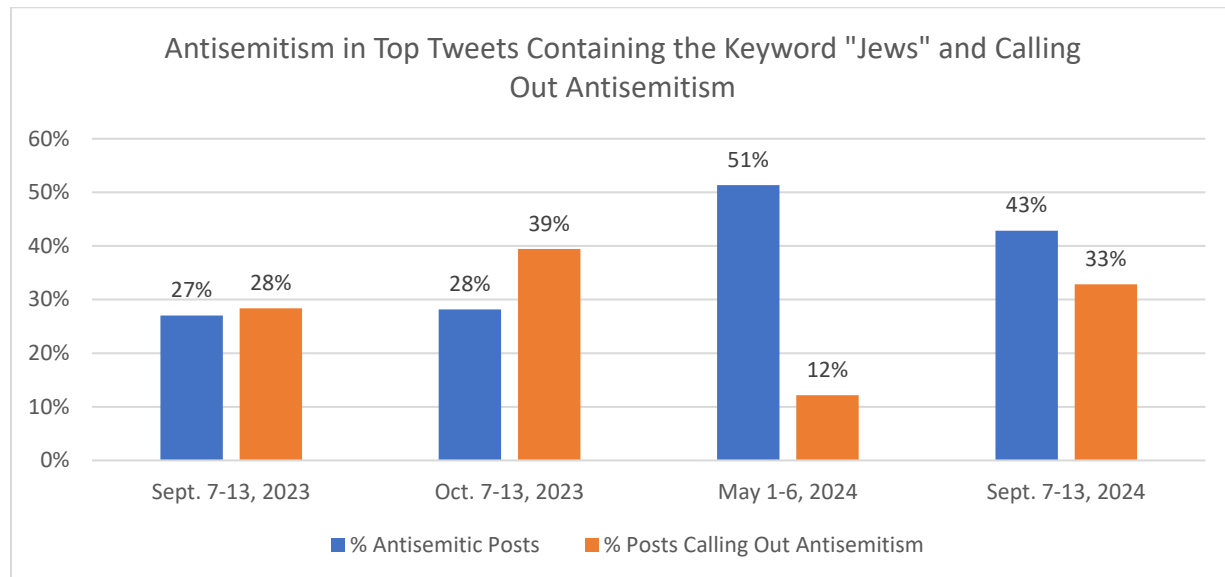
Each TikTok sample was divided into three subsamples, with two annotators assigned to each subsample. The annotations followed the same annotation scheme as the X samples. The statistical analysis for the TikTok data was based on the average classification by the annotators, focusing on topics, accusations against Israel, and sentiments towards Israel.

Results and Discussion

Tweets

Antisemitism in Top Tweets Containing the Keyword "Jews" and Calling Out Antisemitism

The level of antisemitism on X in conversations about Jews was already high before October 7, 2023. In our sample, more than a quarter of top tweets containing the word “Jews” were antisemitic in early September 2023. However, the share of tweets denouncing and calling out antisemitism was equally high. During the week after the Hamas massacre in Israel, antisemitism remained on the same level in our sample of top tweets but tweets calling out antisemitism rose to almost 40 percent. Seven months later, in early May, more than half of the tweets were antisemitic and the percentage of tweets calling out antisemitism fell to 12 percent. In September 2024, the level of antisemitism in our sample of top tweets was significantly higher than a year earlier with 43 percent. However, we also noticed a relatively high engagement of users denouncing antisemitism (a third of all top tweets containing the word “Jews”), see graph 1.

