Antisemitism:
A Guide on Recognizing, Understanding, and Countering Antisemitism
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and

CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe

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Introduction

This Guide could have been about any issues that our world still faces today, and which stands in the way of a peaceful coexistence. Racism, and other forms of persecution of minority groups is still a very dire problem, despite the long way we came. This Guide could have been about that, we, however, chose the specific topic of antisemitism. Racists, antisemites, and other haters of minority groups often don’t acknowledge that they are negatively discriminating against anyone. The elusive nature of antisemitism also lies in the fact that people don’t understand what antisemitism is. Is antisemitism focusing on Jews as a religious or ethnic minority? To complicate matters further, the targets of antisemites are often not Jewish, but are only perceived as such by the haters. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) decided on the now generally accepted working definition: “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.” This definition is now used by many countries and organizations, however the general public, and journalists can’t be expected to know it by heart.

Due to the complexity of the issues, we thought it necessary to focus on the issue and put the matter into perspective. The Guide serves primarily as an aid for the media to help in recognizing, understanding and countering antisemitism. It provides journalists with useful information to better discern whether a slogan or symbol is antisemitic.

To better understand the origins and types of antisemitism, we provide a background into its history, manifestations and nuances. The Guide also shows best practices, and gives recommendations on recognizing and countering antisemitism.

It is written not solely for the media. We wanted to create a comprehensive, but brief guide for anyone interested in the topic, whether they are journalists, analysts, politicians or are people wanting to counter hatred and foster a peaceful coexistence.

We hope that you will find this Guide useful in recognizing, understanding, and countering antisemitism, and that it will inspire you to do even more in building a peaceful future!

Máté Hajba
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Glossary

Antisemitism: According to the IHRA “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

The IHRA further explains: “Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for “why things go wrong.” It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.

Contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

- Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
- Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.
- Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
- Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).
- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.
Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.”

**Jews:** Someone is Jewish either when he or she is born Jewish, or has been converted to Judaism. The former category is known as ethnic Jews, and most Jews consider someone ethnically Jewish if their mother was Jewish, although it is not a rule held by all Jewish people.

**Judaism:** Known as the first monotheistic religion, Jewish tradition says Judaism began with the covenant made between God and Abraham, the first Jew, around 2000 BCE – making it one of the world’s oldest continually practiced religions.

**Anti-Judaism:** This term refers to a movement against the practice of the Jewish religion purely on religious grounds. Arguments against Judaism have been based on competing beliefs, such as a belief that Jesus was the Messiah. The term refers to sentiments based on religious identity or Jewish theological beliefs whereas antisemitism is based on racial and ethnic distinctions.

**Blood libel:** According to the American Jewish Committee’s (AJC) Translate Hate Glossary, a blood libel is a “perpetuated accusation that Jews have murdered non-Jews (such as Christian children) in order to use their blood in rituals.”

**Holocaust:** According to Britannica.com, the Holocaust is “the systematic state-sponsored killing of six million Jewish men, women, and children and millions of others by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during World War II.” The word Holocaust is derived from the Greek holokauston, a translation of the Hebrew word ‘olah, meaning a burnt sacrifice offered whole to God. Over time, in Israel, France and elsewhere, the term Holocaust has been rejected because a genocide is not a “sacrifice.” Instead, increasing numbers of people prefer to use the Hebrew word, Shoah, which means “catastrophe.”
**Holocaust denial:** A definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion was approved by the 31 member countries of the International Holocaust Memorial Alliance (IHRA) in 2013:

“Holocaust denial is discourse and propaganda that deny the historical reality and the extent of the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis and their accomplices during World War II, known as the Holocaust or the Shoah. Holocaust denial refers specifically to any attempt to claim that the Holocaust/Shoah did not take place.”

**Zionism:** Zion is the biblical name for Jerusalem and the Land of Israel. More specifically, Zion is the hill upon which the Temple of Jerusalem was built. Zionism is a Jewish national-political movement founded in 1896 by Austrian journalist Theodor Herzl aiming to re-establish a Jewish homeland in the Holy Land. Jewish immigration from Europe had been increasing steadily in the early 20th century, particularly after the support expressed by the British government in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 for the establishment of a “national home” for the Jewish people. After the genocide of 6 million European Jews in the Shoah, the British Mandate of Palestine was divided into two parts, one of which became the independent state of Israel in 1948.

