

KANTOR CENTER



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

# For a Righteous Cause

## Positive Trends in Fighting Antisemitism and Radicalization

Annual Report 2022

Presented to the President of the State of Israel, H.E. Isaac Herzog,  
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The Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry  
Tel Aviv University

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# FOREWORD

For more than a decade, the Kantor Center team at Tel Aviv University has published, on the eve of Holocaust Memorial Day in Israel, annual reports on the state of antisemitism in the world. Accessible through the Kantor Center website, the reports gained wide publicity and became a primary reference for governments, security agencies, NGOs, and the media. The work on this year's report is already proceeding apace.

Along with alarming incidents and trends, there are many encouraging developments in the fight against antisemitism and other forms of racially and religiously charged radicalization. Some go almost unnoticed.

Thus, as of this year, the Kantor Center is proud to publish also a “positive trends” report. It analyzes some of the year's most important encouraging developments in the fight against antisemitism and radicalization, and offers policy recommendations on how to make specific campaigns even more effective. The report, a fully referenced version of which is available on our website, is the product of a six-month team effort by eight academic experts from Tel Aviv University and beyond it. It is presented to the President of the State of Israel, H.E. Isaac Herzog, and to leading policymakers and activists around the world. We hope it will make a difference.



# Eastern Europe: Restoring and Honoring the Past

Conflicts over remembering the past, particularly the Holocaust, are common in Eastern Europe. Yet, the act of remembering also engenders solidarity that transcends ethnic divides. Many non-Jews have, in recent years, joined forces with their Jewish neighbors to ensure the memory of the Holocaust survives. In addition to expressing solidarity and neighborliness, this collaboration reflects a nostalgia for the multiethnic society that existed before the Second World War.

One area of collaboration in Eastern Europe between Jewish and non-Jewish residents and organizations is the restoration of Jewish cemeteries.

In Poland, the Cultural Heritage Foundation partnered with local rabbis to restore the Warsaw Jewish Cemetery, established in 1806. This project, funded by the Polish Ministry of Culture, is part of a larger project to preserve the history of a multiethnic Poland and includes the restoration of Muslim cemeteries as well. In addition to this major project, in small towns and villages, Jews and young non-Jewish volunteers are working together to restore the few remaining Jewish cemeteries in Poland.

For example, on 1 October 2021, Jeffrey Cymbler reported in the Facebook Group “Jewish Life in Poland and Central Europe” that a Jewish cemetery in Sosnowiec was in terrible condition. He posted again on 29 October 2021, thanking a non-Jewish resident, Sławek Pastuszka, for finding the funds to mow the cemetery’s grass. Cymbler noted that the funding did not come from Israel or the Jewish community. He also noted that Mr. Sławomir Witkowski, a history teacher at the First High School in Katowice, together with his students, promised to care for the cemetery in the future. Notably, Mr. Witkowski and his students have participated in similar Jewish cemetery restoration projects in the past.

In other Eastern European countries, non-Jewish youths are working to restore Jewish cemeteries in locations where there is currently no Jewish community. In the village of Vinodol, Slovakia, located roughly 80 kilometers from the capital city of Bratislava, Vladimir Spanik, a 73-year-old member of the village council, spearheaded a 2021 project to restore the village’s abandoned Jewish cemetery. He recruited several young Roma boys for the project, expressing his hope “that they [Roma youth] discover the Holocaust and the evil time for both Jews and Roma.” For Mr. Spanik, the project is an opportunity to instill an appreciation of the past and the importance of cross-racial solidarity in the young people of his community.

This focus on involving non-Jewish youth in Jewish cemetery restoration projects is also happening at schools throughout Eastern Europe. In the small Polish city of Cieszyn, a museum employee, with the help of a teacher at the Evangelical Society School, organized and recruited students for a Jewish cemetery restoration project in 2021. The project, explained the teacher, provided students with a concrete way to engage with local history and develop intercultural understanding. In Kielce, a city located in south-central Poland, high school

## For a Righteous Cause: Positive Trends in Fighting Antisemitism and Radicalization

students commemorated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a post-Second World War anti-Jewish pogrom by cleaning the local Jewish cemetery.

