



TEL AVIV אוניברסיטת
UNIVERSITY תל אביב

The Lester and Sally Entin
Faculty of Humanities



For the Study of Contemporary European Jewry | לחקר יהדות אירופה בימינו

Moshe Kantor Database for the Study of
Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism

Antisemitism Worldwide
- 2018 -

General Analysis

The Program for the Study of Jews in Arab Lands

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



Tendencies and Developments in Antisemitic Manifestations, 2018

Dina Porat

Ça suffit!

Enough is enough! These two words in French express the feeling among Jews, individuals as well as groups and communities, who were exposed during 2018 and the beginning of 2019, to antisemitic manifestations, which they perceived as having increased in intensity and frequency. Known former taboos had been crossed: "Jews to the gas!", and "death to Zionists!" were slogans heard more than once, as if reflecting a notion that it is the very existence of Jews, Jewish communities and the Jewish state that arouse hostility.

The year 2018 witnessed the largest number of Jews killed (13), compared to previous years (though it should be noted that that the murder in Pittsburg in October was registered as one – most unfortunate - case); an increase in almost all forms of antisemitic manifestations in the public space as well as in the private one; and a sense of emergency among Jews in some countries, regarding their security and their place in their respective societies.

- The number of the major violent cases monitored by the Kantor center team has increased by 13%, from 342 to 387.
- The countries with highest number of cases are the US (over 100 cases), the UK (68), France and Germany (35 each), Canada (20) Belgium (19) the Netherlands (15) and Argentina (11). It should be noted that the numbers of cases in Eastern Europe have been much lower, for a number of years, in comparison to Western Europe, going down from 12 in the Ukraine to a few in the other countries.
- The main modus operandi remain cases of vandalism (216, 56%), threats (89, 23%) and weaponless means (55, 14%). These numbers show that while the use of weapon and arson is in lower numbers, most of the attacks are against people and their property. Indeed, at least 138 people were attacked (36%), private property was damaged (104 cases, 27%). The reason is that persons and their property are less protected than synagogues (47 cases, 12%) and community centers (22, 6%). Cemeteries and monuments are still a traditional target: 76 cases, 19%.

Numbers pinpointed by the Jewish communities and governmental agencies are monitored according to different criteria, that vary from one country to another, and are thus not comparable. They most often include all types of cases, from the major violent ones, to harassment, insults, minor threats, verbal assaults, Holocaust denial and social media shaming. Let us emphasize that these, the insults and harassment and shaming hurt more than the actual violence, for they create the atmosphere and set the tone.

A few examples: In Italy 197 cases of all types were registered, a 60% increase; in South Africa – 62 incidents, 25%. In the U.K. – 1652 documented incidents, a rise of 16%. In France a 74% rise, from 311 to 541 incidents was recorded. In Australia – 366 cases, a rise of 59%. A 22% rise in New York, was noted by the city police.

A sense of emergency?: The most disturbing development, that keeps continuing and intensifying since 2016, is that Jews in some countries feel they live in a state of emergency, because of the continuing rise, most notably in Western Europe and North America, in antisemitic manifestations.¹

- As a result Jews started questioning and **doubting their association** with places and societies they have lived in for long, sometimes for centuries. This year, Jews in Scotland, for example, consider leaving the country.² This sense of turning gradually to an outsider is coupled with an ominous feeling of insecurity that reached its peak in October, after the murder of 11 elderly Jews in the Pittsburgh Tree of Life – Or LeSimcha Synagogue.

The **normalization and mainstreaming of antisemitism** in public forums, debates and discussions is manifested in all media channels, most notably the social networks. Antisemitism is no longer an issue confined to the activity of the far left, far right and radical Islamists triangle - it has mainstreamed and became an integral part of life. "Antisemitism in France in 2018 is daily [...] not one day [passes] without an antisemitic act," asserts the report of the French Ministry of the Interior and the SPCJ (Service de Protection de la Communauté Juive). According to the surveys (see below) most Jews, about 75-80 percent, do not report the antisemitic manifestations that they experience - they are too many and too frequent to handle.

Mainstreamed as well is the growing use of antisemitic terms **in anti-Zionist discourse**, and the disproportionate hostility directed against the Jewish nation-state, which resumes Jewish characteristics. "All the stereotypes of classical Judeophobia are projected onto the Jewish state... and Israel-related hate is becoming a politically correct form of antisemitism."³ One may add that Israel is rejected as a nation state, and that the European post-colonial guilt feelings have led, as historian Alexander Joffe claims, to the opposite of nationalism – to self-flagellation, self-punishment, by letting into Europe mass immigration, mainly Muslim.⁴ Yet, there are other reasons: The impact of the Holocaust; the issue of human rights and minorities protection; and finally, the European demographic severe problems.

