



# ANTISEMITISM WORLDWIDE REPORT FOR 2022



The Center for the Study of  
Contemporary European Jewry  
The Lester and Sally Entin  
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**The Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry at Tel Aviv University** supports research on Jewish history, culture, politics, and interfaith relations. It publishes the flagship annual Antisemitism Worldwide Report and the annual For a Righteous Cause Report. Every year, the Center organizes three seminars on Jewish affairs that are open to the public and publishes eight issues of Perspectives – analytic essays on contemporary Jewish life and thought.

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Cover image: Stamford Hill, London, February 2023. Photo by Uriya Shavit  
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# FOREWORD

The Antisemitism Worldwide Report for 2022 informs of both increases and decreases, some more meaningful than others, in the number of antisemitic incidents in different countries. The United States, where the largest Jewish minority in the world lives, saw a particularly alarming rise in anti-Jewish violence and slander.

These data are not encouraging. The record-levels of 2021 were attributed in part to the exceptional social tensions created by the Covid-19 epidemic and the political tensions created by the Guardian of the Walls operation in Gaza. The data for 2022 suggest that the motivations for present-day antisemitism are not transient as some may have hoped.

Despite the investment of substantial legal, educational, and political efforts, thousands of antisemitic incidents took place across the globe in 2022, including hundreds of physical assaults. Everyone who cares about human dignity and justice must recognize the need to prevent this reality from becoming normalized.

Antisemitic incidents are not an abstract phenomenon. Whether physical or virtual, they affect real people in the real world. As with other hate crimes, fighting them requires a combination of broadly applied agendas along with tailor-made, targeted initiatives. It requires establishing who is attacked, who are the attackers, where the attacks occur, and what motivates the offenders. These questions must be treated with great caution and sensitivity. But they cannot be ignored if we are to achieve results.

This year's Report examines the location and affiliations of victims of antisemitic physical assaults in several cities that were major theatres for such incidents (p. 23). Our comparative study suggests physical attacks tend to occur in specific areas in major urban centers on streets and public transportation (rather than in or outside synagogues); usually do not appear to be premeditated; and target in the vast majority of cases visibly-identifiable Jews, particularly ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) Jews. Whether attackers are motivated by strong antisemitic sentiments, by hatred of Israel (which, ironically, in some cases preys on anti-Zionist Jews), or by a bullying impulse that targets those who appear most different and vulnerable, their offenses fall under the category of antisemitic hate crimes.

Shortcuts and slogans will not do. To more effectively fight antisemitic physical attacks, governments and law enforcement agencies must ensure that even so-called minor racially-motivated incidents, such as throwing eggs or spitting at Jews, will carry severe consequences. There is a need for greater policing and education in those areas where attacks are most prevalent. Clear, measurable, and realistic goals for curbing attacks must be established.

The Report's investigative team's work in London's Stamford Hill area informed that some ultra-Orthodox residents (but not all) have come to experience physical attacks as part of the reality of Jewish life. To students of history, the depictions by some residents of persecutions and torments as Jewish fate, or their calls for Jews to "lower their heads" so as to not provoke the gentiles, are particularly disturbing.

The current state of antisemitism is serious, but must not be inflated or self-servingly politicized. Antisemitic incidents should be reported and analyzed based on rigorous and careful methodologies and definitions and aspire for accuracy rather than sensationalism. Throughout 2022, a spate of studies that seemed oriented towards nothing more than newspaper headlines were published, presenting hysterical data, some grotesquely so. Such efforts do little more than feed cynicism, inaction, and allegations that the fight against antisemitism is an act of “crying wolf.”

Several of the case studies presented in this Report point to one of the most disturbing attributes of antisemitism: Jews do not have to be a part of a society for them to be defamed there. Last year, the Houthis of Yemen, where almost no Jews live, were one of the loudest antisemitic propagandists in the Arab world (p. 47), while in Japan, two minor political parties that advance vicious anti-Jewish conspiracy theories made it to parliament for the first time (p. 37).

Equally disturbing, antisemitism is still a threat in Germany, where an eccentric coup attempt secretly planned by radical nationalists was thwarted in 2022. The importance of the now-imprisoned cell of misfits should not be overestimated. Given the lessons of history, it should also not be ignored (p. 31).

Eli Wiesel said: “We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.” As the fascist Russian regime continues committing crimes against humanity in Ukraine, remaining silent is unacceptable. For the free world to survive, Russia must be defeated, and Putin must face justice.

Fascists and antisemites are twains that often, even if not always, meet. While Putin is not a conscious antisemite, loyalists of his fascist regime made in 2022 a series of dangerous antisemitic statements as Russia faced a series of humiliating military defeats (p. 43). Along with the despots’-pet Roger Waters, Putin’s other international ally today is Iran, which openly seeks to eliminate the one State of the Jews.

The Russian aggression in Ukraine and the cynical propaganda accompanying it provide an important lesson. Despots are never reliable friends to human rights and religious minorities and never honest arbiters of historical justice. The days in which the likes of Putin and his puppet-agents across the world were welcomed participants in the fight against antisemitism must never return.

The fight against antisemitism, as against racism at large, is a moral cause and is informed by a moral sense of duty. Israeli society has debated for a long time whether the lessons of the Holocaust are particular or universal. This debate is uncalled for; they are both.

The unique crimes committed against Jews by Nazi Germany and its allies make the case for a strong, independent Israel and for forceful Jewish action against antisemitism wherever it raises its ugly head. The modern history of Germany is evidence of humans’ infinite ability, including the most educated, to commit evil. It warns us how dangerous it is to allow bigotry and hate speech to thrive.



The particular lesson is one that Jews must always have in mind, and never allow the world to ignore. The universal lesson applies universally.

This year saw the former disciples of the late racist Rabbi Meir Kahane, who introduced Nazi-like legislation to the Knesset, enter government. In an earlier report, we wrote that Israeli governments were always reserved in their engagements with European parties with fascist roots and that Israeli political parties with similar roots cannot be expected to be treated differently by other governments. Since then, members of the Jewish Strength party have polluted Israeli public discourse with chilling racist expressions that would have led to the immediate termination of their political careers in other democracies. The obvious must be stated: Racism is racism, and Jewish racism is as deplorable as other forms of racism, and should never be excused or tolerated.

Antisemitism is fed worldwide by the encroachment of extremists on the political center. The problem is exceptionally present in the United States. The encroachers are tricky to deal with. Even when entertaining and cultivating old hatreds, the radical right is sometimes pro-Zionist, or is confused as such; the radical American left at times blurs the line between legitimate political criticism and antisemitism and speaks in the name of justice and human rights.

The rise of antisemitic extremism among elements of the American right and the American left is the focus of a special section in this Report. Three essays deal with radical antisemitic expressions from the right and the left in historical and contemporary perspectives (pp. 55-70). A unique challenge activism against antisemitism faces in the United States is the almost absolute protection Americans enjoy under the First Amendment when articulating falsehoods and hate speech. This challenge calls for contemplation (p. 71).

A reality in which big companies make big money from spreading big lies without penalty calls for new and creative solutions that will protect freedom of speech while reestablishing ethical codes of editorial responsibility.

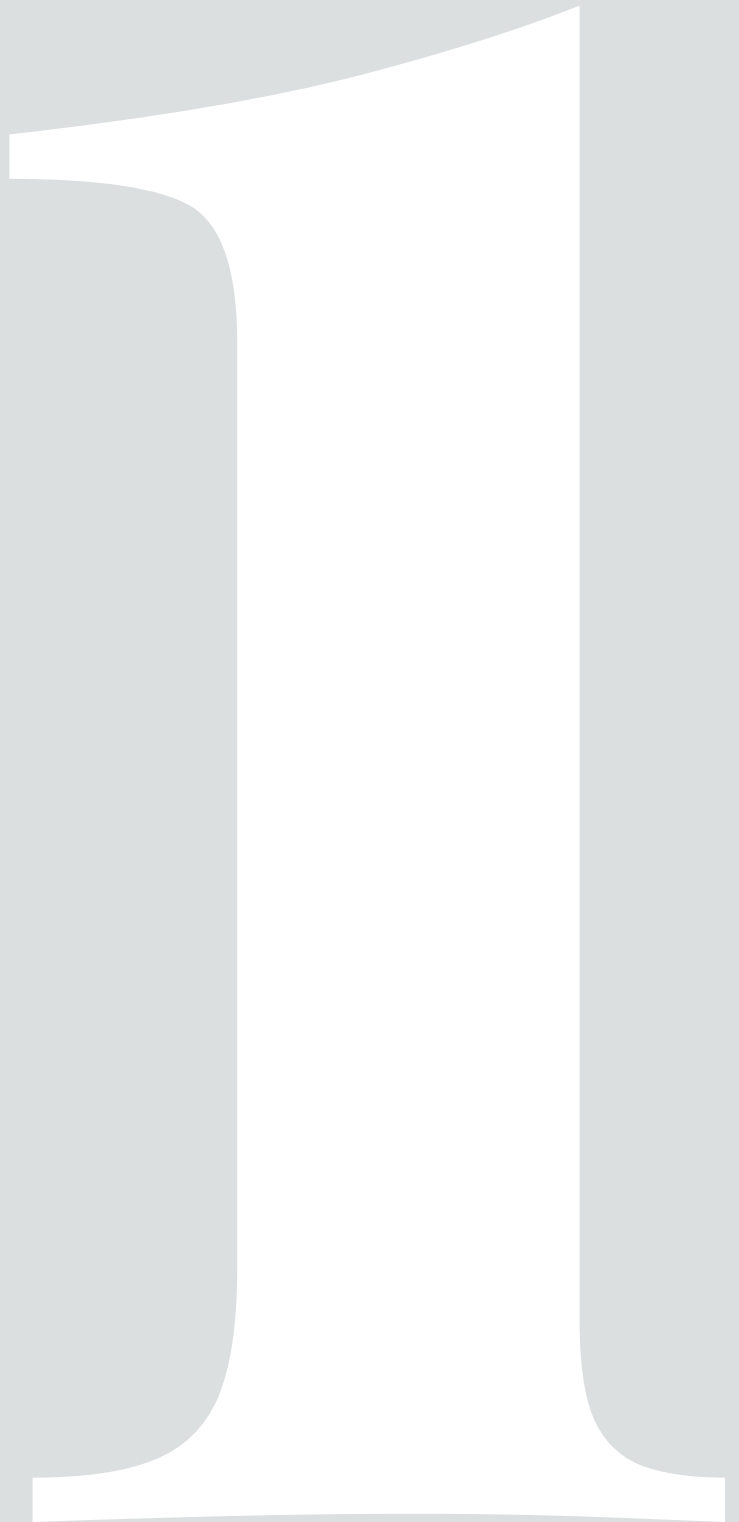
The past year saw a former American president hosting for dinner in his private residence two antisemites. Alarming, Donald J. Trump, who is not known as an antisemite, refused to apologize for the event, and his base of supporters did not penalize him for his reluctance. Opinion polls show that a significant percentage of the American public does not consider associating with Jew-haters problematic.

In a special interview given to this Report, former Senator Joseph Lieberman says he hopes and prays that the majority in America will hold Trump accountable (p. 77). The first and only American Jew to date to run on a national presidential ticket says antisemitism was not an issue in the 2000 election but that he is no longer certain it will remain so should another Jew aim for the White House. As others, Lieberman expresses grave concerns and shock about the current state of antisemitism in America. Yet he is also full of optimism and calls for action. Indeed, optimism and action are what the forces of good need today.



# **SECTION 1**

## **GLOBAL OVERVIEW**





# DATA: ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS WORLDWIDE 2022

Unlike previous years, no exceptional circumstances that are believed to inflame waves of antisemitism existed in 2022. The Covid-19 pandemic, with the lockdowns, financial crises, and social tensions it created, dissipated across the world. While the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained tense, it did not escalate in ways that encouraged massive anti-Israel protests in the West.

Still, the data collected by the Report's research team about the countries with the largest Jewish populations outside Israel, as well as countries with smaller Jewish populations, indicate that 2022 saw both increases and decreases in the number of recorded antisemitic incidents – including physical assaults, vandalism, harassment, propaganda, and hate speech. In 2021, antisemitism reached new highs; 2022 did not mark a universal reversal of the trend, and in some countries, most alarmingly the United States, it intensified. This is despite significant and welcomed legislative, judicial, and educational efforts by governments and NGOs worldwide to fight antisemitism, as documented in our January 2023 annual For a Righteous Cause Report.

Two realities must thus be acknowledged. First, present-day antisemitism thrives on deeply-rooted social developments rather than on anecdotal effects. The immediate suspects are interrelated: social disaffection caused by a variety of economic and cultural phenomena that encourages the search for scapegoats; the rise of radical groups on the left and the right that encroach on the political center and legitimize racist agendas that in the past were broadly disavowed; and the proliferation of virtual “echo chambers” that give credibility to conspiracy theories and hate speech. With so much of the information in the world today presented without the scrutiny and moderation provided by the work of editors, falsehoods spread fast, and are confused as truths.

Another reality that needs to be recognized calls for self-reflection. Those involved in the fight against antisemitism should realize that it is not achieving the desired results. Existing policies should be unsparingly and independently examined to see which are working, which are failing, and which can be improved.

The data presented here are based on reports from law enforcement agencies, local and national media, Jewish community organizations, and other agencies that monitor antisemitic incidents in different countries.

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

Reports by law enforcement and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) suggest antisemitic incidents and attitudes intensified across the United States compared to 2021, which itself saw record numbers of incidents.

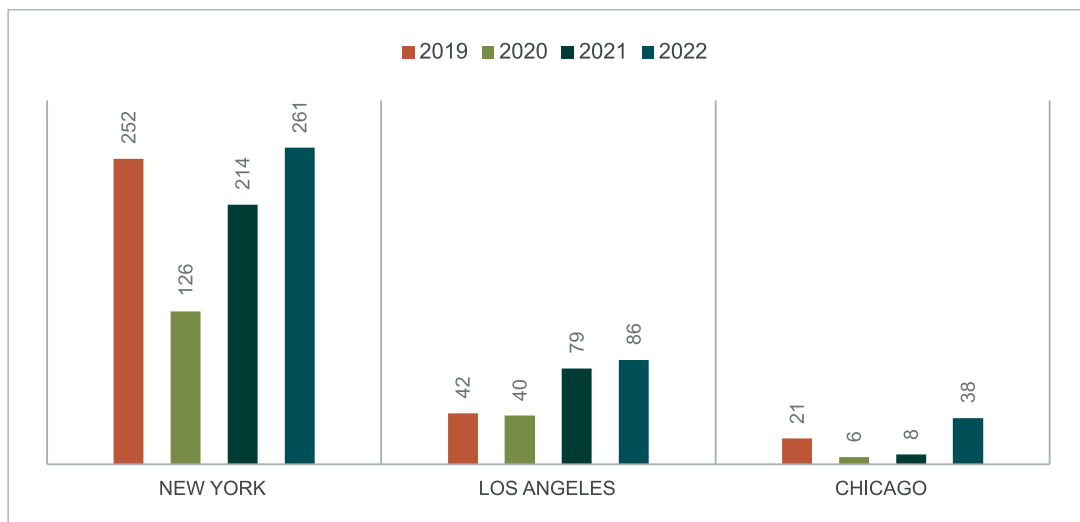


## ANTISEMITISM WORLDWIDE REPORT FOR 2022

The New York Police Department (NYPD), the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), and the Chicago Police Department (CPD) registered an alarming number of incidents. The three cities have the largest Jewish populations in the United States – approximately 1.5 million, 519,000, and 292,000, respectively.