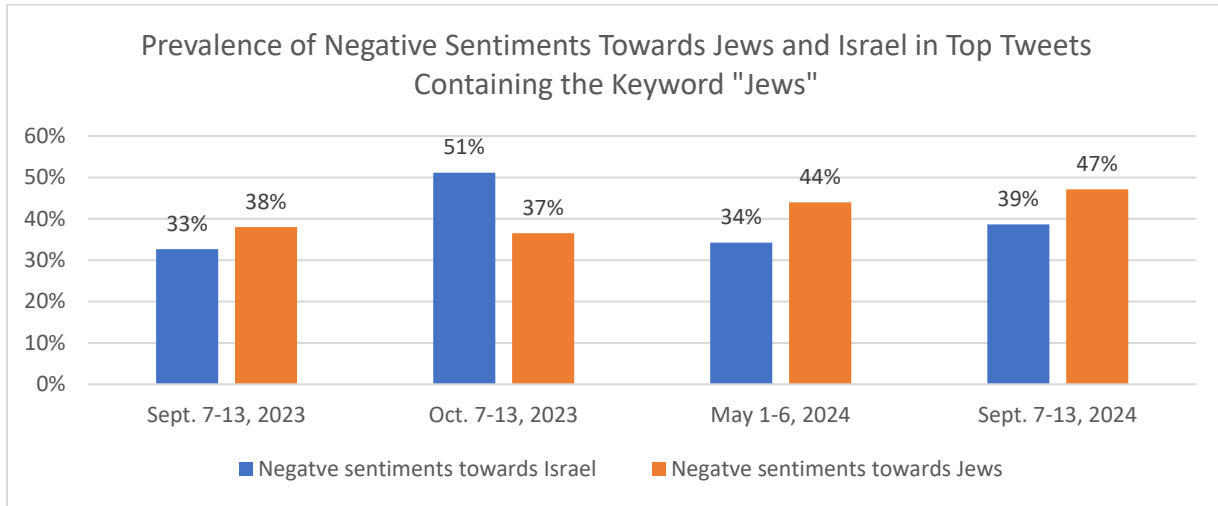


Graph 1: Antisemitism in Top Tweets Containing the Keyword "Jews" and Calling Out Antisemitism, September 2023 to September 2024

Prevalence of Negative Sentiments Towards Jews and Israel in Top Tweets Containing the Keyword "Jews"

The level of negative sentiments towards Jews and Israel in conversations about Jews on X is higher than the level of antisemitism, at least according to the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism that we used. In all our samples from September 2023 to September 2024, between 37 and 47 percent of top tweets included negative sentiments towards Jews and between 33 and 51 percent included negative sentiments towards Israel. Negative sentiments towards Israel were particularly high during the week

after the Hamas massacre. Negative sentiments towards Jews rose in the long run with an increase of 10 percent between September 2023 and September 2024, see graph 2.

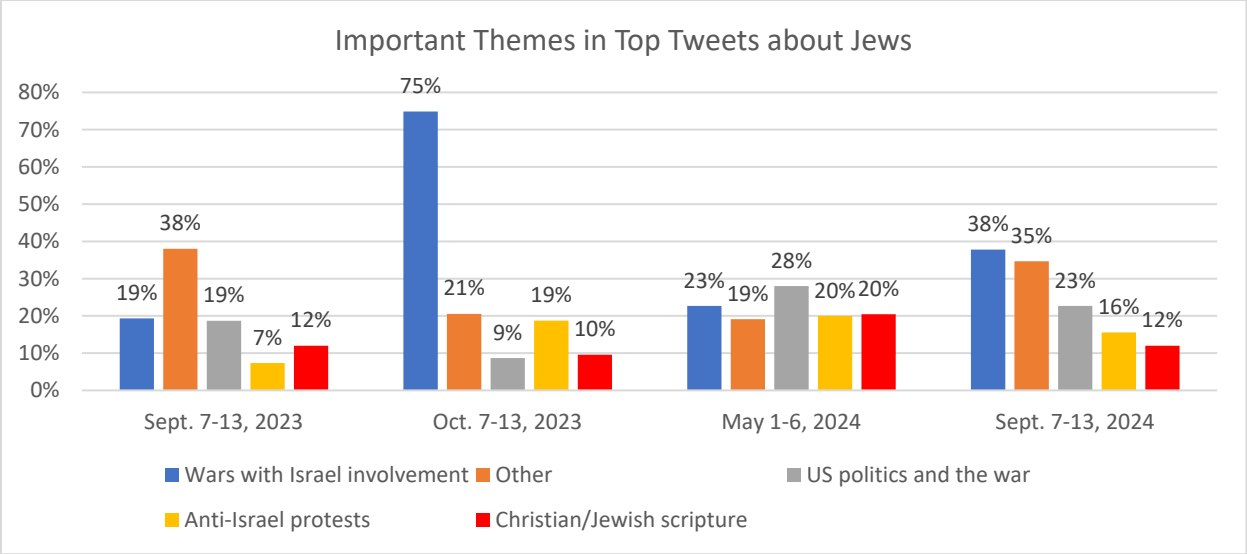


Graph 2: Negative Sentiments Towards Jews and Israel in Top Tweets Containing the Keyword "Jews"

Important Themes in Top Tweets Containing the Keyword "Jews"