**Anti-Zionism:** The origin of the word comes from the refusal, in principle, to accept the existence of a Jewish State, independent of the Palestinian question. It included amongst its supporters, before the founding of Israel, many Jews, although this changed after the Shoah when the need for a safe haven for Jews was made clearly apparent. Anti-Zionism now refers to criticism of Israel that questions Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state.

**Fake news:** a heavily contested and somewhat hijacked term that refers to untrue information being presented as news. Many, including First Draft, advocate for the use of false news, or even more refined terms.

**Disinformation:** Information that is false and *deliberately created to harm* a person, social group, organisation or country (UNESCO, 2018).

**Misinformation:** Information that is false but not created with the intention of causing harm (UNESCO, 2018).

**History of antisemitism**
Antisemitism is often called the ‘longest hatred’ in reference to its long history that dates back many hundreds of years. Jewish people were first singled out for their monotheistic religion as they lived among people with polytheistic beliefs. Later, traditional antisemitism developed from the religious divisions between Christians, who believe Jesus is the Messiah, and the Jews, who do not think he was. Given Christianity’s religious dominance in Europe, being Jewish was historically perceived as an unforgivable sin within European societies. In the Middle Ages, a set of stereotypes emerged that continue to serve as a basis for contemporary manifestations of antisemitism. For example, the belief that Jews are stingy and greedy is an idea stemming from the false narrative that Jews historically worked as moneylenders because they were forbidden from practicing most other professions. Other stereotypes from the Middle Ages include host desecration, blood libels (a centuries-old false allegation that Jews murder Christians – especially Christian children – to use their blood for ritual purposes), well poisoning (the belief that Jews are responsible for horrible diseases such as the Black Death), and perhaps most virulent today, the idea of a Jewish world conspiracy.

The term ‘antisemitism’ was coined in the 1870s by Wilhelm Marr, a German political agitator and journalist to define specifically the hatred of Jews as a “race” rather than as a religion. Although it was rooted in old religious divides and Christian Judeophobia, unlike its predecessors, “modern antisemitism” introduced the concept of race as a means of discrimination. This meant that while previously Jews could get rid of the characteristic they were persecuted for, namely by conversion to Christianity, they could not change their race. This new category applied not only to those who practiced Judaism but also to the many Jews who had assimilated into the mainstream society by converting to Christianity.

An antisemitic book was published in the late 19th century in Tsarist Russia entitled “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.” It was released at the time when pogroms, the organized massacres of Jews, were becoming commonplace in Eastern Europe. The book had significant impact that can still be seen today as it still serves as the basis for conspiracy myths about Jews. The rise of racial antisemitism took a devastating turn in the 1930’s, manifesting in the Shoah (also known as Holocaust). Over six million Jews were killed between 1941 and 1945 as the Nazis worked to destroy Europe’s Jewish population. National Socialism, more commonly known as Nazism, introduced antisemitism into mainstream society and many Europeans began to subscribe to this ideology. Jews were dehumanized, humiliated, discriminated against and were denied fundamental human rights. They were stigmatized and forced to wear a yellow Star of David to make them an easy target. Many Jews were ultimately deported to concentration or extermination camps, where 6 million were killed while others were forced to do hard labour in
inhumane conditions. It was under these conditions that antisemitism reached its most visible and deadly peak.

Since the Shoah, the nature of antisemitism has changed. As antisemitism became closely associated with Nazism and the Holocaust, the expression of overt antisemitism became taboo across much of Europe.

Political antisemitism embodied in political parties, organisations, newspapers and other media was no longer considered acceptable and being labeled as an “antisemite” became toxic.

It was at this time when secondary antisemitism, often called “antisemitism without antisemites,” began to emerge. Present forms of secondary antisemitism include Holocaust denial and Holocaust distortion.

Another dominant form of post-Holocaust antisemitism is the so-called “new antisemitism.” This can be defined as when antisemitism is masked as anti-Israeli or anti-Zionist. Because of this, it is essential to differentiate between criticism of Israel and new antisemitism.

One of the most influential forms of antisemitism nowadays is conspiratorial antisemitism. It is based on the same old prejudice that Jews secretly plan world domination. Those who accept these myths believe that Jews have too much power in the business world, in international financial markets, or over the global media.

When we talk about antisemitism, it is critical to remember that Jews don’t constitute a homogeneous group. They’re all very different. There are religious Jews, and also secular ones. There are left-wing and right-wing Jews. There are also Jews who are members of other minority groups as well, such as people of colour or the LGBT community.