In 2022, the NYPD recorded 261 anti-Jewish hate crime reports compared to 214 in 2021, 126 in 2020, and 252 in 2019. There were 30 incidents of assault in 2022 compared to 20 in 2021.<sup>1</sup> In 2022, the LAPD recorded 86 anti-Jewish hate crime reports in Los Angeles compared to 79 in 2021, 40 in 2020, and 42 in 2019.<sup>2</sup> In Chicago, the CPD recorded 38 anti-Jewish hate crimes in 2022 compared to 8 in 2021, 6 in 2020, and 21 in 2019.<sup>3</sup>

### Antisemitic Hate Crimes in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago, 2019–2022



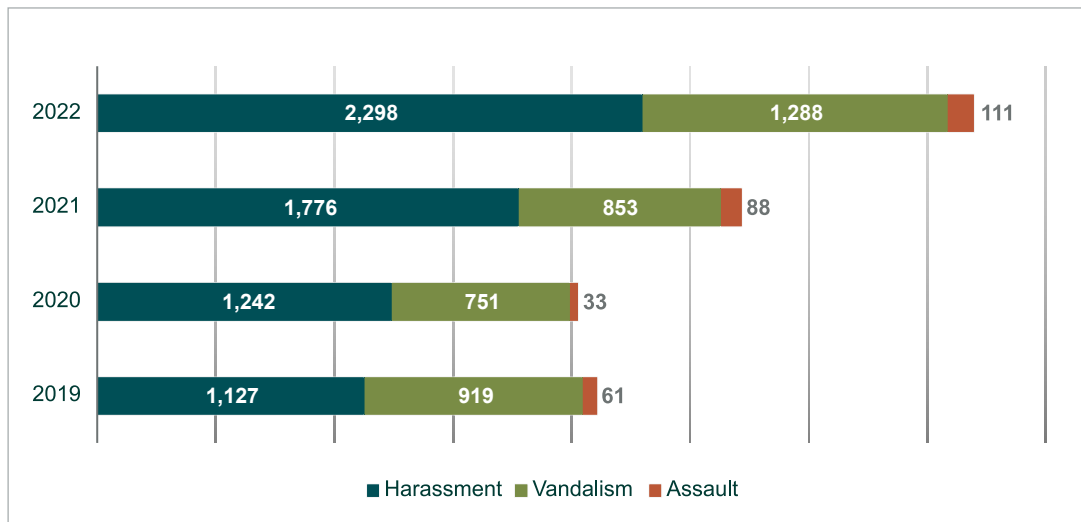
The ADL’s annual audit of antisemitic incidents in the United States catalogued 3,697 incidents in 2022 compared to 2,717 in 2021, the highest number the ADL has recorded. The number of incidents increased in each category compared to 2021 – harassment, vandalism, and assault. Incidents of harassment increased 29% to 2,298, while incidents of vandalism increased 51% to 1,288. In 2022, the ADL recorded a total of 111 incidents of assault across the United States, compared to 88 in 2021, 33 in 2020, and 61 in 2019. The ADL also record a high number (91) of bomb threats toward Jewish institutions, the highest number of bomb threats since 2017.

<sup>1</sup> For NYPD hate crime data, see: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/nypd/stats/reports-analysis/hate-crimes.page>.

<sup>2</sup> For LAPD hate crime data, see: <https://data.lacity.org/Public-Safety/Crime-Data-from-2020-to-Present/2nrs-mtv8/data>.

<sup>3</sup> For CPD hate crime data see: <https://home.chicagopolice.org/statistics-data/data-dashboards/hate-crime-dashboard/>.

## Antisemitic Incidents in the United States, 2019–2022



According to a survey on antisemitic attitudes in the United States conducted by the ADL, 85% of Americans believe at least one anti-Jewish trope compared to 61% in 2019. Moreover, the survey found that 20% of Americans believe six or more anti-Jewish tropes, compared to 11% in 2019, the highest percentage since the early 1990s.<sup>4</sup>

The ADL documented a record high of 852 incidents of white supremacist antisemitic propaganda in 2022, compared to 352 incidents in 2021, 277 incidents in 2020, and 165 incidents in 2019.<sup>5</sup>

The significant increase in antisemitic propaganda distributions in 2022 accords with an overall rise in white supremacist propaganda distributions – 6,751 incidents in 2022 compared to 4,876 in 2021, 5,125 in 2020, and 2,724 in 2019.

The top distributors of antisemitic propaganda in the United States in 2022 were the Goyim Defense League (GDL), the Folkish Resistance Movement (FRM, formerly Folks Front), and White Lives Matter (WLM), which according to the report, were responsible for 58%, 17%, and 14% of the 852 incidents recorded, respectively. Previous reports inform that in 2020 and 2021, the FRM and the New Jersey European Heritage Association (NJEHA) were the leading distributors of antisemitic propaganda.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Center for Antisemitism Research, “Antisemitic Attitudes in America: Topline Findings,” ADL, January 12, 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/antisemitic-attitudes-america-topline-findings>.

<sup>5</sup> Anti-Defamation League, “White Supremacist Propaganda Soars to All-Time High in 2022,” ADL-Center on Extremism, March 8, 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/white-supremacist-propaganda-soars-all-time-high-2022>.

<sup>6</sup> Anti-Defamation League, “U.S. White Supremacist Propaganda Remained at Historic Levels in 2021, With 27 Percent Rise in Antisemitic Messaging,” March 3, 2022, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/us-white-supremacist-propaganda-remained-historic-levels-2021-27-percent-rise>; Anti-Defamation League, “Audit of Antisemitic Incidents – Year in Review 2020,” April 2020, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/us-white-supremacist-propaganda-remained-historic-levels-2021-27-percent-rise>.

## France (Jewish population 442,000)

In cooperation with the French Ministry of Interior, the Service de Protection de la Communauté Juive (SPJC) recorded 436 antisemitic incidents in 2022, compared to 589 antisemitic incidents in 2021, 339 incidents in 2020, and 687 incidents in 2019.<sup>7</sup>

Forty-three antisemitic incidents involving physical violence were recorded in 2022, compared to 60 in 2021, 44 in 2020, and 45 in 2019. This number included one incident of homicide. The 48 incidents of vandalism constituted a decrease from the 68 incidents of vandalism in 2021, the 54 incidents recorded in 2020, and the 101 incidents recorded in 2019.

## Canada (Jewish population 394,000)

B'nai Brith Canada recorded a decrease in antisemitic incidents in 2022, down from the record-high 2,799 incidents the organization recorded in 2021. While the exact number of incidents was not available at the time the Report went to print, the organization indicated that it was the third highest in its recorded history and thus higher than 2,200. In 2020, a total of 2,610 incidents were recorded; in 2019, 2,207.

Antisemitic incidents involving physical violence were approximated to have decreased significantly from the high of 75 in 2021 to similar levels recorded in 2020 and 2019, when nine and 14 such incidents were recorded.

## United Kingdom (Jewish population 292,000)

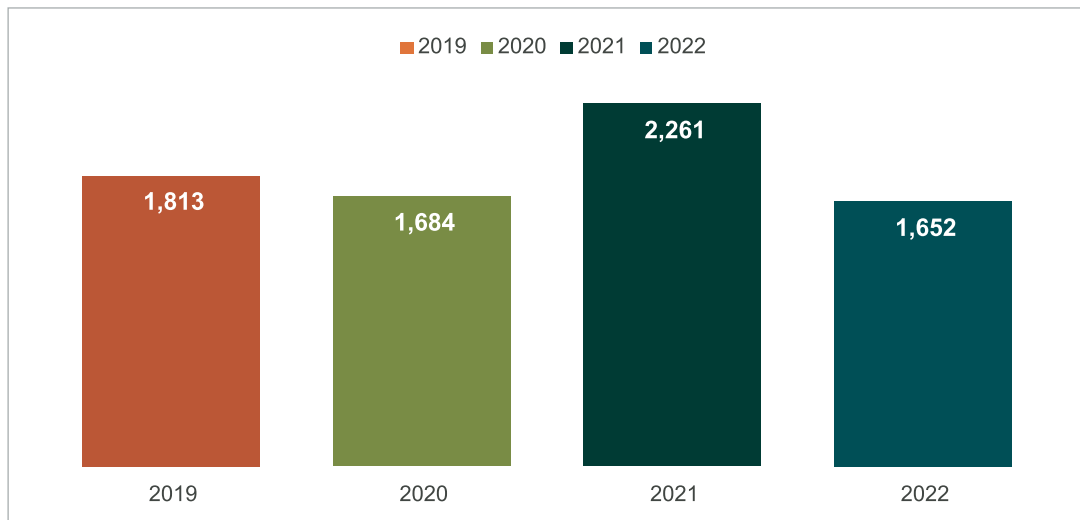
The Community Service Trust (CST) in the United Kingdom recorded 1,652 antisemitic incidents in 2022, a decrease compared to 2,255 incidents recorded in 2021 and almost the same as the number of incidents recorded in 2020 (1,684). In 2019, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, 1,813 incidents were recorded.<sup>8</sup>

The CST recorded a single incident of extreme violence (an attack with the potential or intention of causing death or grievous bodily harm) in 2022, down from three in 2021, three in 2020, and one in 2019. Incidents of assault in 2022 (136) decreased compared to the 174 assaults recorded in 2021. The CST recorded 97 assaults in 2020 and 158 in 2019, respectively. The 74 incidents of damage and desecration of Jewish property marked a decrease compared to the 82 incidents recorded in 2021. It was the same as the number of incidents recorded in 2020, constituting a 15.9% decrease from the 88 incidents recorded in 2019.

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

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

## Total Antisemitic Incidents in UK, 2019–2022



### Argentina (Jewish population 173,000)

The Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA) registered 427 antisemitic incidents in 2022 compared to 488 in 2021 and 504 in 2020. Since DAIA recorded an all-time high in total incidents in 2019 (918), the number of incidents has declined each subsequent year.<sup>9</sup>

Most incidents DAIA recorded occurred online on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. While Facebook is Argentina’s most popular social network, DAIA received more complaints of antisemitism on Twitter than on Facebook. Narratives promoting the conspiracies of Jewish world domination and conspiracy were the most popular, while narratives related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict declined compared to 2021.

### Russia (Jewish population 145,000)

In 2022, the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis recorded no acts of antisemitic violence and five acts of antisemitic vandalism compared to one antisemitic act of violence and three acts of vandalism in 2021. It was the first year since 2018 that SOVA did not record an antisemitic act of violence, while the number of acts of vandalism in 2022 was the same as in 2019.<sup>10</sup>

Documentation of the total number of antisemitic incidents in Russia is lacking, leading to an unclear picture of the state of antisemitism in the country. The SOVA Center data, collected in cooperation with the Russian Jewish Congress (RJC), only addresses acts of violence and vandalism. Absent from its data are incidents of harassment in the country, both online and in the real world. Indeed, online manifestations of antisemitism, such as those on VKontakte, the most popular social network in Russia, or, generally, expressions of antisemitism in public discourse are not accounted for.

<sup>9</sup> For DAIA’s annual antisemitic incidents reports, see: <https://www.daia.org.ar/>.

<sup>10</sup> For the SOVA public database on acts of violence and vandalism since 2007, see: <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/database/>.

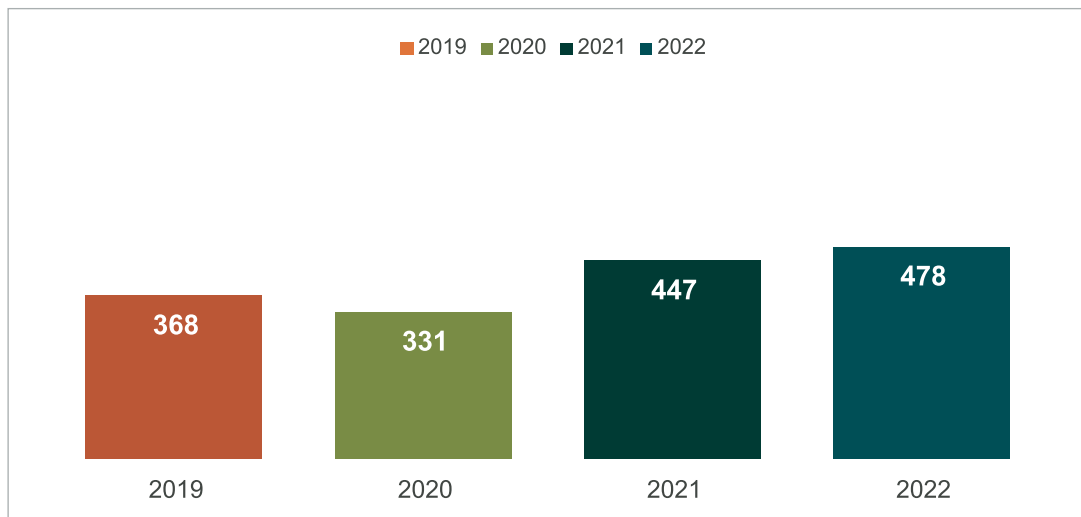
This is all the more problematic for 2022, the year in which the fascist Russian regime of Vladimir Putin launched an illegal war against Ukraine. The Russian regime has advanced antisemitic rhetoric and propaganda to support its war efforts and coerced and subtly threatened the Jewish community in Russia, including shuttering the Jewish Agency. The former Chief Rabbi of Moscow, now living in exile, has urged Jews to leave Russia.

### Australia (Jewish population 118,200)

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), together with Community Security Groups (CSGs) and Jewish state roof bodies, recorded 478 antisemitic incidents in 2022, an increase compared to the 447 incidents recorded in 2021 and the 368 recorded in 2019.<sup>11</sup> In 2022, the number of physical assaults (5) was similar to the number of pre-pandemic assaults in 2019 (4), and constituted a decline from 2020 (8) and 2021 (8).

In addition, in 2022, ECAJ recorded 138 incidents of abuse/harassment, a decrease from 147 incidents in 2021, and an increase from 114 incidents in 2019. One-hundred and twenty-five incidents of graffiti were recorded in 2022 compared to 106 incidents recorded in 2021, and 95 recorded in 2019; the 123 incidents of antisemitic stickers and posters constituted a 70.8% increase from the 72 incidents recorded in 2021, and a 355.6% increase from the 27 incidents recorded in 2019.

### Total Antisemitic Incidents in Australia, 2019–2022



### Germany (Jewish population 118,000)

The Criminal Police Notification Service – Politically Motivated Crimes (KPMD-PMK) collects data on antisemitic crimes and the number of antisemitic acts of violence. In 2022, it recorded 2,639 politically motivated crimes with an antisemitic background, in comparison to 3,028 incidents

<sup>11</sup> For the ECAJ’s annual antisemitic incidents reports, see: <https://www.ecaj.org.au/>.



recorded in 2021 (the highest total recorded to date). The 2022 total was a 16% increase from 2020 (2,275) and a 43.5% increase from 2019 (1,839).<sup>12</sup>

The KPMD-PMK recorded 88 acts of violence and 265 incidents of propaganda compared to 63 acts of violence and 327 incidents of propaganda in 2021, a 39.7% increase and 19% decrease, respectively. The number of recorded acts of violence in 2022 was also higher than in 2020 (55) and 2019 (72).