Many themes are covered in top tweets about Jews (tweets containing the keyword “Jews”), including the Middle East conflict, U.S. politics and the war in Gaza, anti-Israel protests but also discussions about Christian or Jewish scripture, usually bible verses. Before 10/7, the Middle East conflict was a major theme in conversations about Jews but twice as many themes were other themes, unrelated to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During the week after 10/7, top tweets about Jews were dominated by conversations about the war between Hamas and Israel. 75 percent of all top tweets were related to wars with Israel involvement, predominantly the war with Hamas. A year later, the war in Gaza remains the dominant theme but fell under 40 percent. Notably, tweets covering anti-Israel protests made up a greater proportion of tweets about Jews in each period sampled after the October 7 attacks. They made up only 6 percent of tweets before October 7, but in each sampled period after October 7, they accounted for a portion consistently over twice as large, see graph 3. The manual annotation revealed that many tweets in early May 2024 were connected to the Antisemitism Awareness Act, which was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on May 1, 2024.¹¹ Among these was a tweet by Republican Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene, which garnered nearly 5 million views. In her tweet, she explained her reasons for voting against the bill and made a statement that could be interpreted as echoing the antisemitic accusation that Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus.

¹¹ “Antisemitism Awareness Act. Roll Call 172, Bill Number: H. R. 6090, 118th Congress, 2nd Session,” Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives, May 1, 2024, <https://clerk.house.gov/Votes/2024172>.



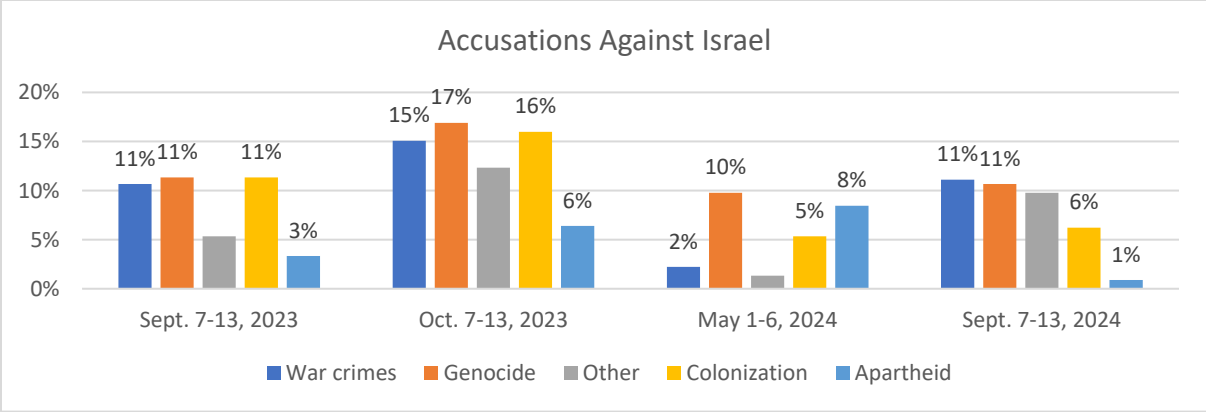
Graph 3: Themes in Top Tweets Containing the Keyword "Jews"

Accusations against Israel in Top Tweets Containing the Keyword "Jews"

Israel has been accused of many crimes, including defamatory claims and comparisons to Nazi Germany.¹² Such comparisons are widely recognized as an example of antisemitism under the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition.¹³ Accusations of war crimes, genocide, colonization, and apartheid were already present in top tweets before 10/7. However, these accusations surged significantly following the Hamas attack on Israel, which resulted in the murder of 1,200 Israelis, most of whom were civilians. Graph 4 illustrates the percentage of top tweets containing such allegations between September 2023 and September 2024. Notably, the intensity of these accusations was strongest immediately following the October 7 attack, occurring well before Israel's subsequent ground offensive in Gaza.

¹² Martin Kramer, "Gaza Is Auschwitz," in *The War on Error: Israel, Islam, and the Middle East* (New Brunswick London: Transaction Publishers, 2016), 291–302.

¹³ Mark Weitzman, "The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism," in *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism*, ed. Armin Lange et al. (De Gruyter, 2019), 463–74, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110618594-035>.