It is also important to note that antisemitism, as it is in the definition, can also be directed against non-Jews who are perceived to be Jewish or associated with Jewish causes. Antisemitism can even exist without Jews.
Far-right and antisemitism

When discussing modern day far-right antisemitism, it is inevitable to find its roots in the Nazi era. The Nazis recycled pre-existing conspiracy myths and negative stereotypes through their propaganda machine which brought these to a wider audience. The idea that Jewish people are undermining the nation in which they live, backstab non-Jewish people, and conspire for a global, anti-nationalist, left wing world order were promulgated in Europe during WWII. The Holocaust led to the murder of over 6 million Jews, yet far-right antisemitism, and its conspiracy myths live on.

In recent years, due to economic and cultural insecurities, Europe saw a surge in the popularity of far-right parties although these are not necessarily antisemitic. Antisemitic tendencies either remained constant, or saw an increase of antisemitic incidents and crimes in some countries. In the USA antisemitic incidents increased by 12% in 2019 compared to 2018, the highest recorded surge on record.

Misconception regarding the horrors of WWII can stem from lack of proper education. In a survey conducted in the US, 63% of respondents did not know that over 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust, and 1 out of 10 adults over 40 never even heard the word Holocaust before. A CNN poll in Austria, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Poland and Sweden found that about 1 in 20 people have never heard of the Holocaust. The same poll revealed that while the majority of the respondents think it important to remember the Holocaust, a third thought that it is being used by Jews to advance their goals.

Holocaust denial and distortion however is a form of antisemitism. The European Union legislated against it, but there is still significant worry among Europeans that Holocaust denial poses a problem in their countries.

Far right antisemitism builds on nationalism and racism, and conspiracy myths that the Jews are to blame for the ills that befall the nation. Neo-Nazi groups venerate the Nazi era, regardless of its atrocities which they often either deny or support. Education is a key in ensuring that the terrors of the Nazis are never forgotten and their seriousness is not diminished. The media has an important role in education and in not giving platforms to extremist voices and in adding corrective commentary to news about extremists. For example it can
be useful to add a section about the Holocaust to news about a holocaust denier, and when reporting about him/her, not repeating his or her beliefs, this way not amplifying the denial or distortion taking place. Large media and social media companies are strengthening their policies to combat hate speech online. The EU agreed with large online media platforms in establishing a “Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online”. Google also helped develop a machine learning algorithm that helps identifying hate speech online.

Further reading:


Ruth Wodak (2018) The radical right and antisemitism. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326846411_The_radical_right_and_antisemitism

Far-left and antisemitism

It is a misconception to think antisemitism is a solely far-right phenomenon. It is not inherent to either right or left wing ideologies, however extremist sides of both, while desperately trying to be polar opposites of each other, are often similar to each other in many aspects. For instance the far-right scapegoats people who differ from them in nationality, appearance or thought. The far-left scapegoats those perceived to represent globalist and capitalist forces. Jewish people are often the target of both forms of scapegoating.

Although socialism and communism defined themselves as tolerant and inclusive ideologies, history proved different. It should be no surprise given that Karl Marx (who was born Jewish) himself was antisemitic in his 1843 essay, called On the Jewish Question, where he wrote: 
“What is the secular basis of Judaism? Practical need, self-interest. What is the worldly religion of the Jew? Huckstering. What is his worldly God? Money. Money is the jealous god of Israel, in face of which no other god may exist.”

The stereotype that Jewish people are rich and greedy, and that they corrupt non-Jewish people is an important factor in far-left antisemitism. The Soviet Union had a long history of antisemitism, often masked as anti-Zionism or anti-cosmopolitanism. The Soviet regime often exacerbated antisemitic sentiments leading to the murder of Jews in the 19th and 20th centuries. As a result many Soviet and Russian Jews emigrated to Israel, especially in the 1990s, and now number over 900,000 living in Israel.

The most recent and prominent case of far-left antisemitism in Europe was that of former UK Labour party leader, Jeremy Corbyn, under whose leadership antisemitism flourished in the party. As a result of what was found to be his complicity in the spread of antisemitism in the Labour Party, Corbyn has been suspended from the party. An independent report on the Labour Party’s antisemitism found “significant failings in the way the Labour Party has handled antisemitism complaints over the last four years“ as well as evidence of discrimination and harassment.

Antisemitism is present in all sides of the political spectrum, and it should be fairly represented as such. Just because a politician is from a party claiming to be inclusive and tolerant, obviously
doesn’t mean that this is the case. Antisemitism should be measured and condemned through objective standards rather than political sympathies.