Other projects involved the collaboration of current residents and the descendants of Eastern European Jews who fled their Eastern European homes during the war or relocated abroad after the war. Marla Osborn, a US citizen whose paternal grandmother was originally from Rohatyn, Ukraine, heads the Rohatyn Jewish Heritage project.

The project brings together local non-Jewish residents and volunteers from across the globe to restore the local Jewish cemetery and research the history of Jews in the region. Ms. Osborn is involved in other collaborative projects in the area as well. On 18 October 2021, she posted an update on the Facebook Page “Why We Study Eastern Europe” about a new memorial for local Holocaust victims in the village of Chesnyky.

The memorial was established by a local non-Jewish Rosolovska family, with assistance from the United Jewish Community of Ukraine and the Jewish community of Ivano-Frankivsk. Ms. Osborn notes the growing enthusiasm in the region for such projects: “There is a growing number of local Ukrainians in cities and villages in western Ukraine who are interested in the multicultural history of these places, including Jewish history, and often they want to do something to preserve what is left. Many of these interested people are young people born during the period of independence of Ukraine; some are historians and teachers.” These young volunteers are disturbed by the disappearance of Jewish “sites of memory” because they want to retain the memory of the region’s multicultural past.

Although these projects are usually crowdfunded, some organizations assist local volunteers who restore Jewish cemeteries. These organizations provide critical information regarding historical restorations, such as how to do so in accordance with rabbinic law. For example, the Cultural Heritage Foundation in Poland created a website that provides those interested in cemetery restoration with guidelines for carrying out the project. Similarly, Ms. Osborn created an online guide on Jewish Cemetery Preservation in Western Ukraine. These resources and others on Jewish cemetery restoration enable Eastern European youth to pursue an applied cross-cultural dialogue on the region’s multicultural past.

## Policy Recommendations

1. **Centralize information on one website.** Information on the restoration and preservation of Jewish cemeteries in various Eastern European countries should be available on one website. In partnership with the European Union, the Israeli government should develop a website with specific information about possible funding sources, technical information about preservation, ongoing projects for potential volunteers, and assistance rendered by Israel, European states, and local authorities. It should also include a forum for exchanging information between people involved in various projects within the region.
2. **Professional development of teachers.** Often, local history teachers initiate Jewish cemetery restoration projects in Eastern Europe. These teachers, especially in small villages, likely have little access to professional development information on this topic. Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs should partner with Eastern European governments to develop an educational website for teachers with material translated into local languages, including lesson plans, suggested reading assignments, detailed overviews of recent works in regional history, and information on different schools involved in Jewish cemetery restoration projects.
3. **Publicly honor individuals and authorities for their help.** Local figures and teachers who initiate Jewish cemetery restoration projects, as well as local authorities who assist them, should be publicly honored in some way on a local and international level.

– Dr. Inna Shtakser

# The Gulf: Discovering the Past, Building a Future

**The United Arab Emirates.** For decades, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has hosted Jewish entrepreneurs, academics, and other professionals from different parts of the world who come to the UAE to do business. Against the backdrop of the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict and the emigration of most Jews from Arab lands, some of these expatriates kept their Jewish identity secret. Gradually, some Jews came to know each other and formed an informal community that meets for private Shabbat dinners, celebrates Jewish holidays, and shares communal moments of joy and sadness, like the birth of a new child or the death of a loved one.

Even before its normalization agreement with Israel, the UAE made overtures to its small Jewish community. Since late 2018, a synagogue has operated openly in Dubai, although under certain limitations for security purposes and in a manner that will not invite criticism from conservative Muslim circles. A Jewish community center was also inaugurated. In 2019, the UAE announced an initiative to build the Abrahamic Family House in Abu Dhabi, a joint religious complex including a mosque, a church, and a synagogue. Similar in height and their outer façade, but different in their internal design, the three houses of worship, to be completed by 2022, symbolize harmony alongside diversity among the three monotheistic faiths.