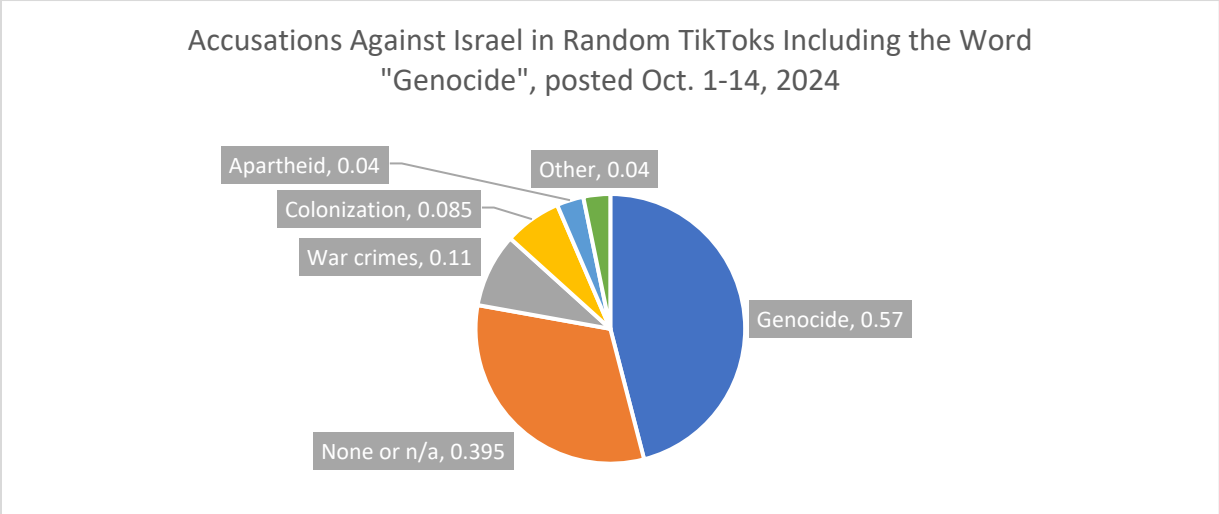
Graph 4: Accusations Against Israel in Top Tweets Containing the Keyword "Jews"

TikToks

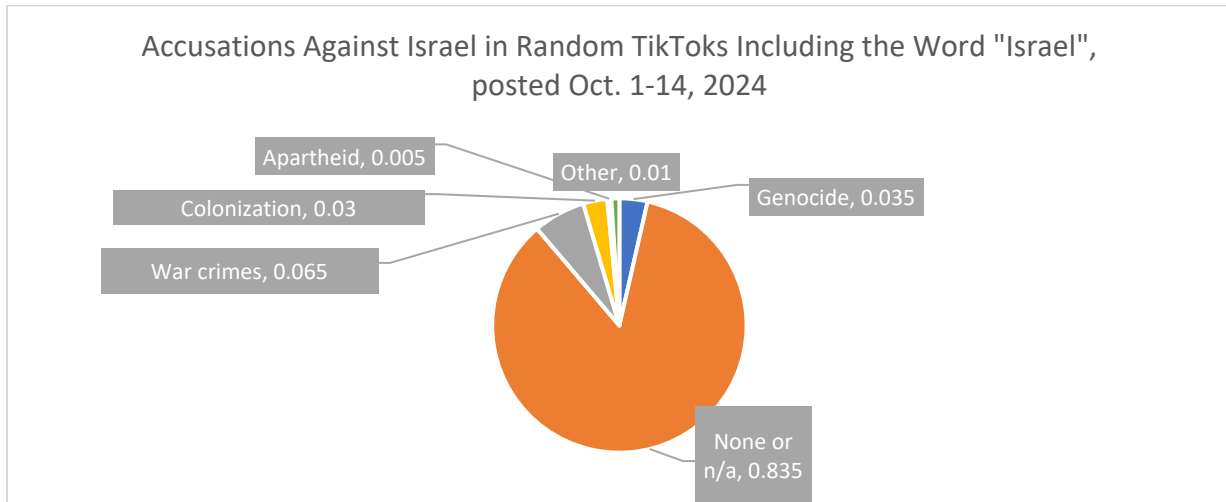
Accusations Against Israel in Random TikToks Including the Words "Genocide" and "Israel," posted Oct. 1-14, 2024

In a random sample of posts on TikTok in early October 2024 with the keyword "genocide," the majority of posts included accusations against Israel, mostly accusing Israel of committing genocide in Gaza, see graph 5. However, in a separate random sample of posts using the keyword "Israel" from the same period, 83,5 percent did not contain any accusation against Israel. Among those that did, accusations of war crimes (6.5 percent) were more frequent than accusations of genocide (3.5 percent), as shown in Graph 6.

Preliminary tests using TikTok’s search function to identify posts with the keyword "Israel" revealed a significantly higher percentage of accusatory posts. This disparity suggests that TikTok’s algorithms may amplify content that includes accusations against Israel.