Further reading:


*Philip Spencer* (2018) *The shame of antisemitism on the left has a long, malign history.* Available at: [https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/apr/01/shame-of-antisemitism-on-left-has-long-malign-history](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/apr/01/shame-of-antisemitism-on-left-has-long-malign-history)
Populist antisemitism

Antisemitism can take many shapes and forms. The negative discrimination of Jewish people, whether religious or racial is most prominently associated with ideological reasons. The far-right dislikes people who are not from the same perceived national and racial background as they are. The far-left, under the illusion the Jewish people are bankers, capitalists and rich often incorporate antisemitic propaganda in their messaging. Religious fundamentalists ostracise the followers of Judaism due to theological reasons.

There is another, not so apparent area from which antisemitism can come, and that is populism. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica “Populism, political program or movement that champions, or claims to champion, the common person, usually by favourable contrast with a real or perceived elite or establishment.”

As populism can be left or right, it is increasingly difficult to place it on a political spectrum, simply because due to its nature it is not based on ideologies, but on getting the support of the majority of people. This is often achieved by finding a common, fabricated enemy against whom the majority can unite. This “enemy” can be minorities, the elite, or other nations. This method of finding an enemy is clearly outlined in The Concept of the Political, a book by German political theorist and Nazi Party member, Carl Schmitt.

While populists nowadays mostly refrain from mentioning Jews as the enemy, they often apply terms that are can be associated with Jewish stereotypes, such as a plot for world domination or secretive moneymen working in the background. Populists propaganda methods often verge on conspiracy theories very similar to those used by antsemites. Thus, even though populists do not name Jewish people as the enemy, and can have good relationships with Jewish communities and the state of Israel, their slogans can have antisemitic undertones.

The most prominent examples are the anti-Soros propaganda throughout the world. The Hungarian-born philanthropist is often branded as a rich speculator who pulls the strings in the background, undermining the values of the USA or Hungary. Although the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) draws parallels between anti-Soros campaigns and antisemitism (see further reading), opinions on the matter are divided. A Hungarian organization fighting antisemitism, the Action and Protection Foundation, found in a survey that when hearing the word “Jew”, only
1% of the entire population associated it with George Soros, and 2% thought of him as being Jewish. Antisemitism in Hungary is however relatively high (placed at 42% by a 2019 ADL survey), with only a 2 percentage point increase registered since 2016.

Fearmongering is a tool of populists that usually applies the same terminology and stereotypes as antisemites. So even though populists might not directly target Jewish people, their slogans can have far-reaching consequences in sustaining age-old antisemitic stereotypes that can contribute to increasing antisemitism. Fearmongering is always dangerous as when people are afraid their fears can be easily channelled against various groups, and as journalists, it important to be careful not to become a vehicle of fearmongering.

Further reading:


*Anti-Defamation League (2020) Soros Conspiracy Theories and The Protests: A Gateway to Antisemitism. Available at: https://www.adl.org/blog/soros-conspiracy-theories-and-the-protests-a-gateway-to-antisemitism*
Antisemitism and religion

For a very long time in history the Christian persecution of Jews, who were in the minority, was based on theological differences. Over time antisemitism developed along the lines of conspiracy myths and stereotypes including the ideas of Jewish people poisoning wells or exploiting people financially. Nowadays it is very difficult to get a complete picture in the convoluted history of religious antisemitism, which over time turned more racial or political in some cases. The role of churches during the Holocaust also has to be considered, as proven by recent historical evidence that the Pope was unwilling to prevent the Nazis from persecuting Jews. The recent surge of refugees from Islamic countries may in some cases also give a new spin to antisemitism in Europe and the US.

Christianity’s historic problem with Jews and Judaism lays in the accusation that the Jews were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. This led to long standing differences, and the clergy held Jews collectively responsible for the sufferings of Christ. Martin Luther, leader of the reformation, wrote a treatise in 1543 titled “On the Jews and Their Lies”, in which he argued for the persecution of Jews and burning of synagogues. Christian churches thus have a well established history of antisemitism.

That is not to say that Christian churches nowadays are necessarily antisemitic. Many have come to terms with and corrected antisemitism in their theological approach, and during the Holocaust, many individual clergy of the Catholic Church helped in the rescue of Jews. However the Pope’s conduct during the Holocaust is often a matter of debate, due to the criticism that he didn’t do enough. The Reformed Church in Germany actually split into a pro-Nazi camp and another that opposed their dictatorship.