While Emirati Jews have enjoyed an inclusive environment in the UAE and even created a special prayer for the welfare of their host country and the protection of its leaders, they could not have imagined the transformation brought about by the Abraham Accords. Indeed, since the signing of the Accords in September 2020, peaceful relations between Muslims and Jews inside the UAE have flourished and entered a historic new phase.

Hotels in the UAE were instructed to provide kosher food to their Jewish and Israeli guests, citizens of the UAE and Israel celebrated Muslim and Jewish holidays together, including a joint Iftar-Lag BaOmer meal, the UAE's Jewish community expanded rapidly to more than 1,000 members, and the first Jewish school will soon open in Dubai.

The most remarkable development occurred in May 2021 when a Holocaust memorial exhibition entitled "We Remember" was unveiled in the Crossroad of Civilizations Museum in Dubai in the presence of the Israeli and German ambassadors to the UAE.

The UAE, an ethnically and religiously diverse country, is not characterized by a history of racism or antisemitism. Still, the exhibition, the first of its kind in the Arab world, was groundbreaking in several respects from a regional standpoint: (a) it replaced the common Holocaust denial in many Arab societies with a recognition of the horrors experienced by the Jewish people; (b) it offered an alternative approach of empathy towards the "other," instead of the prevailing zero-sum-game dynamics of "competitive victimhood" between the Israeli and Palestinian national narratives; and (c) it paved the way for a new form of intercultural interaction between Muslims and Jews, based on historical evidence rather than ignorance or political biases.



## For a Righteous Cause: Positive Trends in Fighting Antisemitism and Radicalization

Visiting the exhibition was an overwhelming experience. It features displays on the persecution of European Jews by Nazi Germany from Kristallnacht to the implementation of the Final Solution, photos and exhibits commemorating the 1.5 million Jewish children murdered in the Holocaust, including Anne Frank, and personal testimonies of Holocaust survivors. Ross Kriel, the president of the UAE's Jewish community, said that the exhibition "reflects a new discourse that is emerging in the UAE, which is rooted in mutual respect and human compassion." He added that "the memory of the Holocaust is emotional and moving but, in this context, it provides a source of hope and reassurance."

Notably, the exhibition pays special tribute to Muslims who saved Jews during the Holocaust. For example, it tells the story of the hundreds of Jews who found refuge in Albania in 1943 and were welcomed by its majority-Muslim population. It also tells the story of Muhammad Hilmi, an Egyptian doctor who was studying in Berlin and rescued several Jews from persecution. He was the first Arab to be recognized by Yad Vashem as "Righteous Among the Nations."

In one corner of the exhibition, the Quranic verse "whoever saves one life, saves the entire world" (5:32) is displayed in Arabic and English. Another exhibit features a statement made by the Emirati foreign minister, 'Abdullah bin Zayid Al Nahyan, who called for "coexistence, tolerance, acceptance of others and respect of all religions and beliefs" during a joint visit with his Israeli counterpart to the Holocaust memorial in Berlin in October 2020.

A large colorful mural, created by Israeli and Emirati artists, graces the museum courtyard. It shows two young men, an Emirati and an Israeli, chatting and drinking coffee together against the backdrop of a Dubai sunset. Above them is the word "cousins" in Arabic and Hebrew.

The museum's founder, Ahmad 'Ubayd al-Mansuri, served as a parliament member from 2011 to 2015 and established the museum in 2012 as a private enterprise in a building provided by the authorities. Most of the items exhibited are from his personal collection, and the museum's target audience includes tourists and local school children.

The museum could not have provided a platform for its empathetic messages without the blessing of the Emirati authorities. In recent decades, the UAE made a strategic decision to become a center of freedom of religion, pluralism, and multiculturalism and make "tolerance" a fundamental national value. In 2017, it established a ministry of tolerance, and 2019 was declared the "year of tolerance."

The opening of the Holocaust exhibition in Dubai is part of a profound cultural and ideological shift that has taken place in the UAE in recent years and whose continued expansion may support peace-building efforts across the Middle East. The criticism of the exhibition in the UAE and the Arab world was surprisingly restrained, focusing mainly on the timing of its opening, which occurred shortly after the outbreak of violence between Israel and Hamas in May 2021. Hopefully, this indicates that the discussion of the Holocaust in Arab societies has become open and legitimate while Holocaust denial is in retreat.