## Brazil (Jewish population 91,000)

The Brazilian government and Brazilian Jewish organizations have not regularly documented antisemitic incidents in the country, making it difficult to assess the state of antisemitism in Brazil accurately. In August 2022, however, the Observatório Judaico dos Direitos Humanos no Brasil (Jewish Observatory for Human Rights in Brazil) released a report documenting antisemitic and neo-Nazi/neo-fascist incidents in Brazil between January 2019 and June 2022.<sup>13</sup>

In the first half of 2022, the Observatório Judaico documented 11 antisemitic incidents and 32 neo-Nazi/neo-fascist incidents (data on the second half is still unavailable). In 2021 in total, the organization documented 18 antisemitic incidents compared to 14 in 2020 and 12 in 2019. In 2021 it documented 49 neo-Nazi/neo-fascist incidents compared to 21 in 2020 and 12 in 2019.<sup>14</sup>

No violent incidents were recorded in 2022, as in 2021, in contrast to the one incident of violence in 2020.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, a Brazilian court sentenced a pastor who publicly prayed for another Holocaust to eighteen years in prison, a historic sentence for such a crime.<sup>16</sup>

## South Africa (Jewish population 51,000)

According to its annual report, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SABJD) and its Community Security Organization (CSO) recorded 68 antisemitic incidents in South Africa compared to 76 in 2021. No incidents of assault were recorded in 2022, compared to two in 2021 and in 2020, while five incidents of graffiti were recorded in 2022, compared to four in 2021 and in 2020. The greatest number of antisemitic incidents in South Africa fall in the category of verbal abuse (targeted and general), with 28 incidents recorded in 2022, compared to 26 in 2021 and 27 in 2020.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> For the KPMD-PMK's quarterly reports, see: <https://dip.bundestag.de/>.

<sup>13</sup> Jewish Observatory for Human Rights in Brazil, "Antisemitic and Related Events Report," August 17, 2022, <https://www.observatoriojudaico.org.br/post/relatorio-de-eventos-antisemitas-e-correlatos>.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>15</sup> Nathalia Kuhl, "Little Jew Worm': A 57-Year-Old Man is Beaten by 3 Attackers," *Metrópoles*, February 28, 2020, <https://www.metropoles.com/brasil/policia-br/judeuzinho-verme-homem-de57-anos-e-espancado-por-3-agressores>.

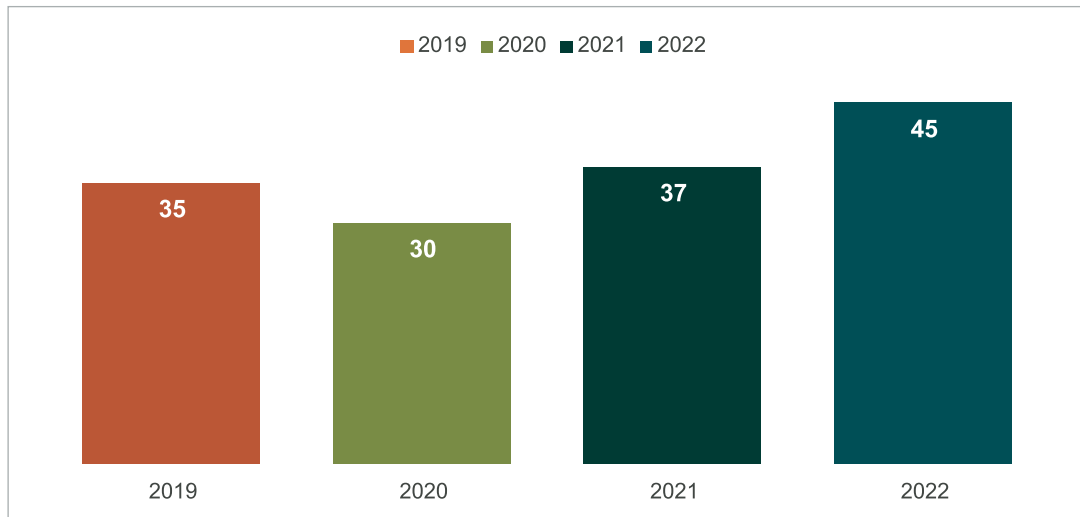
<sup>16</sup> Marcus Gilban, "Judge Gives Brazilian Pastor Who Called for a Second Holocaust Historic 18-Year Prison Sentence," *JTA*, July 5, 2022, <https://www.jta.org/2022/07/05/global/judge-gives-brazilian-pastor-who-called-for-a-second-holocaust-historic-18-year-prison-sentence>.

<sup>17</sup> SABJD-CSO reports for 2019-2022 were generously provided to the Center.

## Hungary (Jewish population 46,500)

The Action and Protection League (APL [Hungarian: Tett és Védelem Alapítvány, TEV]) monitors and analyzes antisemitism in Hungary and several other European countries.<sup>18</sup> In 2022, the APL recorded 45 incidents compared to 37 incidents in 2021, 30 in 2020, and 35 in 2019. Most incidents (2022: 25; 2021: 29) were categorized as hate speech.

### Total Antisemitic Incidents in Hungary, 2019–2022



## Mexico (Jewish population 40,000)

The Tribuna Israelita, one of Mexico’s leading Jewish community organizations, tracks antisemitic incidents in the country, including those in mass media and on social media platforms. In 2022, the organization recorded 21 antisemitic incidents compared to 19 in 2021, 9 in 2020, and 12 in 2019. The majority of incidents fell into the categories of graffiti (2022: 7; 2021: 7) and verbal and physical threats (2022: 6; 2021: 4).

## Belgium (Jewish population 28,000)

Reports and data received from Antisemitisme.be, the primary civil society organization that records antisemitic incidents in Belgium, recorded 17 antisemitic assaults in 2022 compared to three in 2021, a 467% increase and the highest total recorded since 2016 when seven incidents were reported.

## Italy (Jewish population 27,000)

The Observatory of Antisemitism of the Contemporary Jewish Documentation Center (CDEC) recorded 241 incidents of antisemitism in 2022, of which a majority – 164 – occurred online.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> For the TEV’s monthly and annual antisemitic incidents reports in Hungarian, see: <https://tev.hu/>. For English-language reports, see: <https://apleu.org/antisemitic-hate-crimes-and-incidents-reports/>.

<sup>19</sup> For the CDEC’s annual antisemitic incidents reports, see: <https://www.cdec.it/>.

The 77 “real-world” incidents recorded were 71.1% higher than those recorded in 2021. The total number of incidents in 2022 was slightly higher than the total number of incidents in 2021, and slightly higher than the total number of incidents in 2020, but less than the number of incidents in 2019. The CDEC did not record a single case of extreme violence compared to the single case recorded in 2021 (a Jewish man attacked and wounded with a knife; no such incidents were recorded in 2020 or 2019). Similarly, there were two incidents of physical assault in 2022 compared to five in 2021, one in 2020 and two in 2019. The 28 threats in 2022 marked an increase compared to the 26 threats recorded in 2021, 13 in 2020, and nine in 2019.

### Switzerland (Jewish population 18,800)

According to the Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities (SIG), in collaboration with the GRA Foundation Against Racism and Antisemitism and CICAD, 2022 saw a 13.3% increase in the number of “real-world” antisemitic incidents (as defined by them: assault, harassment, and vandalism) in comparison to 2021 and a 37.1% increase in comparison to 2020; data for 2019 was not available.<sup>20</sup>

In 2022, the SIG recorded 57 “real-world” antisemitic incidents in Switzerland’s German, Italian, and Romansh language areas, a moderate increase from the previous year (53) and a significant increase from 2020 (47). There was a single incident of physical assault, nine of graffiti, 16 of verbal abuse, and 29 “comments.”

The SIG recorded 853 online incidents in 2022, compared to 806 in 2021 and 485 in 2020, particularly on social media and in the comments sections of media outlets. However, this increase, though not as large as between 2020 and 2021, possibly reflects better monitoring and reporting and does not necessarily indicate an actual increase in online incidents.

In 2022, CICAD recorded 28 “real-world” antisemitic incidents in the French language area of Switzerland, compared to 22 incidents in 2021 and 15 incidents in 2020. There were 23 incidents of “serious acts” (graffiti, insults, letters) and three “grave acts” (assault, harassment, desecration, arson, targeted threats), compared to seven serious acts and five grave acts in 2021, and three serious acts and three grave acts in 2020.

### Sweden (Jewish population 14,900)

The Action and Protection League (APL), which monitors antisemitic incidents and hate crimes in Sweden, recorded 14 incidents in 2022, compared to 60 in 2021 and 35 in 2020. No incidents of assault were recorded in 2022 compared to one incident in 2021 and one in 2020; a single incident of vandalism was recorded in 2022, the same as in 2021 and 2020. Most incidents recorded by the APL fall under the “Hate Speech” category, which can occur online and in the “real-world.” APL recorded 13 hate speech incidents in 2022, compared to 56 in 2021 and 32 in 2020.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> For the SIG’s and CICAD’s annual antisemitic incidents reports, see: <https://swissjews.ch/en/> and <http://cicad.ch/fr>.

<sup>21</sup> For APL’s monthly English-language antisemitic incidents and hate crimes reports, see: <https://apleu.org/antisemitic-hate-crimes-and-incidents-reports/>.

## Spain (Jewish population 12,900)

The Observatorio de Antisemitismo en España recorded 23 antisemitic incidents in Spain in 2022 compared to eight incidents in 2021 and 16 incidents in 2020, according to the chronology available on its website.<sup>22</sup> Most incidents were acts of vandalism (10) and promoting antisemitic tropes online in the media and on social media platforms (6).

Data from the Spanish Interior Ministry's Crime Statistics System were not yet ready for 2022. According to its data, they registered 11 (2021), 3 (2020), and 5 (2019) incidents, respectively, in previous years.<sup>23</sup>

## Austria (Jewish population 10,300)

The antisemitism reporting office of the Vienna Jewish Community's (Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Wien (IKG)) semi-annual report covering the period of January 1 through June 30, 2022, recorded a total of 381 antisemitic incidents in Austria, a significant decrease from the 562 incidents recorded during the same period in 2021, as well as from the 257 incidents recorded during the same period of 2020.<sup>24</sup>

There were seven physical attacks compared to the eight recorded during the same period in 2021. In the first-half of 2022, IKG recorded 12 threats compared to 11 during the same period in 2021 and 61 incidents of property damage in the first-half of 2022 compared to 58 during the same period in 2021.<sup>25</sup>

## Romania (Jewish population 9,000)

According to data received from the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police, seven criminal complaints under Law No. 157/2018 (regarding measures towards combating and preventing antisemitism) were registered in 2022, compared to four complaints in 2021, three in 2020, and two in 2019.

## Poland (Jewish population 4,500)

According to data from the Polish Police, there were 92 hate crimes of an antisemitic nature identified in 2022, compared to 91 in 2021, 110 in 2020, and 138 in 2019. There were 54 incidents involving "insulting a group or individual" based on his or her national, ethnic, or religious affiliation (Art. 257) compared to 41 in 2021, 89 in 2020, and 64 in 2019. The second largest

<sup>22</sup> A chronology of antisemitic incidents recorded by the Observatorio de Antisemitismo en España is available on its website: <https://observatorioantisemitismo.fcje.org/>.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Ministry of Interior, "Informe sobre la evolución de los delitos de odio en España 2021," 11, <https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/pdf/servicios-al-ciudadano/delitos-de-odio/estadisticas/INFORME-EVOLUCION-DELITOS-DE-ODIO-VDEF.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> According to the IKG, the high number of incidents in the first half of 2021, including eight physical attacks, 11 threats, and 331 incidents of abusive behavior, was due to protests against Covid-19 measures and the Israel-Gaza conflict.

<sup>25</sup> For the IKG's annual antisemitic incidents reports, see: <https://www.antisemitismus-meldestelle.at/>.

category of crimes fell under Art. 256 §1 addressing incitement to hatred and propagating fascism; in 2022, there were 32 incidents compared to 38 in 2021, 17 in 2020, and 63 in 2019. In 2022, there were two acts of violence or threats of violence recorded (Art. 119 §1) compared to four in 2021, none in 2020, and four in 2019.

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

According to data from the Police Presidium of the Czech Republic, in 2022, there were a total of 25 criminal offenses against Jews in the country compared to 37 in 2021. The number of offenses against Jews fell between those recorded in 2020 (27) and 2019 (23).

Crimes in connection to the Jewish community are categorized according to the Czech Criminal Code. In 2022, as in 2021, there was a single criminal case involving threats to an individual or group of people with death or bodily harm, compared to none in 2020 and two in 2019 (§352). In 2022, there were no incidents of disorderly conduct against Jews involving desecration or attacking another compared to three in 2021 and none in 2020 (§358). Two incidents of defamation (§355) and four incidents of instigating hatred (§356) were recorded in 2022, compared to one in 2021 and three in 2021, respectively.

### **Lithuania (Jewish population 2,900)**

According to information received from the Lithuanian Criminal Police Bureau, 27 criminal acts with the aim of expressing hatred for a person or group based on their Jewishness were registered in 2022, compared to six in 2021, 13 in 2020, and 8 in 2019.

Criminal acts against Jews are registered according to the relevant article of Lithuania's criminal code and are not a separate category, while incitement against Jews is registered by denoting the motive to express hatred due to the nationality of others. The majority of registered antisemitic criminal acts consist of incitement. Other acts are related to theft, violation of public order, damage or destruction of property, defamation, and desecration of graves or other places of public respect. It should be noted that Jews are not the primary national group targeted in hate crimes based on nationality.

### **Bulgaria (Jewish population 2,000)**

According to data received from the Organization of Jews in Bulgaria (Shalom), there were nine antisemitic incidents recorded in the country in 2022 (eight in Sofia and one in Plovdiv). Two incidents involved acts of vandalism, while the remaining seven involved acts of harassment on the street or online. Shalom recorded five incidents in 2021, six incidents in 2020, and seven incidents in 2019.

### **Croatia (Jewish population 1,700)**

According to data from Croatia's Ministry of Interior, in 2022, there were two criminal offenses motivated by antisemitism compared to none in 2021, none in 2020, and two in 2019. The two criminal offenses in 2022 were both instances of vandalism (damaging another person's



property), while the two criminal offenses in 2019 were both instances of public incitement to violence and hatred.

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

The Action and Protection League (APL), which monitors antisemitic incidents and hate crimes in Norway, recorded 14 incidents of antisemitic hate speech in the first half of 2022 (January-June). The APL recorded no incidents of vandalism, discrimination, threats, or assaults in Norway in the first half of 2022.<sup>26</sup>

In 2021, the APL recorded 53 incidents in total, the same as in 2020. Most of these incidents were categorized as hate speech (2021: 51; 2020: 40). In 2021, there was only one recorded incident of vandalism, compared to 12 in 2020.

Antisemitic hate crime data for 2022 was not available from Norway's National Police Directorate. In 2021, the National Police Directorate recorded 19 hate crimes motivated by antisemitism compared to 15 in 2020 and 18 in 2019.

<sup>26</sup> For APL's monthly English-language antisemitic incidents and hate crimes reports, see: <https://apleu.org/antisemitic-hate-crimes-and-incidents-reports/>.

# ANALYSIS: WHO ARE THE VICTIMS OF PHYSICAL ASSAULTS?

For the fight against antisemitism to be effective, there must be a clear, systematic idea of who is attacked, where attacks occur, under what circumstances, and by whom. These questions may not always be politically comfortable, but that does not make them any less essential.

Analyses of the locations and victims of physical antisemitic assaults in the two cities that witnessed during 2022 the largest number of reported physical attacks – New York and London – as well as in other cities that saw a significant number of attacks, suggest assaults overwhelmingly took place in a limited number of urban areas; occurred mainly on streets and public transportation (rather than in the vicinity of synagogues or Jewish centers) and appear not to have been premeditated; and their main targets were visibly-identifiable Jews, particularly ultra-Orthodox Jews.