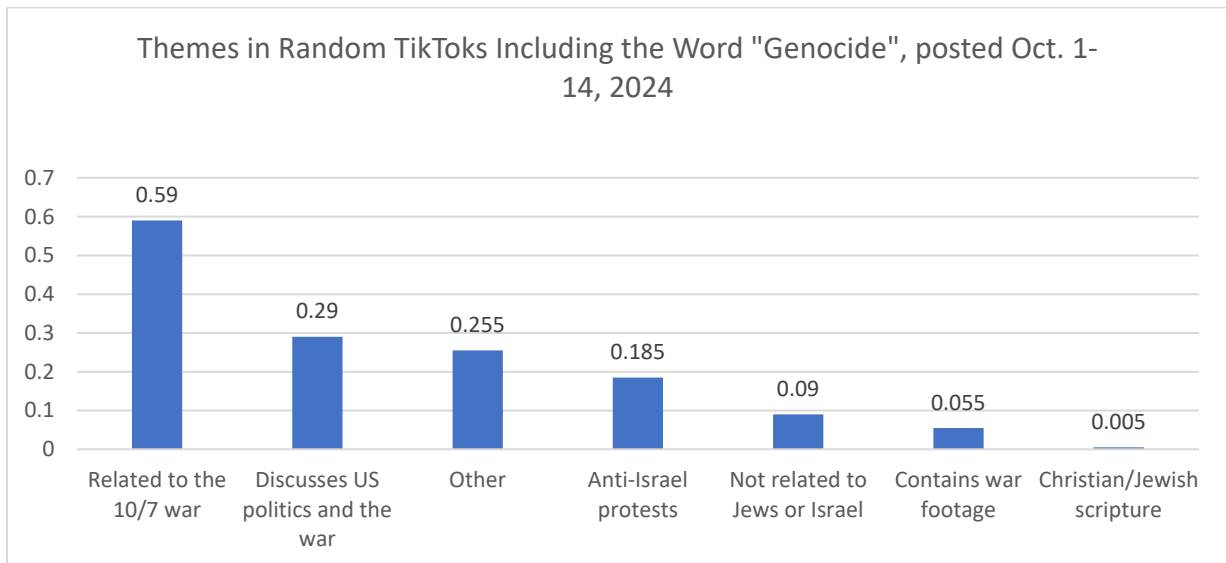
Graph 5: Accusations Against Israel in Random TikToks Including the Word "Genocide," posted Oct. 1-14, 2024



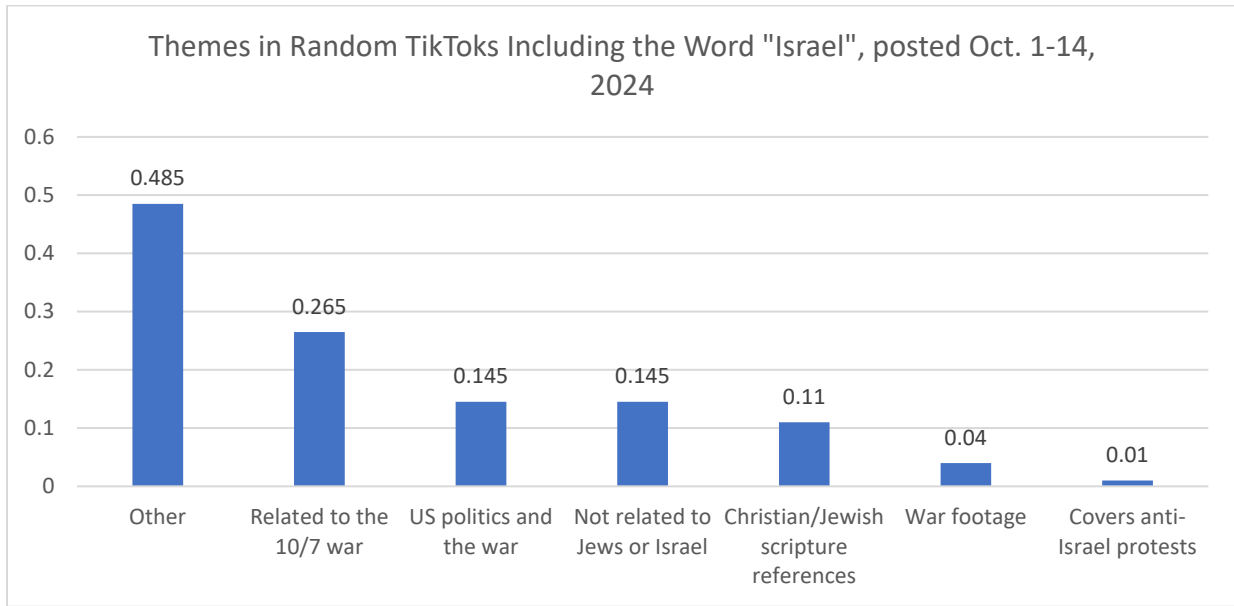
Graph 6: Accusations Against Israel in Random TikToks Including the Word "Israel," posted Oct. 1-14, 2024