- A host of recently conducted large scope **multi-national surveys** corroborated and highlighted the perceptions expressed by Jews. FRA, the Fundamental Rights European Union Agency conducted a survey in 12 EU countries, interviewing 16,500 Jews;⁵ the CNN interviewed 7000 Jews and non-Jews;⁶ and the Eurobarometer conducted 23,640 face to face interviews in the 28 EU states, that complemented the FRA survey.⁷ They leave no room for doubt: the perceptions of Jews as well as of non-Jews are that antisemitism is on the rise in every aspect of daily life. 85% answered that it is by far the Jews' most serious problem in the FRA survey; 40% answered that the Jews in their countries are endangered by racist violence in the CNN poll; and 89% answered that antisemitism had recently increased in the Eurobarometer survey.

1 The title of Katharina von Schnurbein's, E.U. Coordinator on Combatting Antisemitism, lecture in TAU, on 7 March, 2019 was: *Antisemitism Today – A State of Emergency?*

2 <https://www.timesofisrael.com/scottish-lawmakers-pan-anti-semitism-as-many-jews-said-thinking-of-leaving/>

3 Monika Schwarz-Friesel, "The Persistence of European Antisemitism", 18.1.2019, BESA Center Perspective Paper No. 1067.

4 Alexander H. Joffe, "The West's New Antisemitism Crisis: Why Right Now? BESA Center, 23.9.2018.

5 "Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism - Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU", available at <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/2nd-survey-discrimination-hate-crime-against-jews>.

6 <https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2018/11/europe/antisemitism-poll-2018-intl/>.

7 http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2220_90_4_484_ENG.

- The surveys and reports, and the wide media coverage they got, give antisemitism a certain status, that of an acknowledged problem to be dealt with on a public, local and multi-national levels. Substantial budgets have been allocated in order to carry out these surveys (23,640 face to face interviews!). They certainly reflect reality, however, is it possible that the massive exposure had in turn an impact on the perception of the situation, since they unanimously depict it as worsening and threatening. Moreover, the interviewees are asked about their perceptions, a wide notion that is very difficult to define and to quantify. There is always a danger that such an effort, invested in Jews only, would cause resentment. There are surveys conducted on other minority groups, but they do not get the same public attention, as if they are less important.

Authorities and governments have recently acknowledged antisemitism as a severe problem, so that antisemitism and its implications were put during 2018, and more so during the first months of 2019, on the agenda of both local and international authorities. There is a **growing awareness among governmental agencies that are responsible for the well-being and security of their Jewish citizens** of the need to confront the situation, and prevent further deterioration.⁸

Given this situation, political, civil and religious leaders have been repeatedly addressed and requested to act urgently, through education, information, legislation and enforcement, and by setting standards of leadership, that match the declared values of their respective countries. Consequently, workshops and conferences, encounters and media footages, concluding with declarations and promises regarding antisemitism have almost become the order of the day, as part of the efforts to tackle the problem.

Indeed, some **encouraging achievements** have been reached and they deserve to be mentioned: the Working Definition of Antisemitism, as formulated and adopted by the 31 IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) member states of in 2016 was adopted by more countries in 2018. The European Union joined IHRA, so that its 28 member states are committed to adopting it as well. It is not a legally binding document, but it had been recognized not only as a useful tool for police training and courts of justice, but turned into a standard of values and a test of conduct in the struggle against both antisemitism and radical anti-Zionism.

The Vienna, New York and Tel Aviv universities organized in February a large scale conference, supported by Dr. Moshe Kantor and the EJC (the European Jewish Congress) and entitled "An End to Antisemitism." It resulted in a comprehensive **catalogue of policies** and means to fight antisemitism, presented to the participants of conferences held in November by the EU and its presidency.⁹ These conferences resulted in a historic commitment, issued by the EU., to develop a holistic strategy in the struggle against antisemitism, adopt the WDA and secure the Jewish communities by allocating appropriate budgets.¹⁰ Following this commitment, a working group was established by the EU, whose members consist of the special envoys for monitoring and combating antisemitism, that are gradually being appointed in the various countries. Most recently President Trump appointed attorney Elan Carr to the post which was vacant for two years.

⁸ President Emmanuel Macron to members of the CRIF, accessed at <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/02/21/anti-zionism-new-form-anti-semitism-warns-emmanuel-macron/>.

⁹ https://anendtoantisemitism.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/p_anendtoantisemitism/PDF/Catalogue_FINAL_webversion_complete.pdf.

¹⁰ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15213-2018-INIT/en/pdf>.

Steps, especially legal ones, proved useful against the BDS movement, which despite its vociferous presence in the media, in cultural events and campuses, suffered a number of setbacks in 2018. In US campuses, where anti-Zionist harassment of Jewish student rose by 66 percent since 2017, the BDS movement has an impact on the academic and social life (see more in our BDS analysis and in the US campuses report).