There are three primary motivations for such physical attacks, which are not easy to discern and are not mutually exclusive. One is strong antisemitic sentiments that search for victims or cannot resist preying on victims when provided the opportunity. Another is hatred for Israel and support for the Palestinians (which, ironically, sometimes turns against anti-Zionist Jews). Yet another is bullying impulses that target the ultra-Orthodox because they appear most different and vulnerable.

Regardless of what motivates the offenders, local authorities must deal with them with far greater vigor. The concentration of most attacks in specific neighborhoods indicates the potential of concrete, focused policing, judicial and educational actions to achieve fast and measurable objectives. Law-enforcement must establish clear and realistic goals for curbing antisemitic physical attacks where they exist most, and then invest the resources necessary to ensure these objectives are met. Where possible, this should be done with the help of voluntary, grassroots organizations.

The prominence of religious Jews in the overall number of violent antisemitic attacks in cities with large Jewish populations, and their occurrence in residential areas where few tourists visit, provides a potential explanation for the cynicism with which reports on the state of antisemitism in the West are sometimes met. Specifically, contacts between ultra-Orthodox communities and other Jewish, as well as non-Jewish communities, are limited, and the experiences of members of these communities will not always be shared with the outside world, let alone interpreted as more broadly relevant.

**Data.** According to the New York Police Department (NYPD), 30 anti-Jewish hate crimes involving physical assault were recorded in 2022. Twenty-two of the 30 anti-Jewish assaults recorded by the NYPD occurred in Brooklyn in neighborhoods with high concentrations of ultra-Orthodox Jews – Williamsburg, Crown Heights, Borough Park, and Midwood.

## ANTISEMITISM WORLDWIDE REPORT FOR 2022

Based on media reports, video footage, and other sources, in 23 incidents, the victims were identified as ultra-Orthodox or as very likely ultra-Orthodox. In one incident, we established that the victim was a pro-Zionist protestor who was not ultra-Orthodox. In six incidents we could not establish whether the victims were ultra-Orthodox or very likely ultra-Orthodox.

Nineteen of the 23 incidents on which data could be obtained occurred on the street, while two occurred on public transportation. Only a single incident occurred at a religious site – a prayer tent outside of the world headquarters of the Chabad-Lubavitch Hassidic movement in Crown Heights.

In London, the Stamford Hill Shomrim, a voluntary monitoring and security organization, recorded 29 antisemitic assaults in 2022. All occurred in boroughs (Hackney and Haringey) with large populations of religious Jews, particularly ultra-Orthodox. Twenty-eight of the victims were identified by our team through media reports, video footage, and other sources as ultra-Orthodox or as very likely ultra-Orthodox.

Another Jewish organization, CST – Protecting Our Jewish Community, reported a higher number of 82 physical antisemitic assaults in Greater London in 2022. It noted that 60 of the attacks occurred in the boroughs of Barnet (35) and Hackney (25). The two have the largest populations of ultra-Orthodox Jews, and more broadly of visibly-identifiable Jews, in Greater London. Barnet has the largest Jewish population in the UK, constituting 14.5% of the borough's population according to the 2021 census, while Hackney's Jewish population is 6.7% (the percentage is likely higher as the census question regarding religious affiliation is optional).

An analysis of the CST data informed that of the 60 assaults that occurred in Barnet and Hackney, 41 occurred or likely occurred on the street, while 13 occurred on public transportation – the tube, buses, and tube stations. Only two took place outside of synagogues.

According to the CST, 30 of the assaults in Barnet and Hackney were committed against “visibly Jewish” victims. However, this number is likely higher for several reasons: (a) incident reports the CST receives from the Metropolitan Police typically do not contain enough information to ascertain whether the victim was visibly Jewish (only four of the 32 assault reports had such information), and (b) given the Jewish population of Hackney is overwhelmingly ultra-Orthodox, it is probable the victims of all 25 incidents were ultra-Orthodox or likely ultra-Orthodox (CST only identified 12 of the 25 victims as being visibly Jewish).

While the data provided by the CST did not allow our team to independently examine the exact locations and affiliations of Jews attacked, the organization noted that most cases of assault and extreme violence took place in areas that “are home to some of the largest and most clearly identifiable Jewish communities in the UK. The prominent visibility of Jewish signifiers, whether at an individual or collective level, correlates with the likelihood of antisemitic assault.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> CST, “Antisemitic Incidents 2022,” February 9, 2023, 19.

Chicago also saw a significant number of physical assaults against Jews – 11, according to its police department. All the attacks occurred in north Chicago, the area with the greatest concentration of Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jews in the metropole.<sup>2</sup>

Antisemitism Belgium, a voluntary Jewish organization, recorded 17 reports of physical assaults in 2022 compared to three reports of physical assaults in 2021 (see p. 18). Of these, 15 occurred in Antwerp. A 2022 demographic study informed around 63% of Jews in Antwerp identified as ultra-Orthodox while another 19% identified as Orthodox.<sup>3</sup> Antisemitism Belgium reported that in all cases in Antwerp, the victims were identifiably Jewish.

Based on a chronology of incidents available on its website, 12 of the assaults took place on the street, while two occurred at the entrances of synagogues (one incident was not listed).

Given the importance of precise and nuanced data on the nature of physical attacks, it is disappointing that in some cities and countries it cannot be obtained or verified. Berlin, for example, witnessed 24 cases of antisemitic attacks in 2022, yet because of the strict privacy laws applied in Germany, despite months of efforts, our team was unable to learn much about the identity of those attacked in all but a few cases. Efforts to obtain similar data about physical attacks in Paris have also yielded limited results.

**— Dr. Carl Yonker, with contributions from Jesse Weinberg and Fabian Spengler**

<sup>2</sup> The proportion of Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox (which the study classifies as “modern” and “other,” respectively) within the Chicago Jewish community as a whole is only 7% (4% Orthodox and 3% ultra-Orthodox). See: Janet Krasner Aronson et al., “2020 Metropolitan Chicago Jewish Population Study,” Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies – Brandeis University, 2021, <https://hdl.handle.net/10192/45003>, 19, 52.

<sup>3</sup> L. Daniel Staetsky and Sergio DellaPergola, “Jews in Belgium – A Demographic and Social Portrait of Two Jewish Populations,” JPR – European Jewish Demography Unit, August 2022, 26.

# FIELD REPORT: VOICES FROM STAMFORD HILL

Stamford Hill, a neighborhood in the Hackney borough of London, has a Jewish population of as many as 30,000 Jews, most of whom are Hassidic ultra-Orthodox. They comprise about half of the neighborhood's residents.

On the main streets are kosher supermarkets and bakeries, as well as Jewish fashion, jewelry, appliance, and DVD stores. There are as many as two dozen Jewish kindergartens, schools, and Yeshivas. Dozens of Yiddish, English and Hebrew Jewish newspapers are on sale, including a local Stamford Hill weekly and *Hamodi'a*, the mouthpiece of Agudat Israel, which is available on the day of its publication in Israel. Unlike in Israel, only a small minority of the men are not employed.

Despite the visibility of Jewish life, the neighborhood is not a physical enclave. The main streets and public transportation mix Jews and non-Jews of different ethnicities, and at first glance, the area does not strike as religiously unique.

Rabbi Herschel Gluck, the Vienna-born son of Jews who escaped the Nazis at the very last minute, established the Shomrim [The Guardians] in 2008. The voluntary organization, which today is comprised of 30 volunteers, records incidents of antisemitism, attends to attacks as they happen, and encourages the police to prosecute offenders. Volunteers are unarmed but receive training, including from the London police.

As the above data suggest, the Hackney borough, where Stamford Hill is located and where the majority of the Jewish population is ultra-Orthodox, was a main area for antisemitic incidents in 2022. In a conversation at his home close to Stamford Hill, where a photo of him and the late Queen is placed on the cupboard, Gluck related two main reasons for the rise of antisemitic incidents in the neighborhood.

First, Covid-19. According to Gluck, there is lingering anger about the lockdowns and their financial implications, and about politicians seen as not abiding by their own emergency instructions. Jews, seen by antisemites as part of a so-called privileged elite, have become, for some living in Stamford Hill, a visible and immediate target. Second, and more broadly, dismay with the elites, and belief in the role of certain Jews in the operation of global networks of influence, cultivate anti-Jewish sentiments.

Rabbi Gluck holds that contrary to the conventional wisdom, the vast majority of offenders are white Christian nationalists, rather than Muslims. He related that a few months ago, he was physically attacked at a bus stop by a white British man who pushed him without provocation. He has no doubt the motive was antisemitic. Gluck did not report the attack to the police.

The founder of the Shomrim was unable to convince any of the victims of antisemitic attacks to speak with the Report. But finding such victims on the streets of Stamford Hill is not a difficult task, as conversations with 15 local Jews suggested. All were promised anonymity.

A man in his early thirties related how several months ago, as he was driving his car with his wife, two teenagers stopped in front of him and threw eggs at his car. He immediately called the police to complain, but they did nothing.

A middle-aged, self-employed grandmother of over 30 grandchildren (“we do not tell how many children we have, only how many grandchildren”) said last Hanukkah, her nine-year-old grandson, who was on his way home from school on a bus with his friends, was attacked by a 16-year-old pupil, whom he believed to be a Muslim.

The 16-year-old pinched the boy and told him: “Hitler should have done all of you.” The bus driver must have heard the entire incident yet did nothing. The grandson and his friends got off the bus at the next station. The grandmother said she advises her younger grandchildren not to walk alone on certain streets. The incident was not reported to the police.

We heard different opinions around Stamford Hill as to the motivations of the attackers. Some argued most of the attacks are motivated by old Christian and newer Muslim antisemitic hatred against Jews. Others pointed to more nuanced motivations. The grandmother suggested that the rapid growth of Jewish presence in the neighborhood, including their dominance in local businesses, generates resentment.

One Israeli-born Haredi in his mid-twenties said most attackers are not conscious antisemites, but young bullies who search for victims, including for the “entertainment” of recording assaults and posting them on TikTok. Those bullies recognize the vulnerability and passivity of the ultra-Orthodox; if they slapped a Muslim man or pulled off the hijab of a Muslim lady, they would be beaten up, whereas if they attacked a Haredi Jew, the victim would remain passive.

As did two of his friends, he spoke about a local gang of bullies, led by a young kid, too young to be arrested by the police and encouraged by indifferent parents, who systematically search for young Jewish children to harass and beat up. He stressed that he felt reports on antisemitic attacks in the area are inflated. When he came to live in Stamford Hill, he said, he was warned to expect such attacks. Yet to date, nothing has happened.

With most offenders not being prosecuted and a majority of the more minor offenses most likely not even reported, the motivations of the attackers can only be speculated. What is clear, however, is that the victims would not have been attacked had they not been Jewish.

Gluck said that when Jews are attacked, the historical trauma they carry factors in and makes the assault more traumatic. He added that while ultra-Orthodox Jews are the main and almost only target, they are the “canary in the mine,” testifying to the existence of a problem of antisemitism in the United Kingdom, from which other Jews will ultimately possibly suffer. “Antisemitic attacks are relatively rare,” argued Gluck, “but they should have been even rarer, especially given the government’s promises and assertions that they care passionately about antisemitism and eradicating it. It’s true that the resources of the police are very stretched, but

at the same time, they exist, and if they exist, they must have priorities, and antisemitism, it seems, is not one of those priorities because the government does not really care.”

The founder of the Shomrim suggested that the fight against antisemitism is more of a “political football,” a field for slogans and passionate speeches rather than actual action. A more effective fight, he said, should involve four elements.

First, most incidents fall under the category of minor offenses. The police do not prioritize dealing with them, let alone indicting, so offenders have learned they can get away with attacking Jews. Second, there is a need for greater police presence and surveillance in the areas where most attacks occur. Third, there should be more notifications on billboards, including on public transportation, that caution against the criminality of any kind of racially-motivated attacks or slander, and encourage witnesses to communicate with call-in centers. Fourth, it should be recognized that Holocaust education in schools is failing as a means to discourage antisemitism. Gluck, who is personally involved in such classes, said perhaps a more useful tool is to have non-Jews meet community members in person.

None of the Jews with whom we spoke in Stamford Hill related that they felt afraid for their personal safety. None considered moving from the United Kingdom, including those highly critical of the authorities. Asked whether Eretz Hakodesh, where Jews are the majority, is an option, some said it was not realistically so, noting the cultural difference between British-born and Israeli-born Jews, the high cost of living in Israel, and the discrimination and intolerance experienced by Haredim also in Israel, as they put it.

A sense of complacency and retreat, bringing back memories from different eras in Jewish history, was heard from some. One Satmar Haredi, a recently married shop-owner in his early twenties, related that while he was never personally attacked by antisemites, a few of his friends were. He argued that nothing can or should be done against this phenomenon. Such attacks, he said, are the reality of Jews in exile; they cannot fight back, but rather should pray for the Messiah to come and bring about redemption.

A middle-aged Hassid said: “You write this down: There is no problem of antisemitism here. There is only a problem for those Jews who pretend to be Jewish but are not. When British people see someone dressed as I am, they respect me.”

A Rabbi and educator in his fifties said he believed the real problem is that Jews forget they are a minority in the area and sometimes act as if they are the masters, triggering resentment. He gave the example of Purim festivities, when some Jews make a lot of noise on the main streets. The Rabbi argued the problem of antisemitism is exaggerated.

We asked to speak with the Rabbi’s students to hear if they felt the same. The Rabbi called his teenage son, who said he and his friends feel safe in London. He then gave the matter a second thought and recalled how a few weeks ago, a white man shouted at him: “Jew, go back to Poland.”

— **Prof. Uriya Shavit and Dr. Carl Yonker**



**SECTION 2**  
**CASE STUDIES**





# GERMANY: THE ANTISEMITIC COUP THAT FAILED

The sky was gloomy and overcast on the day Heinrich XIII Prinz Reuß's aspirations of becoming ruler of the German Reich shattered. In the morning hours of December 7, 2022, police broke down the door of his apartment in the affluent Westend district of Frankfurt am Main. When they escorted the prince out of the building, he was dressed in a dark-green tweed jacket and brown corduroy pants, his grey hair combed to the back, looking more like a high school teacher for classic languages than a revolutionary.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, that is what German police and the *Verfassungsschutz* (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, the domestic intelligence agency) were convinced Heinrich XIII sought to become. They allege that together with some forty to fifty co-conspirators, he was preparing to stage a coup, dissolve Germany's democratic institutions, and declare a return of the Reich.

The diverse array of conspirators – all arrested on the same day along with the prince – notably included former and active elite soldiers and a judge who served as a member of the federal parliament, the Bundestag, for the right-wing Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). The prince himself makes a living as a real estate agent.<sup>2</sup>

The ludicrousness of a few dozen plotters, even if they included elite soldiers, singlehandedly staging a coup in one of the world's most stable democracies is obvious. They apparently counted on vast segments of the population joining them in a spontaneous uprising. The soldiers in the group were trying to convince other military men and women to lend armed support. And Heinrich XIII's Russian-born romantic partner Vitalia tried but failed to establish contact with Putin's regime to negotiate the post-coup relationship with the Reich.<sup>3</sup>

However, beyond what may seem like satire, the core of the affair is frightening. It highlights the increasing propensity for violence by conspiracy theorists in Germany. These activists are united by deep-rooted antisemitism, and they pose a threat to individual Jews and to Jewish institutions.