## Policy Recommendations

1. **Learn from Dubai's museum.** Israeli and international Holocaust museums, such as Yad Vashem, should learn how to educate Arab audiences about the Holocaust from Dubai's museum. As long as the Jewish genocide is framed as a human tragedy rather than a component of Israel's national narrative, Arabs will be more open to hearing about it, recognizing its credibility, and identifying with its victims' suffering and bravery.
2. **Offer practical support.** Israeli and international Holocaust museums and schools for Holocaust studies should offer Dubai's museum practical support. These museums and schools can donate exhibits, invite Emirati instructors and teachers for training in Holocaust studies, help the UAE build a customized curriculum, and provide the museum with teaching materials in Arabic, such as translated documentaries about the Holocaust.
3. **Engage Arab partners.** The Israeli Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Jewish organizations should engage with Arab partners in their fight against racism and antisemitism. Historically, Jews and Arabs were regarded as Semitic peoples, and Hebrew and Arabic are Semitic languages. These shared historical, cultural, and religious roots, acknowledged as part of the Abraham Accords' spirit, may lead both sides to embrace a common moral stance.
4. **Official and unofficial visits.** Israeli officials and Israeli and Jewish tourists should be encouraged to visit the Crossroad of Civilizations Museum to promote its activities, demonstrating their support of the Emiratis' initiative and shared commitment to educating Emiratis about the horrors of the Holocaust.

– Dr. Ofir Winter

**Bahrain.** The visibility of Jews in Bahrain's public space has become more prominent since the Gulf kingdom became a signatory to the Abraham Accords. The country's leadership has been instrumental in this, actively participating in fostering public Jewish life in the country.

In February 2021, Nancy Khedoury, a member of Bahrain's Shura Council, was interviewed on the Al-Arabiya TV Channel. Khedoury emphasized the peaceful coexistence of Jews and other minorities in Bahrain, even during the 1948 and the 1967 wars when anti-Jewish violence erupted in numerous Muslim countries. While maintaining that Jews have always lived freely in Bahrain, she stressed that Bahraini Jews are now better connected to other communities in the world due to the Abraham Accords. Moreover, Khedoury also referred to the synagogue in Manama as a Jewish site that can attract international visitors.

The House of Ten Commandments synagogue in Manama was reopened in March 2021 after being restored under the aegis of King 'Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa. This event publicized the history of the local Jewish community, which hailed from Iraq and settled in Bahrain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some critics viewed this act as an attempt to welcome "Zionist visitors" in the aftermath of normalization with Israel. Still, the event was well-received, and the ability to gather openly in a synagogue is a significant novelty; as in other parts of the region, Jews in Bahrain have lived a secretive life due to the performantly hostile attitudes toward Judaism.

## For a Righteous Cause: Positive Trends in Fighting Antisemitism and Radicalization

Jews gained further prominence in Bahraini public life in August when the first celebration of Shabbat services since the late 1940s also made the news. Interviewed by the *Times of Israel*, the Head of the Bahraini Jewish Community, Ibrahim Nonoo, stated that this significant change may be the beginning of a renewed Jewish life in the country, including the hope to open a Jewish school in the future and appoint a rabbi. The attendance of Bahraini public figures confirmed the importance of the event; former Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa defined it as a historical moment for the Jewish community and national coexistence in the country.

In September, the celebration of the first Jewish marriage in Bahrain in half a century gained broad media coverage across the Arab world. Talking about Jews and Jewish life is not an ordinary matter, as Jews are typically associated with Zionism and Israel. Some commentators criticized these changes as a direct result of normalization with Israel and a consequent betrayal of the Palestinian cause. In response to the opposition against Jewish visibility, Egyptian commentator Suleiman Gouda emphasized that a distinction must be made between religious views on Judaism and political views on the State of Israel, and, praising the diversity of Arab societies, recalled examples of Jews serving in official positions in Arab countries until the 1950s. The visibility of Jewish life in the Arab world is gaining momentum because of political changes that also empower social activists to advance different views on Jews and Israel.