Nevertheless, politicians, activists and researchers doubt whether these activities have an effect on the growing phenomenon. It seems that the commendable and well-meant efforts of authorities and leaders to tackle antisemitism still **do not meet the street** and the social nets, where antisemitism thrives, and the question is when and if the many and positive efforts will indeed have an effect on the deteriorating situation.¹¹

The tendencies are clear, yet the question is **Why**, why are antisemitic manifestations increasing and why now? – Needless to say, each country and each region has its distinct characteristics that are the source of distinct local antisemitism, and those are presented below, in the country reports. Still, we would like to offer some answers, and pinpoint a number of overarching reasons:

- **Growing ignorance, diminishing commitment**: the explosion of information, in every aspect of life, especially in social networks, in a time of political and economic instability, when people are yearning for an explanation, and all the more so young generations, brings about shallow ready-made convictions. The history of the Jewish people and its culture; the layers of antisemitism accumulated along centuries; World War II, the Nazi regime and the Holocaust; the complicated complex called the Middle East; the reality in Israel - are all demanding issues. In 2019, almost 75 years after World War II ended, a growing number of the present third generation feel free of the commitment to know, remember and expiate for bygone wrongs.¹² They are free of the burden that cast a shadow on former generations regarding the plight of Jews.

- While looking for in-depth reasons for the surge of worldwide antisemitism, law professor Alan Dershowitz identifies today's antisemitism and anti-Zionism with the murder of Jews during World War II, led by the Germans yet supported by most European societies or parts within them. The same irrational hatred that persisted in the 1930s and the 1940s is now the source of new antisemitism, he warns, because today's Jewish presence, especially in Europe, is a constant reminder for the grandchildren generation of their forbearers' sins.¹³ His warning got wide attention, but we would like as historians, to emphasize that each period has its own distinguished characteristics, and the 1930s and 1940s are not comparable to our time.

His analysis touches upon a well-seated reason for **the presence of classical antisemitism** and stereotypes: The strengthening of classical anti-Judaism is deeply rooted in European culture, and reappears in times of crisis. Jews were considered the ultimate victims for a number of decades, especially after the Holocaust, yet with the intensification of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Israel's strength as a state, their status was transferred to the Palestinians. They are now seen as the new Jews, the martyrs, who suffer much as Jesus had.

¹¹ Dina Porat in the March 7, 2019 INSS conference in TAU.

¹² see the CNN survey, on rampant ignorance regarding the Holocaust among European youngsters.

¹³ lecture in Montreal, in a TAU gala dinner, August 26, 2018.

The Jews, on the other hand, came to be perceived as the anti-Christ, and the Israelis are compared to the worst evil of our time - the Nazis, and more recently to ISIS as well. Accordingly, a host of caricatures depicts bleeding Palestinians on crosses and cruel der Stuermer-like Israelis dominating them.

The post-Holocaust image of the Jew accentuates the strengthening of classic antisemitism: it is the same Jew - greedy (for compensations), foreign and double-loyal (supporting another country), egoist and tribal (takes care first of all of his and his co-religionists interests), power and money thirsty (conspires against the non-Jewish world). No wonder that the term "Jew" has turned into a pejorative nickname in many countries and languages.¹⁴ Classic antisemitism thrives when the religious factor motivates conflicts, such as is evident in some of the conflicts involving Muslims¹⁵, or when the church gains ground back in the post-communist era.

- These explanations are rooted in history and tradition, yet the contemporary political arena is no less fertile for the growth of antisemitism. The crises of democracies, that have been the traditional bastion of human and minorities rights, intensified in 2018 and the beginning of 2019; growing economic uncertainty; issues of national identity; the fusion among ideologies and movements, such as even a leftist women movement with an Islamist group, are all key elements for the understanding of contemporary antisemitism.

Right wing parties and movements have gained more political impact and public support due to the immigration crisis. They consider Jews a cosmopolitan foreign agent that constitutes a threat to national local identity, and keep accusing them of being the driving force behind the arrival of immigrants to Europe. East European governments, most notably Poland, Hungary and Lithuania, continue to promote forcefully a positive national historic narrative, according to which their population never cooperated with the German occupier during World War II. On the contrary, they fell prey to German cruelty, and extended a helping hand to the other victims, their fellow Jews. This national ethos is a source of constant conflict with the local Jewish communities that are trying to set the record straight, and are accused of promoting a distorted narrative, by constantly inflating their neighbors' guilt. In Eastern Europe, antisemitic violence comes in small numbers, yet thrives in the social nets, in Russia for instance, where classic antisemitic accusations against Jews are widespread; Jews are constantly depicted as a negative factor, and antisemitism is used as a political tool, most notably in election campaigns and over conflicts, such as in the Crimea and the Ukraine.