The so-called Reichsbürger have existed since 1945. The term does not describe one coherent group or ideology, but diverse approaches that share common traits: "Reichsbürger [...] acknowledge the existence, legitimacy, and sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Germany only conditionally or not at all. Instead, they claim that since the end of the First World War or Second World War, the German people have been living under a continuous secret occupation

<sup>1</sup> Katja Thorwarth, "Prinz Reuß von den 'Reichsbürgern' bedient antisemitische Verschwörungserzählungen," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, December 12, 2022, <https://www.fr.de/politik/razzia-reichsbuerger-prinz-reuss-festnahme-frankfurt-wer-ist-der-adelige-verschwoerungstheorien-91962057.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Maik Baumgärtner et al., "Das Innenleben der 'Reichsbürger'-Truppe," *Der Spiegel*, December 15, 2022, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/heinrich-xiii-prinz-reuss-und-das-innenleben-der-reichsbuerger-truppe-codename-krone-a-1538ccf9-d531-4969-9e9b-0f6bba4b9a52>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

by foreign forces and are, therefore, not a sovereign people. Adherents of this ideology want to (re)establish German sovereignty via the restoration of a historical German Reich, or through declarations of sovereignty for themselves or their groups, or by the foundation of their own ‘states.’”<sup>4</sup>

Core to Reichsbürger ideology are beliefs common to antisemitic conspiracy theories: that there is a secret Jewish network that controls the world through finance and puppet regimes, that Jews seek to undermine and destroy the German people (for example, by creating an artificial Federal Republic) and that the Holocaust was an invention to serve those purposes.<sup>5</sup>

An archetype Reichsbürger was Wolfgang Ebel (1939-2014).<sup>6</sup> In the 1970s, he worked as a railway worker in West-Berlin on behalf of the East German railway company, which operated the trains in West-Berlin based on a special agreement. In 1980, Ebel was fired after participating in a strike. He fought his dismissal in court and, during the trial, developed the idea that the Federal Republic of Germany did not actually exist and that, instead, the German Reich continued to exist. Consequently, a state that did not exist could not fire him.

Ebel claimed to have been asked by Allied secret services to restore the Reich. He added that, in his view, there had never been a peace treaty between the Reich and the Allies to conclude the Second World War, and thus the two parties were still at war. Ebel first called himself General Representative of the Reich, then Transport Minister, and finally Chancellor. He was initially not an open antisemite but adopted right-wing antisemitic discourse the more he developed his ideas.

He began speaking of the Federal Republic of Germany as a construct intended to ensure foreign rule over Germans and declared that chancellor Helmut Kohl (Christian Democratic Union (CDU), in office 1982-1998) was actually a Jew and that his name was Hennoch Kohn. Ebel and his followers later also claimed that chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU, in office 2005-2021) held Israeli citizenship and that Germany was a company exploited by Merkel on behalf of Jewish financial networks.<sup>7</sup>

While most Reichsbürger belong to the right-wing or even extreme right-wing of the political spectrum, not all do.<sup>8</sup> Some are eccentrics who primarily seek to establish their own state but for whom right-wing ideology is not central. At the same time, not all right-wing extremists are

<sup>4</sup> Jan Rathje, “For Reich and Volksgemeinschaft – Against the World Conspiracy: Antisemitism and Sovereignism in the Federal Republic of Germany Since 1945,” *Antisemitism Studies* 5, no. 1 (2021), 101.

<sup>5</sup> Niklas Herrberg, “Durch Gott legitimiert, das ‘Reich’ zu befreien,” *Zeitschrift für Religion, Gesellschaft und Politik* 5, no. 2 (2021), 514-518; Rathje, “For Reich and Volksgemeinschaft – Against the World Conspiracy,” 103-107.

<sup>6</sup> Jan Rathje, “Verschwörungsideologischer Souveränismus von ‘Reichsbürgern,’” *Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung*, April 14, 2022, <https://www.bpb.de/themen/rechtsextremismus/dossier-rechtsextremismus/210330/verschwoerungsideologischer-souveraenismus-von-reichsbuergern/>.

<sup>7</sup> Rathje, “For Reich and Volksgemeinschaft – Against the World Conspiracy,” 112-114; some *Reichsbürger* speak of Germany as a joint-venture between Israel and the Vatican, see: Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Lagebild Antisemitismus 2020/21,” Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat (2022), [https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/publikationen/DE/allgemein/2022-04-lagebild-antisemitismus.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=3, 71](https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/publikationen/DE/allgemein/2022-04-lagebild-antisemitismus.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3, 71).

<sup>8</sup> Herrberg, “Durch Gott legitimiert, das ‘Reich’ zu befreien,” 506.

Reichsbürger. Some do recognize the existence and general legitimacy of the Federal Republic, even if they seek to change the political regime.

The now-arrested Heinrich XIII Prinz Reuß shares typical Reichsbürger views. He was born in 1951 in Büdingen in the German state of Hesse and stems from a noble family that once ruled over two small principalities in what is today the state of Thuringia (together some 1,100 square kilometers; for comparison, the size of Berlin is around 900 square kilometers).<sup>9</sup> According to hundreds of years of family tradition, all male offspring (not merely first-born males) must be named Heinrich. The title Prinz no longer bears legal merit in Germany.

In 2019, Heinrich XIII delivered a keynote speech at a technology conference in Switzerland, the Worldwebforum. His speech was titled “Experience the Rise and Fall of the Blue-Blooded Elite,” and it is unclear how it was relevant to the realm of technology. Heinrich XIII spoke for some fifteen minutes about the alleged injustices his family endured, mainly the end of German aristocracy “and the suffering that came with it.” He lamented the dispossession of some of his family’s estates. He then went on a tirade against Jews and democracy.<sup>10</sup>

The people responsible for his family’s “misfortune”? – the Rothschilds, who he declared conspired to sew chaos in the world, for example, through the French Revolution, controlling the throne of England, and sparking the First World War.<sup>11</sup> He repeatedly referred to “international finance and freemasons.” He explained that democracy and the Federal Republic of Germany were only illusions as Germany remained an American Protectorate.<sup>12</sup>

Despite their evidently extremist, antisemitic ideology, Reichsbürger such as Heinrich XIII went almost unnoticed in public discourse and academia, save for occasional reports about oddballs who declared a kingdom in their backyard, wrote a constitution for that kingdom, and printed their own passports. This perception of non-threatening extremists changed drastically in 2016 when police arrived at the house of Reichsbürger Wolfgang Plan to confiscate weapons he illegally possessed. Plan shot at the officers, killing one and wounding several others.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Rewert Hoffer, “Rothschilds, Freimaurer, Deutschland GmbH: So Tickt Heinrich XIII. Prinz Reuss,” *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, December 7, 2022, <https://www.nzz.ch/international/reichsbuerger-wer-ist-heinrich-xiii-prinz-reuss-ld.1715891>.

<sup>10</sup> Heinrich XIII Prinz Reuß, “Experience the Rise and Fall of the Blue-Blooded Elite,” Worldwebforum 2019, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAQ8-\\_\\_VLvw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAQ8-__VLvw).

<sup>11</sup> Katja Thorwarth, “Prinz Reuß von den ‘Reichsbürgern’ bedient antisemitische Verschwörungserzählungen,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, December 12, 2022, <https://www.fr.de/politik/razzia-reichsbuerger-prinz-reuss-festnahme-frankfurt-wer-ist-der-adelige-verschwörungstheorien-91962057.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Heinrich XIII Prinz Reuß, “Experience the Rise and Fall of the Blue-Blooded Elite”; Hoffer, “Rothschilds, Freimaurer, Deutschland GmbH.”

<sup>13</sup> Rathje, “For Reich and Volksgemeinschaft – Against the World Conspiracy,” 100; Herrberg, “Durch Gott legitimiert, das ‘Reich’ zu befreien,” 505.

With around 21,000 adherents, the number of Reichsbürger ranks only slightly lower than that of other extremist groups who receive widespread public attention, such as Islamists (28,000).<sup>14</sup> While the *Verfassungsschutz* noted in 2022 that, thus far, antisemitic crimes committed by Reichsbürger were limited to statements and did not include physical acts of violence,<sup>15</sup> the agency has come to recognize that Reichsbürger make up a core part of an emerging, obscure milieu of conspiracy theorists from which physical violence emits, including against Jews.

Thomas Haldenwang, president of the *Verfassungsschutz*, stated that “the uncovered network [surrounding Heinrich XIII Prinz Reuß] is a perfect example of the development of a new, violent mixed milieu [*Mischszene*], in which Reichsbürger ideologies, conspiracy theories from the realm of delegitimizers [*Delegitimierer*], and extremist right-wing narratives come together.”<sup>16</sup>

This mixed milieu roughly developed in the past ten years against the background of several – perceived or real – crises. Those notably included the so-called refugee crisis in 2015-2016, when over a million refugees, mainly from Muslim countries, arrived in Germany, and the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to the suspension of certain liberal freedoms.

Judging by the size of protests against migration and Covid-19 measures, it is evident that tens of thousands of Germans struggled to come to terms with the social changes these developments forced and relied on conspiracy theories that integrated antisemitic slander to make sense of them. Some followers of the various conspiracy theories have already resorted to violent means.

In 2017, for example, police uncovered the double life of Lieutenant Colonel Franco Albrecht, born in Offenbach in 1989 to an Italian father and a German mother. Aside from being a soldier, Albrecht posed as a Syrian refugee, managing to get officially registered as such, even though he spoke no Arabic and claimed his name was David Benjamin – a rather unlikely name for a Syrian. Investigators found a list with names of politicians that they alleged Albrecht was preparing to kill, intending to make it look like an Islamist terror attack. Albrecht had previously voiced anti-Islamic and antisemitic comments and defended Holocaust deniers. During his trial, he confessed to hoarding guns in preparation for the eventual breakdown of public order.<sup>17</sup>

In 2019, Stephan Balliet tried but failed to enter a synagogue in Halle on Yom Kippur to kill the assembled worshippers. As he was unable to open the door, Balliet instead killed two people

<sup>14</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Verfassungsschutzbericht 2021: Fakten und Tendenzen,” Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat (2022), [https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/publikationen/DE/verfassungsschutzberichte/2022-06-07-verfassungsschutzbericht-2021-fakten-und-tendenzen-kurzzusammenfassung.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=2](https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/publikationen/DE/verfassungsschutzberichte/2022-06-07-verfassungsschutzbericht-2021-fakten-und-tendenzen-kurzzusammenfassung.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2), 11, 21, 36; the numbers are estimates that the *Verfassungsschutz* deduces based on membership in groups and organizations it identifies as belonging to a certain ideology. The office factors in that some people are members of several groups and organizations. See, for example, the explanation for right-wing extremism: Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Rechtsextremismus und rechtsextremistischer Terrorismus,” Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, no date, [https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/verfassungsschutz/der-bericht/vsb-rechtsextremismus/vsb-rechtsextremismus\\_node.html](https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/verfassungsschutz/der-bericht/vsb-rechtsextremismus/vsb-rechtsextremismus_node.html)).

<sup>15</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Lagebild Antisemitismus 2020/21,” 71.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Götschenberg, “Gefährliche Mischung,” *Tagesschau*, December 8, 2023, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/innenpolitik/reichsbuerger-szene-101.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Ludger Fittkau and Markus Pindur, “Die verworrene Geschichte um Franco A,” *Deutschlandfunk*, July 15, 2022, <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/prozess-wegen-terrorverdachts-die-verworrene-geschichte-um-100.html>.

in the synagogue's vicinity out of frustration. Balliet uploaded a pamphlet in which he blamed Jews for the mass migration of Muslims to Germany. He believed that Jews controlled the German government.<sup>18</sup>

In 2020, Tobias Rathjen killed nine people with Turkish and Middle Eastern migration backgrounds in a shooting spree in Hanau, and then killed his mother and himself. Before committing the murders, he, too, uploaded a pamphlet to the internet in which he explained that he understood migration as a Jewish conspiracy to undermine Western societies.<sup>19</sup>

The *Querdenker* (lit. queerthinkers) developed directly following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. The term alludes to people with controversial ideas or who think outside the box. *Querdenker* are skeptical of the existence of the virus and/or opposed governmental regulations to curb its spread. The group comprises a diverse spectrum of people – at protests, rainbow flags of the LGBTQI movement flew next to German Empire war flags (*Reichskriegsflaggen*) waved by neo-Nazis.<sup>20</sup>

*Querdenker*, too, relied on a host of antisemitic imagery. They compared Covid-19 regulations to Nazi laws, wore yellow *Judensterne* to allude to vaccination certificates, and called the vaccine Zyklon B.<sup>21</sup> Some believe in the antisemitic conspiracy theory that Covid-19 was a Jewish invention used by the Rothschilds, George Soros, and Bill Gates, whom some claimed to be Jewish, to maintain control over the world.<sup>22</sup>

In August 2020, during a *Querdenker* protest in Berlin's government quarter, a mob of some 300-400 people jumped across police barriers and tried to storm the Reichstag – the old parliament building that today houses the Bundestag. Police found that the mob included *Querdenker*, followers of QAnon, right-wing extremists, and Reichsbürger.<sup>23</sup> In 2021, police uncovered a plot by some *Querdenker* to kill government officials, such as the Prime Minister of Saxony, Michael Kretschmer (CDU).<sup>24</sup>

The violent threat emitting from Reichsbürger and fellow conspiracy theorists is exacerbated by the recognition that a significant number of the arrested plotters are active or former soldiers and that other members possess weapons illegally.<sup>25</sup> Klikauer called Reichsbürger one of the “best-armed right-wing groups in Germany.”<sup>26</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Hannes Heine, “Höchststrafe für Halle-Attentäter,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, December 22, 2020, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/stephan-balliet-attackiert-im-gericht-judischen-nebenklager-6861076.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel Bax, “Der Hass und seine Wegbereiter,” *Die Tageszeitung*, February 17, 2021, <https://taz.de/Ein-Jahr-nach-Anschlag-in-Hanau/!5747116/>.

<sup>20</sup> Daniel H. Heinke, “The Security Threat Posed by the Corona-Skeptic Querdenken Movement in Germany,” *CTC Sentinel* 15, no. 3 (March 2022), 20.

<sup>21</sup> Patrick Gensing, “NS-Relativierung verfestigt sich,” *Tagesschau*, November 9, 2021, <https://www.tagesschau.de/investigativ/antisemitismus-querdenken-ns-verharmlosung-101.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Lagebild Antisemitismus 2020/21,” 54-55.

<sup>23</sup> Heinke, “The Security Threat Posed by the Corona-Skeptic Querdenken Movement in Germany,” 19.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

<sup>25</sup> Rathje, “For Reich and Volksgemeinschaft – Against the World Conspiracy,” 124.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Klikauer, “German Neo-Nazis and a New Party,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 30, no. 1/2 (2019), 244.



Already, before the arrest of Prinz Heinrich XIII and his group, there were public debates in Germany about extremism among soldiers. The *Kommando Spezialkräfte* (Special Forces Commando, KSK), the elite unit of the German army, came under particular scrutiny. Several soldiers were fired for their views, and some commentators called for disbanding the unit altogether.<sup>27</sup>

Heinrich XIII's second-in-command and head of the plotters' military wing was Rüdiger von Pescatore. He led a paratrooper battalion that merged with KSK before he was dismissed for illegal arms trading. Another plotter was Maximilian Eder, a retired colonel and co-founder of KSK, who often spoke at *Querdenker* events and who had called for bringing KSK to Berlin to "clean up" there.<sup>28</sup> Eder, von Pescatore, and Heinrich XIII will not presently get a chance to bring a new order to Berlin. They will likely spend years in real and imagined prisons. However, the threat to democracy in Germany posed by Reichsbürger and other conspiracy theorists will remain very real.