### Policy Recommendations

1. **Public promotion of Jewish visibility.** Supporting Jewish life in Arab countries is essential to recognizing that Jews are still, despite their small numbers, integral parts of social fabrics. The initiatives to restore Jewish properties are commendable because they show that the welfare of minorities is in the public interest. Bahrain's Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth should be encouraged to promote societal initiatives to acquaint citizens with the Jewish past and tradition – e.g., visits to Jewish sites and encounters with Jewish community members. This could also include the introduction of school curricula on the history of the Holocaust and Jewish history in Bahrain.
2. **Guarantee safety.** Increased visibility raises security risks for the local Jewish community, its prominent members, and its properties. Bahrain's Ministry of Interior should be encouraged to allocate specific resources to protect minorities and their specific needs in light of potential threats linked to their growing visibility.

– Dr. Giovanni Quer

# Western Governments and NGOs: Fighting Back

The past two years have witnessed an unforeseen development: while physical attacks and threats against Jews in the West decreased, expressions of antisemitism on social media increased dramatically and were more hateful and vile than in previous years.

Western governments and NGOs, alongside local and international organizations, reacted to the increase in antisemitism in various ways. Some allocated budgets to secure Jewish communities and established educational and training programs for law enforcement; some advanced legislation to curb expressions of antisemitism online and to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism; and others organized international conferences and seminars and hosted IHRA plenaries where public denunciations of antisemitism and pledges to fight its manifestations were made. Indeed, since 2015, more than 800 bodies worldwide have adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism, most in the past two years.

**The European Union.** In 2015, the European Commission appointed Katharina von Schnurbein as its first coordinator for combatting antisemitism, inaugurating a new phase of activity. In December 2018, the EU plenary, then presided over by Austria, distributed a catalogue of measures to combat antisemitism to all participants, and the 28 countries in attendance pledged to safeguard their Jewish communities. Special envoys – officials tasked with monitoring antisemitism, raising public awareness, and promoting legislation to tackle it – were appointed in several countries. These envoys occasionally gather under the EU umbrella to coordinate activities, and they issue a monthly bulletin that details the ongoing activity against antisemitism in the EU and EC. Under their guidance, in October 2021, the EU Strategy on Combatting Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life was declared in Malmö. It aims to prevent all forms of antisemitism, protect and foster Jewish life in Europe, and promote research and the commemoration of the Holocaust. Notably, it is considered the first-ever concrete action plan with the formal backing of an international organization.

**Sweden.** In January 2000, Goeran Persson, then the prime minister of Sweden, convened a high-level international conference in Stockholm. At least 45 delegations, headed by high-ranking officials and heads of states, participated. The declared goal – to keep the memory of the Holocaust center stage and combat antisemitism – led to the establishment of the International Task Force (ITF, now known as IHRA), comprised of 34 member countries and several international organizations with observer status.

Since then, Sweden has hosted four follow-up conferences on genocide, racism, antisemitism, and the Holocaust. In October 2021, the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism convened in Malmö. This Swedish city was notoriously known for rabid antisemitism that drove away seventy-five percent of its Jewish population.

## For a Righteous Cause: Positive Trends in Fighting Antisemitism and Radicalization

Dozens of delegations and world leaders participated, answering the call of Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Loeven, who initiated the gathering. The conference culminated in participants pledging concrete measures to combat antisemitism and a promise for a follow-up meeting: next year, Sweden will chair the IHRA and monitor the pledges' fulfillment. Dr. Moshe Kantor, president of the EJC and a guest speaker at the conference, personally attested "to the depth of the sincerity of Swedish officials in seeking to combat antisemitism."

**Canada.** The number of antisemitic incidents more than doubled between 2020 and 2021 in Canada. In response, the Canadian government, led by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, convened an urgent conference, which resulted in an action plan. According to the plan, the Canadian government announced a standing commitment to allocate five million dollars to protect Jewish institutes, cemeteries, and monuments, fund education programs, advance stricter legislation and enforcement measures, and promote the adoption of the IHRA definition, among other initiatives. Prof. Irwin Cotler, Canada's former minister of justice who currently serves as the country's special envoy on antisemitism, invited Jewish students who experienced antisemitism on campus to the emergency conference meetings to tell their stories, among his other activities.