Themes in Random TikToks Including the Word "Genocide" and "Israel", posted Oct. 1-14, 2024

The Gaza war was the dominant theme in random posts on TikTok in early 2024 with the keyword "genocide," followed by discussions about the U.S. position on the war. Close to one fifth of the posts discussed anti-Israeli protests and only 9 percent were not related to Jews or Israel, see graph 7. By contrast, random posts with the keyword "Israel" of the same period included a larger variety of themes. 26.5 percent were related to the Gaza war. 14.5 percent were not related to Jews or Israel (e.g. individuals including celebrities with the name Israel) and 11 percent discussed Christian or Jewish scripture, mostly bible verses, see graph 8.



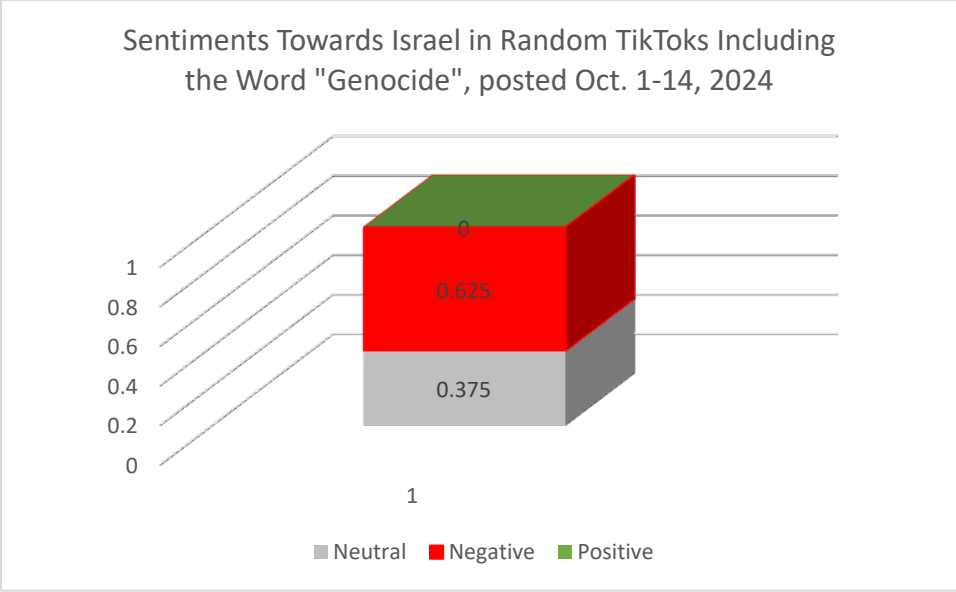
Graph 7: Themes in Random TikToks Including the Word "Genocide," posted Oct. 1-14, 2024



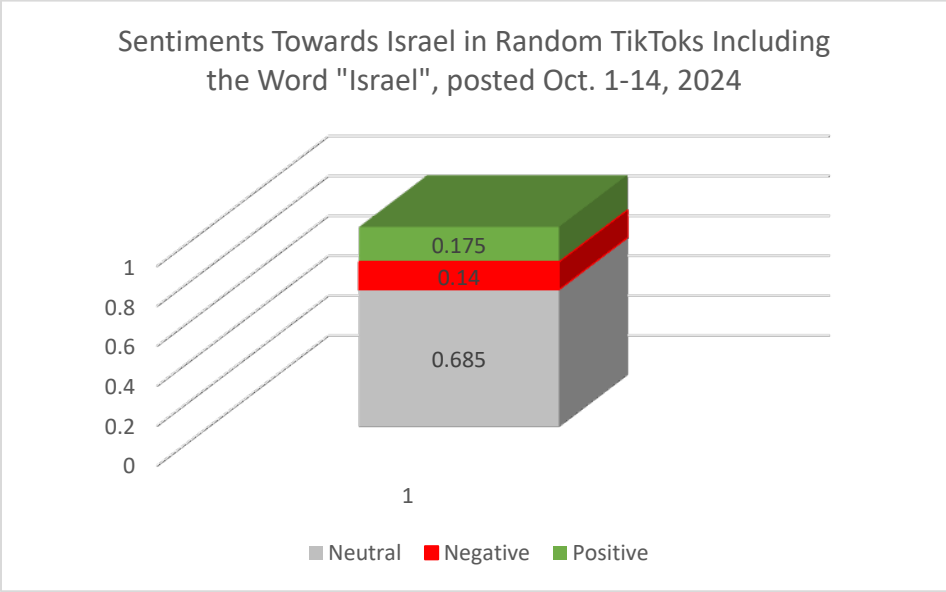
Graph 8: Themes in Random TikToks Including the Word "Israel," posted Oct. 1-14, 2024