— **Fabian Spengler**

<sup>27</sup> Joachim Käppner and Mike Szymanski, "Warum Kramp-Karrenbauer weiter auf das KSK setzt," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, June 15, 2021, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/ksk-bundeswehr-reform-1.5323207>.

<sup>28</sup> Julia Klaus, "Wusste Verschwörer-Oberst von Razzia?," *ZDF*, December 12, 2022, <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/reichsbuerger-razzia-eder-bundeswehr-100.html>.

# JAPAN: ANTISEMITES MAKE IT TO PARLIAMENT

A great measure of stability has characterized post-war Japanese democracy. Since 1955, the hegemonic conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was only voted out of office twice. Since 2012, when the LDP returned to power after a three-year absence, it has won eight consecutive national elections.

The current government is a coalition of the LDP, led by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, and the Komeito Party, backed by a Buddhist new religious organization, Soka Gakkai. Of the 465 seats in the House of Representatives, the lower house of Japan's parliament, the LDP holds 260 seats.<sup>1</sup> It does not face any strong opposition capable of bringing about a change of government. The leading opposition party is the liberal Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP), which is failing to gain momentum. The center-right Japan Innovation Party is rapidly emerging as a more potent political force.

In recent years, populist parties have also gained modest popularity but have had limited electoral success, including in the most recent 2022 election for the House of Councillors, the upper house of Japan's National Diet.<sup>2</sup> Among them is the NHK party, which called for reforming the public broadcasting provider, Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK, Japan Broadcasting Corporation, from which the party takes its name), as well as for cutting taxes. Another populist voice that made it to parliament is the Sanseito party,<sup>3</sup> which promotes investments in education, food safety, and increased defense spending. Each won a single seat in the upper house (out of 125) in 2022.<sup>4</sup> Both sit in the opposition.

The NHK party and Sanseito party are radically unique on the Japanese political map in disseminating antisemitic propaganda about Jewish domination of international finance globalization.

Antisemitism has surfaced in various forms throughout Japan's modern history in culture and politics, but its presence in politics has been relatively rare. Viewed within a broader context,

<sup>1</sup> "Name of Constituency and Number of Members by Constituency," The House of Representatives, Japan, February 13, 2023; [https://www.shugiin.go.jp/internet/itdb\\_annai.nsf/html/statics/shiryo/kaiha\\_m.htm](https://www.shugiin.go.jp/internet/itdb_annai.nsf/html/statics/shiryo/kaiha_m.htm) [in Japanese].

<sup>2</sup> Reiwa Shinsengumi Party, which pledged in the last election to abolish the consumption tax and to provide cash transfers four times a year, is representative of such parties. "Reiwa Shinsengumi Party's Emergency Policy 2022 for House of Councillors," Reiwa Shinsengumi Party, date unknown, [https://reiwa-shinsengumi.com/sanin2022\\_kinkyu/](https://reiwa-shinsengumi.com/sanin2022_kinkyu/) [in Japanese].

<sup>3</sup> Sohei Kamiya states in his book that *Sanseito* means "a team that creates a politics in which everyone can participate." Sohei Kamiya, *Sanseito Party Q&A Book* (Tokyo: Seirindo, 2022), 26 [in Japanese].

<sup>4</sup> "The NHK Party's House of Councillors Election Campaign Pledge Pamphlet," NHK Party, June 25, 2022, <https://syoha-senkyo.jp/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/nhk-commitment.pdf> [in Japanese]; "Sanseito Policy," Sanseito Party, <https://www.sanseito.jp/policy/> [in Japanese]; and Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, "Number of Candidates for the New Front Office by Party Affiliation by Gender (Proportional Representation, Beating Zone)," July 10, 2022, [https://www.soumu.go.jp/main\\_content/000825825.xls](https://www.soumu.go.jp/main_content/000825825.xls) [in Japanese].

the antisemitic conspiracy of nefarious Jewish global influence is but one of several conspiracy theories advanced by the two populist parties to expand their bases of support. They have done so largely as a means to an end, the end being attracting attention and winning the support of disaffected segments of society, and the means – changing or moderating their outrageous statements based on cynical calculations.

According to Goodman, the origins of antisemitism in Japan date back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Following the Russian Revolution, Japanese soldiers serving in Siberia “came into close contact with White Russian troops” who introduced them to *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.<sup>5</sup> Upon their return to Japan, several soldiers began publicizing the Protocols, including Higuchi Tsuyanosuke and Yasue Norihiro, who was the first to publish a complete translation of the Protocols in 1924 and came to be considered the “Jewish expert” of the Japanese army.<sup>6</sup>

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of books were published, some by leading publishing houses in Japan, that advanced antisemitic notions of a global Jewish conspiracy. Popular author and Christian fundamentalist preacher Masami Uno published two bestsellers alleging “America is a Jewish nation” and that the Jews were a “behind-the-scenes nation” controlling major corporations around the world.<sup>7</sup>

In the early 1990s, in part as a response to the American-led coalition to liberate Kuwait, some one-hundred books related to Jews, some espousing theories of a Jewish conspiracy to control the world, were published in Japan and gained popularity. The publications provoked a great deal of criticism but also revealed a broader lack of understanding of the harmful content being published.<sup>8</sup>

Antisemitic rhetoric in Japanese political discourse also increased at the time, suggesting Jewish manipulation of America and efforts to sow disorder in Japan.<sup>9</sup> In 1992, for the first time in 50 years, a Japanese political party made an antisemitic conspiracy theory an open component of its platform. This was the Global Restoration Party (GRP). It ran for the upper house of Japan’s parliament on a platform that opposed “the ambitions of the Jews (Pharisees) to conquer the world.”<sup>10</sup> Goodman notes the GRP obtained a meager 0.03 percent of the vote (11,883 votes).<sup>11</sup>

Like the GRP three decades ago, the emerging populist NHK party and Sanseito party have made overt antisemitism a part of their political platforms. Founded by Takashi Tachibana, a

<sup>5</sup> David Goodman, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion in Japan,” in *The Global Impact of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion: A Century-Old Myth*, ed. Esther Webman (New York: Routledge, 2011), 162.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Clyde Haberman, “Japanese Writers Critical of Jews,” *The New York Times*, March 12, 1987.

<sup>8</sup> Steven R. Weisman, “In a Tide of Japanese Books on Jews, an Antisemitic Current,” *The New York Times*, February 19, 1991.

<sup>9</sup> David G. Goodman and Masanori Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind: The History and Uses of a Cultural Stereotype* (New York-London: The Free Press, 1995), 2-3.

<sup>10</sup> Goodman, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion in Japan,” 168.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

former employee of Japan's NHK public broadcaster, the NHK emerged as a national party in 2019 when Tachibana was elected for the first time to the House of Councillors.<sup>12</sup>

Although highly active on social media, the party is rarely covered by the mainstream Japanese media, and Tachibana admits the party is not taken seriously by the LDP in the Diet.<sup>13</sup> Its supporters are primarily young people who have little interest in politics or elections. Political writer Furuya Tsunehira, who knows Tachibana well, noted that the NHK's supporters are the non-mainstream right-wing and the "politically insane" who confuse politics for entertainment.<sup>14</sup>

The earliest manifestation of antisemitism in the party appeared in the summer of 2021 when the NHK party announced on its YouTube channel an initiative to unite under its auspices several smaller political groups that did not meet the requirements of being an official party.<sup>15</sup> These included the Tsubasa party,<sup>16</sup> headed by Atsuhiko Kurokawa, a known antisemitic conspiracy theorist.<sup>17</sup> By January 2022, Kurokawa was named NHK's secretary-general.<sup>18</sup>

Prior to his rise in the NHK party, Kurokawa had advocated conspiracy theories related to Jewish domination of international finance. On his YouTube channel, he posted conspiracy videos saying that the bankruptcy of famous Japanese companies and the collapse of the Chinese economy could happen, suggesting the relations with international financial capital. He claimed that "Rothschild" controls the world and Japanese economies.

Kurokawa usually begins his videos with the statement, "destroy Jewish money."<sup>19</sup> He expressed similar antisemitic conspiracy theories in his political campaigns. In his 2019 campaign for the House of Councillors, he claimed a group of Jewish financiers – Rothschild, Morgan, and Rockefeller – control the Federal Reserve Board (FRB).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, "Number of Votes for Each Party Listed in the Prefectural Party List (Proportional Representation), the Party to Protect the People from NHK," July 21, 2019, [https://www.soumu.go.jp/main\\_content/000636689.xls](https://www.soumu.go.jp/main_content/000636689.xls) [in Japanese].

<sup>13</sup> "NHK Party Leader Takashi Tachibana (54)," *Jomo Shinbun*, May 11, 2022, <https://www.jomo-news.co.jp/articles/-/113191> [in Japanese].

<sup>14</sup> Tsunehira Furuya, "How Did the 'NHK Party' Gain Seats in the Diet?," *Newsweek Japan*, July 31, 2019, <https://www.newsweekjapan.jp/stories/world/2019/07/nhk-2.php> [in Japanese].

<sup>15</sup> Takashi Tachibana, "NHK Party Transforms into the Various Factions," *YouTube*, March 25, 2021, [https://youtu.be/UKrNC\\_0T2w](https://youtu.be/UKrNC_0T2w) [in Japanese].

<sup>16</sup> *Tsubasa* means wing in Japanese. It used to be called the Olive Tree Party, after an Italian political party. Atsuhiko Kurokawa explained that he wanted to change the name to a Japanese name. "Greetings on the Change of Party Name," The Tsubasa Party, date unknown, <https://tsubasa-party.jp/> [in Japanese].

<sup>17</sup> Atsuhiko Kurokawa, "House of Representatives Election, the Tsubasa Party, Positively Considering Collaboration with the Party to Protect the People from Old Parties," *YouTube*, May 20, 2021, [https://youtu.be/c2\\_LX5dgMho?t=8](https://youtu.be/c2_LX5dgMho?t=8) [in Japanese].

<sup>18</sup> Takashi Tachibana, "(July 16, 1:00 p.m.) Regular Press Conference Live Broadcast," *YouTube*, July 16, 2021; [https://youtu.be/xlC\\_cGNL34](https://youtu.be/xlC_cGNL34) [in Japanese], and Atsuhiko Kurokawa (@democracymonst), "On January 25, 2022, as of Today, I was Officially Appointed Secretary General," *Twitter*, January 25, 2022, <https://twitter.com/democracymonst/status/1485847121341267976> [in Japanese].

<sup>19</sup> Tachibana, the leader of the NHK party, is known for his slogan "destroy NHK," and it is assumed that Kurokawa's expression "destroy Jewish money" was influenced by him.

<sup>20</sup> An archive of the political broadcast has been uploaded to Kurokawa's YouTube channel. Atsuhiko Kurokawa, "Political Watch Olive Tree 2019 House of Councillors Election," *YouTube*, July 8, 2019, [https://youtu.be/e6UVYdH-G\\_o](https://youtu.be/e6UVYdH-G_o) [in Japanese].

After joining the NHK, his views remained unchanged. In a 2021 election campaign video, he and Tachibana stated that they would “destroy Jewish money.”<sup>21</sup> When former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was assassinated in July 2022, Kurokawa suggested that Mossad, the CIA, and Jewish money were possibly involved in the assassination.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, he suggested the Unification Church was a new Jewish religion sponsored by the Rockefellers.<sup>23</sup>

Israeli Ambassador to Japan Gilad Cohen expressed his concern about this statement to the Japanese government on Twitter.<sup>24</sup>

The propagation of antisemitic conspiracy theories by Kurokawa and Tachibana did not appear to increase support for the NHK or resonate more broadly with its electorate. At a press conference in July 2022, Tachibana stated that “many people are not interested” in such conspiracies but did not distance himself from them. Rather, he suggested that Kurokawa, who receives a monthly salary from the NHK, broaden his focus, finding it “problematic” for a national party to invest itself in solely pursuing “Jewish issues.”<sup>25</sup>

Like the NHK, the Sanseito party, founded in 2020 by a group of right-wing political activists and led by Sohei Kamiya, also promulgated antisemitic conspiracy theories as a central part of its anti-globalist electoral platform and efforts to expand its popularity.<sup>26</sup>

According to political writer Tsunehira Furuya, who is closely acquainted with Kamiya, the Sanseito party is an “organic right-wing” party that emphasizes “purity,” including belief in organic farming, anti-mass consumption society, praise for natural products, and an anti-vaccination agenda. Its xenophobia and revisionist outlook of history are complementary arguments; its agenda draws on pseudo-science and conspiracy theories and attracts some consumer-conscious, organic-faith middle-class and affluent voters, mainly independents who have traditionally not been interested in politics.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Atsuhiko Kurokawa, “Destroy Jewish Money! House of Representatives Election 2021 Net Speech Nico Live [Atsuhiko Kurokawa, Takashi Tachibana],” *YouTube*, October 29, 2021, <https://youtu.be/F4WzPjo-dGY> [in Japanese].

<sup>22</sup> Atsuhiko Kurokawa (@democracymonst), “There is Information that Shinzo Abe was Shot,” *Twitter*, July 8, 2022, <https://twitter.com/democracymonst/status/1545241387628576768?s=20> [in Japanese], and Atsuhiko Kurokawa (@democracymonst), “There is a Possibility that the CIA or Jewish Money was Involved in the Crime,” *Twitter*, July 9, 2022, <https://twitter.com/democracymonst/status/1545520724957614080?s=61&t=esH6syihyLsDpticIEiQVQ> [in Japanese].

<sup>23</sup> Atsuhiko Kurokawa (@democracymonst), “If I get Killed Now, that’s what Jewish Money Did,” *Twitter*, July 14, 2022, [https://twitter.com/democracymonst/status/1547385780007383041?s=61&t=u50JQ\\_76PurFZsMdwY3jVw](https://twitter.com/democracymonst/status/1547385780007383041?s=61&t=u50JQ_76PurFZsMdwY3jVw) [in Japanese].

<sup>24</sup> Gilad Cohen (@GiladCohen\_), “This is an Antisemitic Conspiracy Theory Spread by the Sanseito Party,” *Twitter*, August 2, 2022, [https://twitter.com/GiladCohen\\_/status/1554440432654102532?s=20](https://twitter.com/GiladCohen_/status/1554440432654102532?s=20) [in Japanese].

<sup>25</sup> Takashi Tachibana, “[Live Press Conference] Friday, July 29, 1:00 p.m.,” *YouTube*, July 16, 2021, <https://youtu.be/1GnGPnLx1v0> [in Japanese].

<sup>26</sup> Sanseito Party, *There is No Political Party We Want to Vote For, So We Made Up Our Own* (Tokyo: Ikuhosha Publisher Inc., 2020), 1 [in Japanese].

<sup>27</sup> Tsunehira Furuya, “What is the Sanseito Party? An Atypical Right-Wing Party Born of ‘Organic Faith,’” *Newsweek Japan*, July 14, 2022, [https://www.newsweekjapan.jp/furuya/2022/07/post-27\\_6.php](https://www.newsweekjapan.jp/furuya/2022/07/post-27_6.php) [in Japanese].

Currently, the Sanseito party has almost no impact on Japanese politics. Like the NHK, it receives little coverage in the mainstream media and does not cooperate with the ruling coalition in the Diet. It criticizes the LDP and other existing parties as friends of international financial capital.