**Austria and the Vatican.** In 2020, Austria continued its concerted efforts to combat antisemitism. It published a 160-page action plan and appointed Karolina Edtstadler, the Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution, to oversee its fight against antisemitism. In the past two years, Pope Francis and Cardinal Kurt Koch, the head of the Vatican committee for relations with the Jewish people, have issued occasional declarations strongly denouncing antisemitism and advocating close dialogue between Christians and Jews. Notably, on his recent visit to Budapest in September 2021, Pope Francis spoke firmly against antisemitism, much to the surprise of his hosts.

## Policy Recommendations

1. **Appoint special envoys.** Countries that have yet to appoint special envoys to combat antisemitism should be encouraged to do so by those that have. In addition, an international forum in which special envoys regularly meet and coordinate activities should be initiated in partnership between the EU and the United Nations.
2. **Promote accountability.** In recent years, many pledges to fight antisemitism have been made in various forums. Participants in these forums need to establish a mechanism for accountability and adopt deadlines for implementing their pledges.
3. **Engage and educate policymakers and world leaders.** Governments and NGOs should continue to appeal to leaders and heads of state to issue denouncements of antisemitism and expressions of their commitment to safeguarding Jewish life. Leaders and policymakers should also be provided with appropriate educational materials by NGOs or their special envoys to raise awareness and encourage them to stay alert. NGOs and special envoys should also encourage leaders to consult important documents against antisemitism published so far – the Catalogue of Policies to Combat Antisemitism, the London and Ottawa Protocols, and the Austrian and European Commission Action Plans.

– Prof. Dina Porat

## A Whole New Ball Game: Fighting Antisemitism in Sports

When stadiums reopened after the COVID-19 lockdowns, it appeared that football officials across the continent were willing to confront notorious antisemitic expressions in a manner previously unseen. On International Holocaust Remembrance Day (27 January 2021), the English Football Association (FA) announced it would adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) definition for antisemitism.

Clubs in the United Kingdom followed the FA's lead, indicating a breakthrough in the commitment of English football to tackle antisemitism. Several days after the FA announcement, Chelsea FC, an English football team that currently holds the UEFA Champions League title, launched a new website titled "Say No To Antisemitism," marking a concerted effort to "clean its own house" by confronting its fans' poor record of antisemitism and hate.

Continental European associations and clubs also joined the fight. The Austrian football association adopted the IHRA definition for antisemitism. In Germany and the Netherlands, two major European clubs, Borussia Dortmund and Feyenoord Rotterdam, partnered with the Anne Frank house to develop guidelines for tackling antisemitism in football. This project is part of both clubs' educational programs against antisemitism, named "Changing the Chants," and is advanced in collaboration with their fans.

The EU Commission also acknowledged the importance of fighting antisemitism in sports when presenting its broader strategy on the means to uproot the phenomenon. A particular focus will be football, as noted in the "Global Conference on Football's Role in Combatting Antisemitism," held in Vienna.

American sports are another stage that witnessed positive advances in the struggle against antisemitism. The most notable case was that of Meyers Leonard, a center for the NBA's Miami Heat, who used antisemitic slurs while playing a video game. Recordings of this incident were widely shared on social media. The NBA and Miami Heat responded uncompromisingly: Leonard was suspended, fined \$50,000, and ultimately his contract was severed, leaving him without a team and essentially ending his professional career. Reflecting on Leonard's fate, NBA Commissioner Adam Silver mentioned that sports are an important arena for fighting antisemitism.

This event is just one of several that had a similar outcome in recent months, demonstrating that antisemitic remarks are no longer tolerated in American sports and that even public apologies are inadequate. In June, this new approach was evident in Massachusetts when a local high school, Duxbury, fired its head football coach Dave Maimaron for using antisemitic slurs.

A very encouraging conclusion comes to mind when exploring these events. The fight against antisemitism is not limited to one level. It is not the initiative of political and sporting organizations such as the EU and FA alone, but also the teams and the fans. This unique combination of three levels – organizations, teams, and fans – creates a significant front against manifestations of antisemitism in sports that will hopefully be sustained in the coming years.