Islam’s religious quarrel with Jews lies in the historic fact that Jews did not accept the teachings of Muhammad, and him as a prophet. With the Muslim conquest many Jews lived in the conquered territories and they were allowed to practice their religion, although they were not treated equally. The conditions of Jews under Muslim rule is the subject of much debate, particularly concerning the Middle Ages, however later on antisemitic atrocities, such as blood libels, forced conversions and expulsions were not unknown in the Muslim world. In modern times however anti-Zionism and the rise of Arab nationalism gave way to strong antisemitic sentiments not only on religious, but also on political grounds in some places in the Islam world.
The establishment of Israel is a point of conflict with many Islamic states. Fundamental islamists and Islamist terror groups target Jewish people, and harbour strong antisemitic and anti-Zionist sentiments.

Even before the peak of the refugee crisis in 2015 Europe saw a surge in antisemitic incidents perpetrated by people of Arab and Muslims background. With the refugee crisis many migrants arrived from the region of Middle East and North Africa where there is a high amount of antisemitism. Antisemitic attitudes among Muslims in Europe are also higher than among the general population. For example, in a 2015 poll in France, from those respondents who identify as Muslim “74% believe that Jews have a lot of power, and 67% that they are too present in the media”, which is an issue that should not be overlooked, but solved through education and dialogue.

A study however suggests that new migrants in Western Europe are more inclined towards democracy and living in peace, and that the surge of refugees is not the main contributing factor to the rise of antisemitic incidents. The far right perpetrates the majority of antisemitic atrocities, but it must be noted that antisemitic incidents differ form antisemitic sentiments in that the former is often an unlawful action, while the latter is a thought or attitude. As noted above, antisemitic sentiments are high among Muslims in Europe, but the majority of actions against Jews are still taken by the far-right. As with any other religious groups there are antisemitic elements and there are those who help fight antisemitism.

Religions should not be generalized as antisemitic. There are antisemites among all faiths, some due to religious reasons, some independently of their faith, but there are also positive examples of working together and healing each other. As journalists, it is important to provide a balance of positive stories that can counterbalance the negative stories.
Further reading:


Zoltán Kész (2018) This Priest Didn't Back Down from the Nazis or the Communists. Available at: https://fee.org/articles/this-priest-didnt-back-down-from-the-nazis-or-the-communists/

Máté Hajba (2017) Vilmos Apor, a Man Who Chose the Harder Road. Available at: https://fee.org/articles/vilmos-apor-a-man-who-chose-the-harder-road/

Hate symbols

Many countries in Europe have legislated against hateful symbols, such as those used in totalitarian regimes. Hate groups however still use hate symbols to express their views. As these are often unlawful or are at least socially unacceptable, certain precautions are often used to hide the true meanings of these symbols from those who don’t know how to interpret them.

The most apparent hate symbol is the swastika. Although it is an ancient symbol used by many religions, since its adoption as the symbol of the Nazi party, it has been predominantly associated with far-right extremism in the western world. The symbol’s religious meaning is still retained in certain faiths such as Hinduism and Buddhism, and there are other, less common uses of the swastika in the western world, such as in the seal of the Theosophical Society (which also features the Star of David) that predates the Nazi movement and has no hateful origin. In order to conceal the swastika as a hate symbol sometimes it faces to the left, the opposite direction as the Nazi symbol, or is embellished in a way to conceal it.

Runes are also often used to denote hate, such as the so-called Othala Rune, which was used by Nazis to represent their mystic Aryan origins. The “life rune” served similar purposes. The “sun” runes representing the “s” sound were used as the symbol of SS. Despite the use of runes by Nazis and current hate groups, not all runes are used for the purposes of hate, and should be interpreted within their context.

The Nazi salute, a raised extended right hand with open palm is also often used by neo-Nazi groups, but sometimes with modifications to have plausible deniability, such as in the case of the “Kühnen salute”, also called a three finger salute when the palm is not fully open, showing only 3 extended fingers.

To hide their true meanings white supremacists often use numbers to denote slogans. The two most prominent examples are 88, and 14, which are often combined as 1488. The number 88 means “Heil Hitler”, as the letter “h” is the 8th in the latin alphabet. 14 symbolizes the white supremacist slogan “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.” It was coined by David Lane, an American white supremacist, and member of the far-right terror group, The Order, who was sent to prison for his activities. The sentence has 14 words, hence the number that symbolizes it.
It is often difficult to recognize hate symbols as they are sometimes disguised, and they can also evolve over time to retain their secrecy. It is important to always look at the context and intention in which they are used, to see if they aim to communicate hate or membership of a hate group. As journalists, it is useful to become familiar with hate symbols and have access to an updated image glossary so that you can identify them appropriately.