Sentiments Towards Israel in Random TikToks Including the Word "Genocide", posted Oct. 1-14, 2024

Positive sentiments towards Israel were non-existent in posts about genocide in early October 2024. 62.5 percent were negative, see graph 9. By contrast, positive sentiments towards Israel were slightly higher than negative sentiments in random posts about Israel in the same time period, with the majority of posts having a neutral sentiments towards Israel, see graph 10.



Graph 9: Sentiments Towards Israel in Random TikToks Including the Word "Genocide," posted Oct. 1-14, 2024



Graph 10: Sentiments Towards Israel in Random TikToks Including the Word "Israel," posted Oct. 1-14, 2024

Limitations

This study has several notable limitations, particularly in terms of dataset composition, sampling methods, and sample sizes.

The data from X was gathered in a relatively consistent manner using the platform’s advanced search interface. However, this data is inherently curated by X’s algorithms, which influence the posts surfaced

for collection. This algorithmic mediation introduces potential biases, as it is unclear what factors determine the visibility of specific posts within the dataset. Consequently, the data may not fully represent the broader discourse on the platform.

The TikTok data was retrieved from its archive, but this process was fraught with challenges. The TikTok Research API often exhibited erratic functionality, with inconsistent API pagination, missing data, and a lack of transparency in query results. Requests frequently yielded incomplete or empty files, making it difficult to assess the completeness and representativeness of the data. Additionally, the retrieved posts constitute only a tiny fraction of the actual content available, with no clear criteria governing the selection of posts.¹⁴

The sample sizes for both platforms are relatively small, consisting of 75 or 100 posts per time frame. This limited sample size restricts the generalizability of the findings.

Finally, while the annotation process was conducted meticulously, it remains susceptible to human error. Annotation tasks, such as sentiment analysis, thematic categorization, and classification, involve subjective judgments that may vary among annotators. Although discrepancies in key areas were resolved through discussion, there is an inherent risk of misclassification or inconsistent interpretation.

These limitations underscore the need for caution in interpreting the study's results. Future research should aim to address these constraints by using larger datasets, improving access to platform archives, and refining annotation protocols to enhance reliability and representativeness.

Conclusions

This study highlights critical trends in online discourse surrounding Israel and Jews across the platforms X and TikTok before and after the Hamas massacre in Israel on October 7, 2023. The findings reveal a significant rise in antisemitism and negative sentiments toward both Israel and Jews over the study period. Accusation against Israel, many of them sweeping and defamatory, include accusations of genocide, war crimes, apartheid, and colonization, the accusation of genocide being the most prominent accusation.

Antisemitic content in top tweets remained alarmingly high, peaking in May 2024 with over half of the sampled tweets classified as antisemitic. Negative sentiments towards Israel rose significantly in the week after Israel was attacked on 10/7. While tweets calling out antisemitism initially rose after October 7, their prevalence diminished over time, reflecting a decline in active opposition to antisemitic discourse. Themes in tweets shifted dramatically after October 7, with a strong focus on the Gaza war and accusations against Israel.

Random TikTok posts with the keyword "genocide" from early October 2024, one year after the Hamas massacre, overwhelmingly accused Israel of genocide in Gaza, while those with "Israel" presented a wider variety of themes and more neutral sentiments. Positive sentiments toward Israel were entirely absent in posts about genocide, whereas neutral and positive sentiments were more prevalent in posts

¹⁴ The experience with TikTok's Archive has been documented here, <https://isca.indiana.edu/documents/experience-report-tiktok-archive.pdf>.

using the keyword “Israel.” TikTok’s algorithm appear to amplify accusatory content against Israel, as evidenced by the higher visibility of such posts in targeted searches.

Across both platforms, the Gaza war emerged as the dominant theme, particularly in content featuring keywords like “Jews” or “genocide.” Posts unrelated to Israel constituted a small minority, indicating a strong thematic alignment between discussions of Israel and antisemitism or accusations against Israel.

The findings underline the increasing entanglement of antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment in online discourse, particularly during periods of heightened geopolitical conflict. They also demonstrate how social media platforms, through their algorithms and user-generated content, play a significant role in shaping narratives and amplifying hostile sentiments. This poses challenges for combating online antisemitism and misinformation, as the rapid spread of harmful rhetoric exacerbates real-world insecurity and fear among Jewish communities.