## Policy Recommendations

1. **The government of Israel should be more proactive in tackling antisemitism in sports.** It should seek to form partnerships with sporting associations worldwide to confront expressions of antisemitism from players and fans. The government should provide the necessary budgets for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture and Sport to fund and develop these partnerships.
2. **Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs should focus its efforts on Eastern Europe.** Most key developments occurred in Western Europe, while Eastern Europe lagged. The Israeli MFA should leverage relations with those countries and promote the adoption of Dortmund and Feyenoord's educational model among Eastern European clubs, providing funding as necessary.
3. **Israel's Ministry of Culture and Sport should promote cooperation between sports clubs by developing joint sports camps.** The ministry of sports should develop a program for weeklong camps that will bring youth teams to Israel where their training camps will be augmented by an educational program on Jewish history and antisemitism.

– Dr. Tomer Fadlon



# Drawing a Line: Encouraging Legal Developments

Several encouraging legal developments relevant to combating antisemitism occurred in 2021.

**European Union/European Commission.** In February 2021, the European Court of Human Rights issued a ruling on statements made by Mr. Volen Siderov, a Bulgarian parliament member and the founder of ATAKA, a far-right political party. In his book *The Boomerang of Evil* (2002), Siderov wrote several antisemitic and xenophobic statements, including: “Enslaving other people has for centuries been the supreme goal of the Jewish world elite.” In *The Power of Mammon* (2004), Siderov wrote: “[E]verywhere on the European continent Jews got under the skin of rulers, pushed them towards wars and cataclysms, so that they would fall in an acute need of money.”

For these and other statements, Siderov was subsequently sued by 18 people and 66 NGOs, alleging various types of harassment and discrimination against Roma, Turks, Jews, Catholics, and sexual and gender minorities. Among the petitioners were two Jewish Bulgarian citizens, Gabriela Aron Behar and Katrin Borisova Gutman, who sued Siderov because of his anti-Jewish rhetoric. From the court of first instance to the appellate and supreme court, Bulgarian courts all dismissed the lawsuit, stating that Mr. Siderov had been within his rights to express “unpopular” opinions and that the petitioners had not been personally named by him or affected by the comments.

Having exhausted all legal proceedings in Bulgaria, Bechor and Gutman petitioned the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. In February 2021, the European Court declared in its ruling that Mr. Siderov’s statements were antisemitic hate speech – “virulently anti-Semitic” in fact – and that they had “rehearsed timeworn anti-Semitic and Holocaust denial narratives.” The European Court further stated the comments were meant to “vilify Jews and stir up prejudice and hatred towards them,” in stark contrast to the position of the Bulgarian courts and government that had downplayed them.

Apart from confirming the European Court’s long-standing position regarding hate speech, the ruling is important since it clarifies that a person does not have to be named explicitly for the offending statement to be considered hate speech. In this sense, the ruling can be viewed as strengthening the rulings of several national courts across Europe that declared that some forms of hate speech are so virulent that they violate the rights of all persons belonging to the maligned group. The ruling also clearly states that European countries are obligated to provide redress to such persons and access to effective legal remedies.

The European Commission introduced in 2021 two important initiatives related to combating antisemitism. The first is to expand the “EU Crimes” list to include hate speech and hate crimes. This will allow for a harmonized and common approach among member states in handling antisemitic hate speech and hate crime.

## For a Righteous Cause: Positive Trends in Fighting Antisemitism and Radicalization

The second is the EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life, introduced on 5 October 2021. The strategy includes a list of measures to combat antisemitism, foster Jewish life, and promote Holocaust research and remembrance. Several noteworthy measures are specified, including: (a) Encouraging member states to complete the transposition of the Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia and prosecute antisemitic hate speech and hate crimes in line with EU and national legislation. (b) Introducing new laws, strengthening the roles of the equality bodies in the member states responsible for monitoring and supporting equal treatment, and increasing their knowledge about antisemitism. (c) Proposing the adoption of a “Digital Services Act” that will aim to harmonize reporting obligations of online platforms to counter hate speech.