Further reading:

For a comprehensive list of hate symbols, see the database of ADL, available at: https://www.adl.org/hate-symbols

For another source for identifying hate symbols, that includes memes, and slogans up to date as of 2021, see the SIGNS OF HATE: A SAFEGUARDING GUIDE TO ONLINE HATE publication of the HOPE not hate charity: https://hopenothate.bigcartel.com/product/signs-of-hate-a-safeguarding-guide-to-online-hate
Disinformation, Fake News and Misinformation

Fake news about Jews is not a recent phenomenon: antisemitism is called the oldest hatred for a reason. Hatred has always been fuelled by and complemented with false information and made-up stories – the predecessors of nowadays fake news. Whether it is the Dreyfus trial in France, or Tiszaeszlár in Hungary, antisemitism has historically been intertwined with false news. With the rise of social media, false news and conspiracies with antisemitic elements reach more people than ever before, faster than ever before.

Historical patterns and current manifestations
It is safe to say that almost all current conspiracy myths contain antisemitic elements; whether they address the origins of the Corona virus, 5G, or politics in the US, such as the QAnon conspiracy. There are easily recognizable historical patterns that are worth to look out for when processing and producing information in order to avoid repeating antisemitic undertones.

Covid-19 pandemic
Blaming Jewish people for a disease is nothing new: in the 14th century Jews were blamed for the Black Death, in the 19th century for tuberculosis in New York, and the current scapegoating is undeniably a continuation of a historical pattern. Some false news emphasizes that the virus is simply fake and the Jews use it to gain profit, while others blame Israel for inventing it. It is also used to celebrate Jewish deaths and/or as a call to infect and kill Jews by coughing on them (Holocough).

Attention: Avoid unfounded connections between Jews and this or any other disease and be cautious about vague sources.

Soros, Rothschild and the drive for profit
The myths of Jews being greedy also dates back to the Middle Ages when the narrative of the Jewish money-lender was constructed as a convenient scapegoat. This myth lives on in false information that blames Soros for orchestrating society (politics, media, etc.) for profit, but also in a more subtle linguistic tool when Soros, or Rothschild, is used as a camouflage to mean Jewish people, playing into unconscious antisemitic bias.

Attention: Avoid using a collective singular (a Jew instead of Jews) and/or writing with personal pronouns that push an us vs. them narrative.
World domination

The image of the money hungry Jew is strongly connected to the myth of Jews aiming for world domination, coupled with the control over the media myth. Dating back to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, this myth is one of the most persistent ones. Current manifestations can be observed when Soros is framed as a manipulator of politics or the person behind the EU, or other international institutions, but also in the delegitimization of traditional media outlets (and their news!) as providers of fake news.

Attention: Avoid framing a story that echoes a deliberate plan and be careful about the terms employed that tend to refer to Jewish people, e.g. ‘globalist elites’, ‘international enemy’.

Further readings:


First Draft, 2019. Responsible reporting in the age of information disorder. Available at: https://firstdraftnews.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Responsible_Reportin...x25881

Get the Trolls Out project, 2016. Linguistic self-defense guide against antisemitism. Available at:
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee500d316a2470c370596d3/t/5ef38daf07ce8217dca04134/1593019828102/Linguistic_Self-defence_guide_against_antisemitism_-_EN.pdf


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Anti-Israel sentiments, Anti-Zionism, and antisemitism: Drawing the line

Both online and offline, anti-Israel statements are often merged with old antisemitic stereotypes, under the disguise of anti-Zionism. However, not all criticism of Israel is antisemitism. Israel is a country like all others, with good and bad policies, and it’s not beyond criticism.

Many antisemitic incidents in Europe occur in reaction to events in the Middle East and there has been a notable rise in antisemitic incidents at times when conflict escalates, for example during military operations in Gaza. When people or property that are perceived to be Jewish or are associated with the Jewish community are attacked in reaction to this type of event as symbols of the State of Israel and its policies, it’s a clear example of antisemitism. Holding Jewish individuals or Jews collectively responsible for the situation in the Middle East is antisemitic.

It can be challenging to recognize when criticism of Israel and anti-Zionism become a veil for antisemitism. The political, historical, and social context needs to be considered in relation to the criticism and the criticizer, a challenge exacerbated by the over-simplified messaging of social media and the political biases of different media outlets. The 4 D’s model can help us distinguish criticism of Israel from antisemitism.