However, the party carries some weight in local elections in the Okinawa prefecture, which hosts US military bases. Its rhetoric has a particular appeal there with an anti-American conservative segment of the electorate. This encouraged the LDP to sign in October 2022 an agreement with it that would ensure it does not lose crucial votes in the mayoral elections in Naha, the capital of the prefecture.<sup>28</sup>

A cornerstone of Sanseito's political platform is a critique of the "Establishment," which it believes is dominated by globalists who control politics, the economy, and the media and are harming Japan. Its politicians and candidates claim that Jews are among the globalists and that Jewish money dominates the international world order. At a town hall meeting in June 2022, prior to the House of Councillors election, Kamiya stated, "Do you think those people [Sanseito candidates] will become pawns of Jewish capital, sell Japan, and do such things?"<sup>29</sup>

In a book published that same month, the party claimed that "a force, a plurality of organizations led by Jewish international finance that effectively controls Western society," has been targeting Japan for hundreds of years.<sup>30</sup>

According to the book, the plot is as follows: wealthy Jews provided arms and capital to the poor peoples of Europe to counter persecution by kings and aristocrats, leading to civil revolutions. Then the Jews took control of Western governments, media, and economies, and most wars were fought to benefit the military industry. Those forces are targeting Japan.

Kamiya's and his party's ideological embrace of antisemitic anti-globalism can be traced to the historian Chikatsu Hayashi, who published in 2021 a book called *The Rothschilds*. In his book he accuses the Rothschilds of conspiracy, claiming they have historically influenced Western royal families, governments, economies, and media, and profited from war. For example, he suggests Jewish control of world affairs. He argued that the Rothschilds supported Britain, France, and Germany in World War I and that "Jews profit tremendously from wars that devastate non-Jews."<sup>31</sup>

The blatant dissemination of antisemitic conspiracy theories connected to Jewish financial and international domination has provoked an outcry in Japan. Mitsuru Kurayama, a historian, stated Sanseito became committed to conspiracy theories around the time two founding

<sup>28</sup> "Sanseito Party and Chinen Reach Policy Agreement in Naha Mayoral Election," *Okinawa Times*, October 17, 2022, <https://www.okinawatimes.co.jp/articles/-/1041851> [in Japanese].

<sup>29</sup> BizlinTV/Press Office, "Sanseito Party, Sohei Kamiya (44) Mentions "Jewish Capital," *YouTube*, June 9, 2022, <https://youtu.be/bu1YMgBaN4o> [in Japanese].

<sup>30</sup> Sohei Kamiya, *The Sanseito Party Q&A Book*, 69-70 [in Japanese].

<sup>31</sup> Chikatsu Hayashi, *The Rothschilds: The Story of the Family that Took Over the British Empire and Ruled the World* (Osaka: Keiei Kagaku Publishing, Inc., 2021) [in Japanese].

members had left the party. According to Mitsuru Kurayama, Kamiya said, “conspiracy theories, spirituality, network business, you have to tolerate that kind of thing to expand.”<sup>32</sup>

Unlike Kurokawa of the NHK, Kamiya has tried to revise his stance, claiming he does not equate “Jewish money” with “international finance” but rather seeks to point to the influence of certain Jews within the international financial system. In a television appearance following the election, he acknowledged that equating an “ethnic group” with international finance might be dangerous, stating, “it is true that Jewish capital is involved, but it was a little wrong to write it in a way that could be misunderstood as if all Jews are involved. I think we need to correct it in the future.”<sup>33</sup>

Kamiya’s “moderation” is not convincing given his party’s broader and continued embrace of conspiracy theories. The dissemination of conspiracy theories and its inflammatory rhetoric, largely appearing on the party’s social media platforms, are a cornerstone of its efforts to gain supporters.

While Sanseito and the NHK have gained only meager support so far, their cynical embrace of antisemitic conspiracies and slogans to advance their populist agendas is a concerning development in Japanese politics.

— **Moses Toshimasu**

<sup>32</sup> Mitsuru Kurayama, “Sanseito Party is not Preposterous. It’s Completely Preposterous/Mitsuru Kurayama's Political Bulletin,” *Nikkan SPA*, July 16, 2022; <https://nikkan-spa.jp/1843745> [in Japanese].

<sup>33</sup> The program was broadcast on NTV’s BS program on August 18, 2022. An archive of the broadcast is available from its official YouTube channel. NTV News, “Sanseito Party’s Sohei Kamiya Directly Interviewed,” *YouTube*, August 19, 2022, [https://youtu.be/TH\\_rLDTdm\\_Q](https://youtu.be/TH_rLDTdm_Q) [in Japanese].



# RUSSIA: FASCISTS TURN TO AN OLD SCAPEGOAT

As Russian troops in Ukraine faced one humiliating defeat after another in 2022, members and associates of Putin's fascist regime resorted to Holocaust distortion and vicious antisemitic slander. Their comments have caused alarm that Jews will once again become the ultimate scapegoats for the failures and paranoias of a Moscow-based tyrant.

One of the official pretexts of the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine was the so-called need to 'de-Nazify' the westernizing, democratic country. On May 1, 2022, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov dismissed the notion that it makes no sense to accuse Ukraine, whose president is a Jew, of Nazi inclinations. In an interview with Italian television broadcaster *Rete 4*, Lavrov said that some of the most ardent antisemites in history were Jewish and that even Adolf Hitler had "Jewish blood." Following his comments, the spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry accused Israel of backing "the neo-Nazi regime in Kyiv."<sup>1</sup>

Lavrov's comments were not only false but also outrageously implied that Jews contributed to their Holocaust. Israel's prime minister at the time, Naftali Bennett, criticized Lavrov's remarks and said that "using the Holocaust of the Jewish people as a political tool must cease immediately," while Foreign Minister Yair Lapid implied that although Israel makes "every effort" to avoid a diplomatic crisis with Russia, Lavrov's statement crossed a line.<sup>2</sup> Evidently, mass-scale crimes against humanity committed by Putin's regime did not cross that line.

Putin is not an antisemite, at least not a conscious one. After becoming president, he combatted manifestations of open antisemitism, which his predecessors had encouraged, tolerated, or ignored.<sup>3</sup> According to Putin's biographers, Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy, he "encouraged Russian oligarchs" – regardless of their ethnic or religious origin – "to invest in the restoration of synagogues and mosques, not just churches."<sup>4</sup> Joshua Keating noted, "whatever his many other sins, even Vladimir Putin's harshest critics concede that he's not an antisemite."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Editors, "Zelensky: With Its Nazism Claims, Russia 'Following Same Concept of Goebbels,'" *Times of Israel*, May 4, 2022, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/zelensky-with-nazism-claims-russia-following-same-concept-of-goebbels/>.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Roth and Angela Giuffrida, "Israel Summons Russia Envoy over Minister's Hitler Comments," *The Guardian*, May 2, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/02/israel-summons-russia-envoy-sergei-lavrov-hitler-comments>.

<sup>3</sup> Cnaan Liphshiz, "Antisemitism Seen Seeping into Russian Media Landscape as Ukraine Invasion Slows," *Times of Israel*, September 29, 2022, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/as-ukraine-invasion-slows-antisemitism-seeps-into-russian-media-landscape/>, and Natella Boltyanskaya, "Despite Putin's Apologies, Antisemitism in Russia is on the Rise," *Vesty*, May 6, 2022, <https://www.vesty.co.il/main/opinions/article/hyysefguc> [in Russian].

<sup>4</sup> Charles Dunst, "A Nationalist Streak Runs through Putin's Love for Jews and Israel," *Times of Israel*, July 20, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/a-nationalist-streak-runs-though-putins-love-for-jews-and-israel/>.

<sup>5</sup> Joshua Keating, "Putin's Chosen People," *Slate*, November 28, 2014, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2014/11/vladimir-putin-chabad-whats-behind-the-russian-presidents-close-relationship-with-an-orthodox-jewish-sect.html>.

The Levada Center, a Russian research institute, reported in 2018 that antisemitism in Russia is declining.<sup>6</sup> The study examined violent incidents of antisemitism, including the defilement of Jewish cemeteries, vandalism of cultural and religious sites, public attacks on Jews, and antisemitic graffiti.

Still, this was true for times of relative peace and prosperity. A growing number of antisemitic comments by Putin loyalists has caused analysts and Jewish leaders to ponder whether the regime, filled with hatred for the young, charismatic, and liberal Jewish leader of Ukraine, and pressed to channel growing public anger within Russia regarding its fatal fiasco in Ukraine, is about to make Jews its next target.

Roman Bronfman, a former MK who wrote about post-Soviet Jewry, found that openly anti-Jewish rhetoric entered Russian media in 2022. Bronfman argued that this trend began when “news emerged that Ukrainian troops had successfully stopped the advance of Russian forces on Ukrainian territory.”<sup>7</sup> According to Bronfman, “at a moment when the regime’s stability was threatened, a Jewish target was selected.”<sup>8</sup>

Dmitry Popov’s September 2022 article in *Moskovskij Komsomolets* that described Jews as foreign agents is but one example. Popov, a senior and veteran pro-regime writer, presented a list of well-known Jews whom he called “foreign agents,” a term the Russian government frequently uses to describe its ideological enemies.<sup>9</sup> He also argued derisively that the Jews might one day form a government in “the beautiful Russia of the future” — presumably after Putin exits office. The article was interpreted as a sign “that antisemitism had returned to the country.”<sup>10</sup>

Reactions to Bernard-Henri Lévy’s visit to Kyiv are another cause for alarm. The French-Jewish author and philosopher is a strong voice against the fascist Russian invasion. The Strategic Culture Foundation (SCF), a Russian think tank based in Moscow often quoted in state-controlled media, published an article about Lévy that used classical antisemitic terminology taken from the most chauvinistic texts of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>11</sup> The article, written by Agnia Kregel, a frequent contributor to the think tank, stated: “This 74-year-old French citizen, born to a family of Algerian Jews, smells blood with his nose and, without delay, flies to lap it up — and for good money.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> “Report: Antisemitism as Perceived by the Jewish Population of Russia,” Russian Jewish Congress and the Lavada Center, n.d., <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Religion/Submissions/WJC-Annex4.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Liphshiz, “Antisemitism Seen Seeping into Russian Media.”

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Dmitry Popov, “After Putin’s Words about Ukraine’s Plans, I Wanted to Exhale,” *Moskovskij Komsomolets*, September 18, 2022, <https://www.mk.ru/politics/2022/09/18/posle-slov-putina-o-planakh-ukrainy-zakhotelos-vydokhnut.html> [in Russian].

<sup>10</sup> The Editors, “As Putin’s War Suffers Setbacks, Russian Media Discourse Expresses Increasing Hostility to Jews,” *All Israel News*, September 30, 2022, <https://allisrael.com/as-putin-s-war-suffers-setbacks-russian-media-discourse-expresses-increasing-hostility-to-jews>.

<sup>11</sup> Cnaan Liphshiz, “Antisemitism Seen Seeping into Russian Media Landscape.”

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Early in 2023, the United States imposed sanctions on Iran’s defense and aviation sector for supplying Russia with drones used in its criminal attacks against Ukraine. Pro-Russian Telegram channels responded by spreading anti-Israel and antisemitic propaganda. Russian military blogger Roman Saponkov even called for the “demilitarization of Israel.”<sup>13</sup>

Putin, while careful to avoid antisemitic comments himself, did not sanction those who made them. Moreover, he does not shy away from quoting antisemitic-inclined Russian thinkers in his speeches. These include the philosopher Ivan Ilyin, sociologist and chief ideologist Alexander Dugin, and historian Lev Gumilev. He also glorified ultra-nationalist Russian writer Alexander Prokhanov, who, among many antisemitic remarks, said in 2012 that “Jews took over the world and are using their power for evil.” Moreover, Putin has close relations with the notorious antisemitic motorcycle gang, the “Night Wolves,” to whom he gave a slice of seized Crimea for a training facility.<sup>14</sup>

Ilya Yablokov, a digital media lecturer at Sheffield University in the United Kingdom, who has written about Putin and antisemitism in Russia, argued that “anti-Jewish xenophobia could flare up at any moment if the Kremlin wants it to.”<sup>15</sup> Moscow’s Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, who fled the country two weeks after the invasion began due to pressure from the Kremlin to support the war, could not be more explicit in his urgent call: “Jews should leave Russia while they still can before they are made scapegoats for the hardship caused by the war in Ukraine.” Goldschmidt added: “When we look back over Russian history, whenever the political system was in danger, you saw the government trying to redirect the anger and discontent of the masses towards the Jewish community.”<sup>16</sup>

So far, there are no reports of a rise in physical attacks against Jews in Russia, although it is difficult to verify data from the country independently. Yet as Putin’s regime sinks to new lows in its efforts to survive at all costs, Jews still living in Russia should pay attention to the stark warning of Moscow’s Chief Rabbi.

— **Dr. Evgeni Klauber**

<sup>13</sup> Digital Forensic Research Lab, “Russian War Report: Satellite Imagery Indicates a Build-up of Air Defense Missile Systems in Southern Russia,” *New Atlanticist* (blog), Atlantic Council, February 3, 2023. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/russian-war-report-satellite-imagery-indicates-a-build-up-of-air-defense-missile-systems-in-southern-russia/>.

<sup>14</sup> Charlie Campbell, “Russia’s Conspiracy-Laden Claims that Israel is Supporting Neo-Nazis Could Change Tel Aviv’s Stance on the War in Ukraine,” *Time*, May 3, 2022, <https://time.com/6172946/sergei-lavrov-hitler-israel-ukraine/>.

<sup>15</sup> Victor Jack, “Russia’s Jews Fear Resurgent Antisemitism amid Ukraine War,” *Politico*, July 4, 2022, <https://www.politico.eu/article/vladimir-putin-ukraine-war-forces-russia-jews-adapt-new-life-home-abroad/>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*



# YEMEN: THE HOUTHIS INTENSIFY THEIR ANTISEMITIC CAMPAIGN

During 2022, the antisemitic rhetoric of Ansar Allah, better known as the Houthis, intensified and became more toxic. It provided yet another demonstration of how deeply rooted anti-Jewish propaganda is in parts of the Muslim world, including those distant from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Iranian-backed movement from northern Yemen belongs to the Zaydi school of Shi'a Islam (*Zaydiyya*). Zaydis take their name from Zayd ibn 'Ali, the great-grandson of 'Ali, whom they regard as the fifth imam; hence, Zaydis' designation as Fiver Shi'as. Conversely, Twelver Shi'as consider Zayd's brother, Muhammad al-Baqir, the fifth imam.<sup>1</sup>

Besides this dispute on succession to the imamate, significant theological differences also exist between Zaydi Shi'ism and Twelver Shi'ism:<sup>2</sup> Zaydis emphasize rationalism rather than textual literalism;<sup>3</sup> deny the infallibility of the imams;<sup>4</sup> believe in a religious obligation to overthrow an unjust and corrupt ruler;<sup>5</sup> reject the doctrine of the twelfth hidden imam who will return as messianic savior;<sup>6</sup> and oppose subordination to a clerical hierarchy.<sup>7</sup>

The Houthi movement was founded in the early 1990s as an expression of Zaydi activism and revivalism vis-à-vis the government in San'a', which following the unification of northern and southern Yemen in May 1990 had deliberately neglected Zaydi areas.<sup>8</sup>

Regarding ideology, the Houthis have maintained positions close to traditional *Zaydiyya* on several issues.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, however, they have introduced innovations, some of which were inspired by the Islamic Republic's official ideology (for instance, the infallibility of the

<sup>1</sup> Barak Salmoni, Bryce Loidolt, and Madeline Wells, *Regime and Periphery in Northern Yemen: The Huthi Phenomenon* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2010), 285.