**Ukraine.** On 22 September 2021, the Ukrainian parliament passed the “Prevention and Counteraction to Antisemitism Law,” which was signed into law by President Volodymyr Zelensky on 7 October 2021.

The law aims to prevent and counter antisemitic manifestations in Ukraine, and defines antisemitism in accordance with the IHRA definition. The law also states that persons guilty of violating the law would be subject to punishments under the existing hate crimes law (but does not specify the exact punishments) and allows victims to seek compensation.

The law’s sponsors noted that antisemitic manifestations had largely gone unpunished since there had been no clear definition of antisemitism under Ukrainian law. Israeli officials and Jewish groups praised the passage of the law. Still, the law was also criticized by some, primarily on account of its vague language, for not specifying exact penalties, and for not prohibiting glorification of collaborators of the Nazi regime as part of antisemitic-based offenses.

Despite these criticisms, the importance of the Ukrainian law stems from considering antisemitism as a specific type of manifestation of hate that is addressed via a specific law wherein antisemitism is defined in accordance with the IHRA definition.

**United States.** In May 2021, the US Congress enacted the “COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act” in response to the sharp rise in anti-Asian hate crimes across the US in 2020 and 2021. The law strengthens reporting mechanisms on hate crimes and provides reporting resources in several languages. Moreover, the Justice Department announced it will appoint a person to review COVID-19 related hate crimes and organize crimes reduction programs.

Several states across the US also strengthened their anti-hate policies, including New York’s Prohibition of Hate Symbols on Public Property Law of 2021. The law, which prohibits displaying or selling “symbols of hate” – such as confederate flags and swastikas – on publicly funded property, was introduced after Confederate flags were displayed on several occasions across the state and antisemitic incidents in New York City increased fifty-percent during 2021.

A California hate crimes statute was signed into law by Governor Newsom on 8 October 2021. It was introduced following a rise in antisemitic events during 2021, including displays of anti-Israel graffiti in San Francisco near a Chabad center and a Jewish-owned café, as well as white supremacist groups distributing antisemitic flyers in Santa Cruz. The law will require local

## For a Righteous Cause: Positive Trends in Fighting Antisemitism and Radicalization

hate crimes policies to recognize religious bias and discrimination bias and law enforcement officers to undergo educational training on hate crimes.

These relatively modest developments should be viewed within the context of the United States' unique approach to free speech, which has made hate crimes laws difficult to adopt across the country.

### Policy Recommendations

1. **Train police, prosecutors, and judges to identify antisemitism.** The new ruling from the European Court mentioned above highlights a crucial missing piece in the struggle against antisemitism: correctly identifying an antisemitic offense. Perfect laws may be enacted, but if the police officer, prosecutor, or judge do not recognize offenses for what they are, then those laws would never be effectively enforced. Thus, relevant training programs for law enforcement and legal professionals should be advanced.
2. **Create a mechanism for quick reporting of online hate speech.** As shown in the European Commission's latest efforts, countering hate speech online is a major priority. Internet companies often remove online hate speech after receiving a specific complaint. Therefore, robust reporting mechanisms must be put in place. On the national level, justice ministries working in coordination with law enforcement can develop technology for quick and effective online reporting and effective follow-up on individual reports.
3. **Promote coordination and cooperation.** Many organizations are working on online hate speech. Creating a shared platform for them will enhance cooperation and promote sharing resources and technology. Such a platform would also encourage organizations to combat antisemitism as a form of hate speech.

– Adv. Talia Naamat

# Word on the Contributors

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**The Kantor Center at Tel Aviv University** publishes annually the For a Righteous Cause report on achievements in fighting antisemitism and radicalization, the Antisemitism Worldwide report on the state of antisemitism across the globe, and eight issues of Perspectives – analytical essays on contemporary Jewish life. Every year, the Center organizes international workshops for professionals as well as three seminars on topical issues open to the public. It also hosts a three-day leadership seminar for promising international students and supports original research on Jewish history and culture. For more information, please visit our website: <https://kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/>.





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