Zionism and Anti-Zionism

Zion is an ancient Hebrew name for Jerusalem that represents the Jewish people’s historical and religious connection to the land of Israel. The longing to return to the land of Israel has been a recurring theme in Jewish prayers over centuries. Political Zionism emerged in the late nineteenth century largely as a response to the rise of other nationalisms and antisemitism in Europe. The aim of political Zionism was to establish a Jewish state where Jews could freely express their culture and religion – considered the only way to ensure Jewish survival in the face of mounting threats. Since the establishment of Israel in 1948, political Zionism has been primarily expressed in continued support for Jewish self-determination, maintaining Israel as a safe haven for Jews around the world, and fostering a shared cultural Jewish identity. Anti-Zionism means opposition to the idea of Jewish self-determination and to the right to a homeland for Jews in the State of Israel.
Distinctions: the 4 D’s test

Demonization

The Jewish State is demonized when its leaders or citizens are dehumanized or given satanic qualities. Such images emerge from deeply-rooted antisemitism, recycled through centuries since the Judeophobia of the Middle Ages; it is not criticism of Israel or “Anti-Zionism”. Demonization includes employing stereotypes against Israel that have traditionally been directed against „the Jews”, such as: blood libel imagery that evokes cannibalism or vampirism, devil-like characteristics including horns, or assigning perverted, evil or nefarious intentions like kidnapping children for ritualistic intentions or manipulating world leaders (including banks and the media) for their insatiable gain.

Double standards

Double standards are being applied when Israel is disproportionately profiled in news reports aimed to provide comparative perspective on global issues; or when Israel is singled out by the United Nations and other international organizations for human rights abuses while the behaviour of other known and major abusers, such as China, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Syria, is ignored.

BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions)

There is often a grey zone between criticism of the policies of the state of Israel and blatant antisemitism. The BDS movement is an example of that. Some activists might join the BDS movement because of idealistic motivations, such as anti-colonialist commitments, and they may or may not also be motivated by conscious or unconscious antisemitic biases. The BDS movement creates an environment where singling out the Jewish state is more probable and acceptable, and antisemitic conspiracy myths and demonic images can more easily circulate. There are a variety of positions within the BDS movement that must be considered to attribute antisemitic intention or impact, for example, if the boycott targets are economic or cultural.

Delegitimization

When Israel’s fundamental right to exist is denied – alone among all the nations of the world – this too is antisemitism. Claiming that the „Jewish people” are invented, or Jews are only a religious group, serves as a pretext: if Jews are not a nation, they should not have the right for
self-determination. Also noteworthy is when people, politicians, or states seek to delegitimize Israel precisely as it moves toward peace.

**Denial and distortion of the Shoah**

Shoah denial or distortion refers to when the facts of the Holocaust are altered, minimized, trivialized or responsibility for it is excused, for example, when Jews are blamed for inventing the 6 million victims as part of a nefarious conspiracy to control the world. False comparisons are a form of distortion as well, such as comparing the West Bank to the Warsaw ghetto; Israel’s prime minister to Hitler; the Star of David with the Nazi swastika; or Palestinian deaths during wars to the systematic plan to exterminate the Jewish people (genocide).

Further reading:

*Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education: Anti-Semitism and the Situation in the Middle East, Teaching Aid 10, published by OSCE, 2019*

Available at: [https://www.osce.org/odihr/441137](https://www.osce.org/odihr/441137)
Antisemitism in numbers

According to a 2018 FRA survey conducted in the EU among those who identify as Jewish “Simply being Jewish increases people’s likelihood of being faced with a sustained stream of abuse expressed in different forms, wherever they go, whatever they read and with whomever they engage”. A comparison of the 2012 and 2018 FRA surveys shows that the perception among respondents that antisemitism is a worsening problem in the country where they live is growing. 89% of respondents felt that antisemitism increased in their country during 5 years before the survey was taken, and the majority of people listed antisemitism and racism as a serious problem in their countries.

A Special Eurobarometer survey on the perception of antisemitism conducted in 2018 among the population of the EU member states found that 50% considers antisemitism a problem in their country and 36% think that there is an increase in antisemitism over the past 5 years. Also “68% of Europeans feel that people in their country are not well informed about the history, customs and practices of Jewish people in their country”.