This study contributes to understanding the evolving nature of online antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment, offering insights for both researchers and policymakers seeking to address these pressing issues.

Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge the Advanced Cyberinfrastructure Curriculum Fellows Program for their exceptional support, with particular appreciation to Yu Ma and Tony Walker for the outstanding resources and assistance they provided. We extend our gratitude to Daniel Miehling for compiling the samples from X.

This work used Jetestream2 at Indiana University through allocation HUM200003 from the Advanced Cyberinfrastructure Coordination Ecosystem: Services & Support (ACCESS) program, which is supported by U.S. National Science Foundation grants #2138259, #2138286, #2138307, #2137603, and #2138296.¹⁵

¹⁵ Timothy J. Boerner et al., “ACCESS: Advancing Innovation: NSF’s Advanced Cyberinfrastructure Coordination Ecosystem: Services & Support,” in *Practice and Experience in Advanced Research Computing* (PEARC ’23: Practice and Experience in Advanced Research Computing, Portland OR USA: ACM, 2023), 173–76, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3569951.3597559>.

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Annex

Annotation Scheme

ALL QUESTIONS WITH * ARE MANDATORY

Check only if post is offline. (If a link is displayed, copy and paste it in a browser to check if it's still online.)

Check all that applies. *

Related to the 10/7 war (Israel, Gaza, other regions).

Contains war footage.

Discusses US politics and the war.

Covers anti-Israel protests.

Interview content.

References to Christian/Jewish scripture.

References to Islamic scripture.

Includes a media source.

Not related to Jews or Israel.

Other (specify in comment)

Other topic (Comment)

Is the post antisemitic according to IHRA (see document)? *

Confident not antisemitic

Probably not antisemitic

I don't know

Probably antisemitic

Confident antisemitic

IHRA section that applies * (check at least one)

None or n/a

1.0 Hatred towards Jews

3.1.1 Justifying harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology

3.1.2 Mendacious or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such + Jewish power

3.1.3 Blaming the Jews as a people for what a single person or group has done

3.1.4 Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms or intentionality of the Holocaust

3.1.5 Accusing the Jews/Israel of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust

3.1.6 Accusing Jews of being more loyal to Israel, or to 'Jewish priorities'

3.1.7 Denying the Jewish people right to self-determination, e.g., 'Israel is racist per se'

3.1.8 Applying double standards to Israel (sth. that is not expected of other nations)

3.1.9 Classic antisemitism (e.g., blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis

3.1.10 Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis

3.1.11 Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel

Check if you disagree with IHRA in this case.

Content type that transports the antisemitic message. Check all that applies. *

None or n/a

Written text

Audio: speech, music, sound effects. This includes an automated transcript

Visuals/ imagery/ moving pictures

Post description, hashtag, username

Link to antisemitic text or video

The post includes an accusation against Israel (check what applies)

None or n/a

Genocide

War crimes

Colonization

Apartheid

Other (specify in comments)

Other accusation (Comment)

Sentiment toward Israel is ... (calling out or reporting is not automatically a positive or negative sentiment) *

Very negative

Negative

Neutral

Positive

Very positive

Sentiment toward Jews/ Judaism is ... (calling out or reporting is not automatically a positive or negative sentiment) *

Very negative

Negative

Neutral

Positive

Very positive

Calling out or reporting on antisemitism (including in the past but excluding the Holocaust. However, if Holocaust commemoration includes references to the present or future, such as 'never again,' calling out applies) *

No

Yes

Check if applicable.

Denies a reasonable accusation of antisemitism.

This post is related to the Holocaust, including imagery and comparisons to contemporary issues.

Holocaust distortion: Using imagery and language associated with the Holocaust for political, ideological, or commercial purposes unrelated to this history.

N/A

Additional comments

Tokens for Samples

All samples can be accessed through the Annotation Platform at <https://annotate.osome.iu.edu/>. To access the samples, please register with Annotation Platform and choose the tokens from the table below.

Samples	Tokens for annotation
Top Tweets, keyword "Jews," September 7-13, 2023	6HMBGT
Top Tweets, keyword "Jews," October 7-13, 2023	Ai3OED
Top Tweets, keyword "Jews," May 1-6, 2024	RytT91
Top Tweets, keyword "Jews," September 7-13, 2024	8Mgv87
Random TikToks, keyword "Genocide," October 1-14, 2024	gpVUmw + mpIUro + SnEM0L
Random TikToks, keyword "Israel," October 1-14, 2024	XSVGWg + LOdIQW + fmVfZi