In **Western countries**, where both democracy and capitalism proved debatable, the far-left regards Jewish alleged world power as responsible for the failures of global economy. Jews are being blamed for globalization that increases economic uncertainties, and the man-in-the-street's anxiety over being left alone to cope with powers he cannot identify or control. Moreover, in both sides of the European continent, as well as in other parts of the world, Jews and especially Jewish communities, are perceived as immune against economic crises and unaffected by them. They are perceived as well organized, a people that knows how to pull political strings in his favor.

¹⁴ See for example, Esther Webman, "The 'Jew' as a Metaphor for Evil in Arab Public Discourse," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, Vol. 6, issues 3-4 (2015), 275-292.

¹⁵ See for example, Esther Webman, "Rethinking the Role of Religion in Arab Antisemitic Discourses," to be published in forthcoming issue of *Religions*.

Several current political developments worldwide converge and have a crucial impact on the rise of antisemitism:

- The Brexit that polarizes the British society and politics, and its repercussions in the Labor party, whose leader voices virulent antisemitic opinions, disguised as anti-Zionism. For the first time in their long history British Jews, who feel they lost their political home, question their future in Britain.

- The deepening social and economic crisis in France, where tens of thousands of protesters, nicknamed the Yellow Vests, took to the streets in November, enabling antisemites and anarchists to come to the fore; the presence of a strong far-right party, coupled with a strong presence of immigrants from Muslim countries, most of whom unintegrated, while the Jews are a source of envy, undermine the security of the Jewish community.

- The growing rift between the two major parties in the US, in which the attitudes towards Israel and to the Jews play a major role; the hard choice that Jewish students have to make, between manifesting their national identity and support for Israel, and their wish to be part of the environment that criticizes them for that; the presence of extreme right groups, and the violent attacks they perpetrated, are a source of grave concern and uncertainty among Jews.

- The opposition to Angela Merkel's immigration policy undermines stability, strengthens the far-right that feeds on the fear and economic worries that immigration evokes and raises the question whether antisemitism among the newcomers has enhanced overall antisemitic tendencies.

Newcomers from countries with a traditional antisemitic attitudes constitute a threat, and surveys show that the level of antisemitism among the Muslim population is higher than in the general society. This was apparent in Germany, for instance. However, it is still debatable whether after having been more accustomed to their new environment, and after joining former immigrants, they are also engaged in antisemitic activity. This debate includes a number of claims: in places where antisemitism is punishable, or at least not politically correct, newcomers refrain from engaging in unlawful activities; and on the other hand, the more Muslim presence gains ground in west European society, the media and politics, the more they influence local cultures "to unlock antisemitic tendencies," as it happens in the UK labor party, and expressed by newly elected US Muslim congress members.¹⁶

Two more points to conclude the answer to the WHY question: first, there are **modes and fashions**, even in an issue such as antisemitism. Publicity and attention given to a shooting spree, a large-scale desecration of an ancient cemetery, to the setting of fire to a synagogue, encourage followers and imitators. A related development is the nature of the public political and social discourse, that is undergoing a process of

polarization and radicalization, reflected in the media and in the public arena and more so in the social networks, where anonymity allows for unrestrained expressions and reactions. Moreover, regardless of numbers and statistics, the language and imagery used by bigots, has become more audacious and brazen, creating a public atmosphere in which extreme language and expression

¹⁶ <https://www.thejc.com/comment/comment/does-muslim-immigration-into-europe-pose-a-threat-to-jewish-communities-pears-institute-survey-1.467385>; <https://www.france24.com/en/20190213-anti-semitism-hate-crime-jews-germany-afd>.

have become a norm. Needless to say that the political arena, where leaders openly use antisemitic motifs according to their needs, especially during electoral campaigns, and the antisemitic radicalizing activism, feed upon each other.¹⁷

And second: antisemitism is on the rise, even **without any Israeli-Palestinian-Gaza confrontations**. We suggest to reconsider the traditional pinpointing at such confrontations as an immediate trigger for the rise of antisemitism. Antisemitic manifestations increase, obviously, for other reasons, as we have tried to explain.

We, the Kantor Center team raise a suggestion: Let us exercise a sense of proportion, certainly not underestimating the situation, yet not over inflating it either. Let us look around and cooperate with other discriminated groups and minorities. Extremist groups cultivate hatred against whoever does not follow their views, not just Jews; the number of hate crimes against the "others" far exceeds the number targeted against Jews. Christians have been attacked and murdered during the last years, thousands of them in Nigeria, for instance, and hundreds of churches were desecrated in France. Let us extend a friendly hand to others.

¹⁷ According to David Nirenberg to Patrick Kingsley, in "Antisemitism is Back, From the Left, Right and Islamist Extremes. Why?" *New York Times*, April 4, 2019.