A CNN poll in some European countries revealed that 28% of people thought Jews have too much influence in finance and business. The numbers of Jews living around the world is generally overestimated which also demonstrates the misconceptions about Jewish influence. Hungarians put the percentage the highest with a quarter of respondents estimating that 20% of the world population is Jewish. However the Jewish population of the world is estimated to be around 0.2%. Only Israel has a Jewish population over 2%.

Holocaust denial is also a problem and a form of antisemitism. According to the CNN poll, 1 in 20 people in the countries of the survey have never heard of the Holocaust, while in the US 63% didn’t know that over 6 million Jews were killed during the Shoah.

According to a YouGov survey, conspiracy myths are prevalent in European countries and the USA, based on the idea that a few people run things no matter what government is in charge. The same survey shows that trust in media and institutions are low.

ADL’s research on antisemitism reveals that 24% of people in Western Europe, 34% in Eastern Europe, and 19% in the Americas harbour antisemitic attitudes. The highest ratio is in the
Middle East and North Africa with 74%. In Europe the highest amounts are in Hungary with 42%, Ukraine with 46% and Poland with 48%.

Further reading:


What can you do?

Fake news or misinformation must be countered as it can lead to people harbouring false beliefs. Always fact check information, and review every source. References, and hyperlinks might not support the claim they aim to serve as a source of, or unsourced claims might not be true. Credible media outlets have impressums, from which a good idea of credibility can be gathered. Trustworthy media outlets are also often members of media associations of their countries. Accountablejournalism.org is a website that gathers most of the Code of ethics of such associations around the world. If a media outlet makes suspicious claims that might go against the code, check it, and report it. The European Federation of Journalists also strives for an ethical journalism that counters hate speech but supports freedom of expression. The Media Diversity Institute provides excellent resources and training for journalists to aid in accurate and nuanced reporting.

How can the media combat antisemitism?

- Foster dialogue, let your audience get to know minority people.
- Flag and report antisemitic and hateful content on social media platforms.
- Report hateful, racist and antisemitic material in the media to the media authority of the country it was published in.
- Be aware of the code of ethics of the media association in your country.
- Always check sources.
- Always fact-check information.
- Recognize the context in which claims are made or symbols are used.
- Increase your and others’ learning with training and/or guidance on the history and evolution of antisemitic messages so that it can be identified and its continued circulation prevented.
• Be extra careful about subtler or indirect expressions of antisemitism, namely Holocaust distortion, delegitimization of Israel, or simply portraying the enemy or opposition with hooked noses.

• Correct misbeliefs, misinformation and conspiracy myths.

• Add commentary to news about antisemitism, Holocaust denial and hate speech by providing counter facts and figures.

• When reporting on antisemitism, make sure that you do not amplify the antisemitic person/hater’s belief, but instead focus on the victim and share essential, educational information on antisemitism/Jewish life/ etc.

• Use rational arguments or ridicule against conspiracy myths.

• Know the legal background of your country on what constitutes hate speech and what symbols are banned.

• Don’t demonize or delegitimize Israel, don’t apply double standards to it and don’t deny or distort the Holocaust, such as by making parallels between Israel and Nazis or Palestinians and Jews in the Holocaust.

• Don’t generalize, don’t use the singular Jew, don’t assume somebody is or isn’t antisemitic because of their political, religious or ethnic background.

• Include stories on Jewish people where the story is not that the person is Jewish, but being Jewish is presented as a normal fact, this way contributing to the acceptance of Jewish people in society.

• Include stories where Jews are not victims of antisemitism, or mentioned in relation to Israel.
• Be aware of and acknowledge the diversity of the different Jewish groups and communities in Europe and the different expressions of contemporary Jewish identity.

• If you are unfamiliar with Judaism, engage with Jewish communities, academic experts and civil organizations who can provide context.

• When reporting on the past/historic events, make sure there is a reference to the Jewish community of today to increase contemporary awareness.

• Check your own biases and assumptions. Many ideas about how you can do this can be found in this helpful resource by the OSCE-ODIHR “Overcoming Own Biases”.

• Be aware of / inquire about the internal discourse in the Jewish community before you report on the subject. Different Jewish groups can have different interpretations of the same event.

• When using visuals, be careful to avoid stereotypical imagery.

• Build relationships with the Jewish community even if it takes time, and make sure you offer them space to share their experiences and opinions.
Further reading:


NOA Compass: an online tool to find initiatives, resources and best practices to overcome antisemitism in the EU Member states. www.noa-project.eu/project

“Overcoming Own Biases” Teaching Aid produced by the OSCE-ODIHR Words into Action Programme https://www.osce.org/odihr/441083