<sup>2</sup> Zaydi Shi'ism today is mostly exclusively found in Yemen. Twelver Shi'ism is dominant in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and Bahrain.

<sup>3</sup> Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> Francis Robinson, *Atlas of the Islamic World since 1500* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1982).

<sup>5</sup> Victoria Clark, *Yemen: Dancing on the Heads of Snakes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 25; Salmoni et al., *Regime and Periphery in Northern Yemen*, 287; Maysaa Shuja al-Deen, "Yemen's War-torn Rivalries for Religious Education," Carnegie Endowment, June 7, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Mohammed Almafahali and James Root, "How Iran's Islamic Revolution Does, and Does Not, Influence Houthi Rule in Northern Yemen," San'a' Center for Strategic Studies, February 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Salmoni et al., *Regime and Periphery in Northern Yemen*, 67.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Johnston et al., *Could the Houthis Be the Next Hizballah?* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2020), 99.

<sup>9</sup> Nadwa al-Dawsari, "The Houthis' Endgame in Yemen," *al-Jazeera*, December 21, 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2017/12/21/the-houthis-endgame-in-yemen>.

supreme leader).<sup>10</sup> Such reformulation was encouraged by the period of study in Iran spent by the late leader of the movement, Hussein al-Houthi.<sup>11</sup>

The innovations introduced by the Houthis include anti-imperialism and antisemitism.<sup>12</sup> The Houthi slogan, which was officially adopted immediately after the American invasion of Iraq and which currently dominates the public space in northern Yemen, reads: “God is great, death to the US, death to Israel, curse the Jews, and victory for Islam.”<sup>13</sup>

Committed to antisemitism since the early 2000s, the group has constantly incited hatred against Jews. Throughout 2022, this trend reached a new low.

In January 2022, Houthi Health Minister Taha al-Mutawakkil said in a sermon aired on the Houthi-owned *al-Iman TV* that the Jews’ leader is Satan and that throughout the history of humanity, Jews had spread moral decay.<sup>14</sup> Al-Mutawakkil also said that through their “deceptive nature,” Jews control the centers of decision-making in the world.

The conspiracy theory according to which Jews control global centers of political and financial power also dominates other videos by Houthi leaders.<sup>15</sup> One of those, released by the Houthis’ *al-Masirah TV* (headquartered in Beirut under the auspices of Hezbollah) in July 2022, suggested that an Israeli company used special bracelets to spy on Muslim pilgrims in Mecca.<sup>16</sup> In another video released on the occasion of al-Quds Day,<sup>17</sup> the Houthi supreme leader, ‘Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, argued that the “Israeli Zionist entity” controls a “Zionist lobby in the world” and that the latter is the “enemy of Islam and Muslims.”<sup>18</sup>

Given such statements, it did not come as a surprise that last year the Houthis passed legislation banning normalization with Israel and criminalizing any contact with the Jewish state or its citizens.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Luca Nevola, “Houthis in the Making: Nostalgia, Populism and the Politicization of Hashemite Descent,” *International Journal of Archeology and Social Sciences in the Arabian Peninsula* 13 (2020).

<sup>11</sup> Mehdi Khalaji, “Iran’s Window of Influence in Yemen is Getting Bigger,” The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February 2, 2015; Laurent Bonnefoy, “Varieties of Islamism in Yemen: The Logic of Integration Under Pressure,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 13, no. 1 (2009), 1-11.

<sup>12</sup> Itam Shalev, “Review of Houthi Educational Materials in Yemen, 2015-2019,” IMPACT-se, March 2021.

<sup>13</sup> “The Huthis: From Saada to San’a,” International Crisis Group, Middle East Report no. 154, June 2014, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/the-huthis-from-saada-to-sanaa.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> “Houthi Health Minister Taha Al-Motawakel: The Jews Lead Humanity to Sin, Immorality, Lust,” MEMRI, February 4, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNRYi4qyEeA>.

<sup>15</sup> “Houthi Health Minister Taha Al-Motawakel: The UAE is a Jewish Settlement, Controlled by the Jews,” MEMRI, January 21, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MweiNKY7kbQ>.

<sup>16</sup> “Saudi A. at the Center in Its Normalization with Israeli Enemy,” *al-Masirah TV*, July 27, 2022, <https://english.almasirah.net/post/27357/Saudi-A.-At-the-Center-in-its-Normalization-With-Israeli-Enemy>.

<sup>17</sup> Event held to express support for the Palestinian people and opposition to Israel and Zionism. It was initiated by Iran in 1979.

<sup>18</sup> “Speech by Al-Sayyid Abdul Malik Badruddin Al-Houthi on Occasion of the International Quds Day 1443 A.H.,” SABA, May 1, 2022, <https://www.saba.ye/en/news3185352.htm>.

<sup>19</sup> “After Iraq, Houthis in Yemen Criminalize Ties with Israel,” *i24 News*, June 2, 2022, <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/middle-east/1654179110-after-iraq-houthis-in-yemen-criminalize-ties-with-israel>.

Opposition to normalization also emerged in a speech by ‘Abd al-Malik in which he referred to normalization with “the Zionist entity” as “a betrayal of Allah, His Messenger, and [the] Muslims,” and called on Western countries to free themselves of Jewish Zionism, which has “taken control of them, misled them, corrupted them.”<sup>20</sup>

Prior to that, in June 2022, ‘Abd al-Malik said in a video that during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the filthiest places in Medina were the Jewish neighborhoods.<sup>21</sup> The video stated that because of that, the Prophet Muhammad used to present Jews as an example of filth and was adamant in encouraging everyone not to be like them and to pursue cleanliness.

The same theme appeared in an interview with a Houthi-affiliated scholar broadcast in April on *al-Masirah TV*. During the interview, the scholar proclaimed that according to the Quran, Jews are the “filthiest and most evil human beings” and were indeed transformed into apes and pigs by Allah. He also cited Adolf Hitler and his *Mein Kampf*, and accused Jews of spreading AIDS, cancer, and immorality.<sup>22</sup>

Advancing a similarly antisemitic conspiracy theory, in March 2022, Muhammad ‘Ali al-Houthi, a member of the Supreme Political Council, argued that the war in Ukraine is a result of the “evil-doing” of the Jews. He suggested that Ukraine was drawn into war because it has a Jewish president: “This [the war] is proof that when a Jew is the leader of a country, this results in war. If the president of Ukraine were someone else rather than that Jew, perhaps they would not have ended up in war.”<sup>23</sup>

Throughout the year, moreover, episodes of violence against Jews were widely celebrated and praised by the Houthi leadership.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, threats were directed toward Israeli Jews. In September 2022, *al-Masirah TV* aired a music video featuring a Houthi military parade with captions in Arabic and Hebrew reading: “Tell the Zionists that they will be disgraced [...] Israel will come to an end. [...] we will let them taste our might and the heat of the piercing swords, and tomorrow we will see Jerusalem cleansed of the filth of the Jews.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> “Revolution Leader Calls on Western Countries, Societies to Liberate Themselves from Zionism, Stop Insulting Prophets,” *SABA*, October 8, 2022, <https://www.saba.ye/en/news3206460.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> “Houthi Leader: The Prophet Muhammad Said Don’t Be Like the Jews, Who Were an Example of Filth,” MEMRI, July 18, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vu8zYKwHghQ>.

<sup>22</sup> “Yemeni Academic: Allah Transformed Jews into Apes, Pigs; They Are the Filthiest of Allah’s Creatures,” MEMRI, May 2, 2022, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kj73L\\_OWojQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kj73L_OWojQ).

<sup>23</sup> “Mohammed Ali al-Houthi of the Yemeni-Houthi Leadership: Ukraine is at War because it is Led by a Jew,” MEMRI, March 16, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0CH7yb6THY>.

<sup>24</sup> “The Political Bureau of Ansarallah Blesses the Heroic Operations in Occupied Palestine and the Return of Relations between Syria and Hamas,” *Ansarallah*, October 20, 2022, <https://www.ansarallah.com/archives/559577>; Seth Frantzman, “Yemen’s Houthis Celebrate Terror Attack in Israel,” *The Jerusalem Post*, May 8, 2022, <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-706063>.

<sup>25</sup> “Houthi Music Video Threatening Israel: The Zionists will be Disgraced, Jerusalem will be Cleansed of the Filth of the Jews,” MEMRI, September 4, 2022 <https://www.memri.org/tv/yemen-houthi-music-video-military-parade-end-israel-jerusalem-cleansed-filth-jews>.



Why do Houthis advance such a blunt antisemitic agenda, and why has it intensified in 2022?

First, in a period of military stalemate in which Iranian material support is more crucial than ever, outspoken hatred for Jews has become, for the Houthis, a way to reaffirm their belonging to the “axis of resistance” led by Teheran, which has antisemitism as one of its ideological pillars.<sup>26</sup>

Second, the group has used antisemitism to differentiate itself from those Gulf monarchies that established diplomatic relations with Israel, seeking to attract sympathy, support, and legitimacy among the Muslim and Arab public, which remains largely pro-Palestinian.<sup>27</sup>

Third, in a period in which northern Yemen has experienced a combination of fuel shortages, food insecurity, and sharp inflation that has impacted people’s lives dramatically, the Houthis have resorted to antisemitism to divert attention from their failures in governance and direct the people’s frustration against a common enemy.<sup>28</sup>

The major implication of the Houthis’ intensification of antisemitism is a security threat to the few (primarily elderly) Yemeni Jews who remain in the country. Yemen’s Jewish community no longer retains its historical territorial presence: as conditions in the country became unbearable and Israel offered an alternative,<sup>29</sup> Yemeni Jews relocated almost entirely.<sup>30</sup> Still, according to a UN Panel of Experts on Yemen report, seven Jews reside in Yemen today.<sup>31</sup> Their minimal number does not make threats to their security any less worthy of concern. Such threats, moreover, are far from being hypothetical. Indeed, the UN Panel of Experts documented the case of a Jew who has been detained for years for transferring an ancient Torah scroll to Israel.<sup>32</sup>

Then there is the poisoning of Yemeni youth to consider. In Houthi summer camps and classrooms, children are required to repeat on a daily basis the movement’s antisemitic slogan and to study the movement’s antisemitic publications.<sup>33</sup> Houthi-approved textbooks, for instance, read: “[...] the believer beats their enemies, which are America and Israel [...]. So, let’s do the jihad for the sake of God. [...] America is trying to fight Islam and control the world because the Jews are controlling them [...]”<sup>34</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Emily Mae Czachor, “US Military Says Huge Iranian Weapons Shipment Destined for Yemen Rebels Seized in the Gulf of Oman,” *CBS News*, February 2, 2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/iran-yemen-rebels-weapons-shipment-seized-us-naval-forces/>.

<sup>27</sup> “How do MENA Citizens View Normalization with Israel,” *Arab Barometer*, September 12, 2022, <https://www.arabbarometer.org/2022/09/how-do-mena-citizens-view-normalization-with-israel/>.

<sup>28</sup> “Houthis Continue to Bilk Consumers with Exorbitant Fuel Prices,” *San’a’ Center for Strategic Studies*, August 12, 2022, <https://sanaacenter.org/the-yemen-review/july-2022/18397>.

<sup>29</sup> United Nations Security Council, “Letter Dated 25 January 2022 from the Panel of Experts on Yemen Addressed to the President of the Security Council,” 44.

<sup>30</sup> Bat-Zion Eraqi-Klorman, “Yemen,” in *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*, ed. by Reeva Spector Simon et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 405-408.

<sup>31</sup> “Letter from the Panel of Experts,” 44.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Salam al-Harbi, “How the Houthis Took Over and Reshaped the Education System in the Northern Regions,” *San’a’ Center for Strategic Studies*, October 20, 2021, [https://sanaacenter.org/ar/publications-all/the-yemen-review-ar/15338#Houthi\\_remake\\_education\\_system](https://sanaacenter.org/ar/publications-all/the-yemen-review-ar/15338#Houthi_remake_education_system).

<sup>34</sup> “Letter from the Panel of Experts,” 138.

This exposure to antisemitic propaganda promises to have a lasting adverse impact on Yemeni youth.<sup>35</sup> Unless properly and promptly addressed, antisemitic thinking risks surviving in the long term, even in the eventuality of a Houthi military defeat.

— *Dr. Marta Furlan*

<sup>35</sup> “Yemeni Student in Rally Aired on Houthi TV: Soon Our Drones will Strike New York and Tel Aviv,” MEMRI, January 24, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhJuZwv1CnA>.



# **SECTION 3**

## **CRISIS IN THE UNITED STATES**





# THE FRINGES ENCROACH ON THE CENTER

Something has changed. In recent years, America’s social and political climate has become fertile ground for antisemitism. Expressions of hatred against Jews have been mainstreamed and normalized, and incidents of violence, vandalism, and harassment of Jews have increased.<sup>1</sup> Violent attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions, such as the 2018 Tree of Life Synagogue attack and the 2019 Jersey City Kosher Market shooting, shattered the illusion that the American Jewish experience stands apart from that of its diaspora counterparts.

While antisemitism in the United States used to be identified with the far-right, the antisemitism of the far-left has found fertile ground in today’s culture wars. At one time, manifestations of antisemitism were restricted to America’s political fringes; now, the antisemitism of the far-right and far-left are pushing into the mainstream of American culture and politics from both sides.

American Jews feel that antisemitism is “here and now” in a way it previously was not. This change has, in the words of Emily Tamkin, the author of *Bad Jews* (2022), “thrown many American Jews off-balance. Things are not as they were.”<sup>2</sup> Coming to terms with this new, alarming reality has been part of the renewed focus of American popular Jewish discourse on antisemitism.

A recent survey by the Pew Research Center reflects the growing sense of concern within the Jewish community regarding antisemitism and the shared perception that it is on the rise. Pew found that 93% of American Jews say there is at least some antisemitism in the United States, with 43% saying there is “a lot,” while 75% of American Jews say antisemitism has increased in the United States over the past five years.<sup>3</sup>

A 2022 Anti-Defamation League (ADL) survey on antisemitic attitudes in America revealed a disturbing increase in the number of Americans who believe anti-Jewish notions. The ADL survey revealed 85% of Americans accept at least one anti-Jewish trope, as opposed to 61% in 2019, while 20% accept six or more antisemitic tropes, as opposed to 11% in 2019. The number of Americans who believe six or more tropes is the highest since 1992 (20%).<sup>4</sup>

1 Anti-Defamation League, “Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2021,” May 5, 2022, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/audit-antisemitic-incidents-2021>.

2 Emily Tamkin, *Bad Jews: A History of American Jewish Politics and Identities* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2022), 14-15, digital edition. See also, Ruth R. Wise, “Is the Writing on the Wall for America’s Jews?” *Mosaic Magazine*, August 8, 2022, <https://mosaicmagazine.com/observation/politics-current-affairs/2022/08/is-the-writing-on-the-wall-for-americas-jews/>.

3 Pew Research Center, “Jewish Americans in 2020 – Anti-Semitism and Jewish Views on Discrimination,” Pew Research, May 11, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/anti-semitism-and-jewish-views-on-discrimination/>.

4 Center for Antisemitism Research, “Antisemitic Attitudes in America: Topline Findings,” ADL, January 12, 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/antisemitic-attitudes-america-topline-findings>.

American history has never been free of antisemitism.<sup>5</sup> Yet, for decades after the Second World War, American Jews have lived securely in the knowledge that civil society and its institutions are a reliable buffer against discrimination, prejudice, and violence. As Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO of the ADL, observed in his book *It Could Happen Here* (2022), throughout history, Jews living as minorities “with relatively few exceptions [have] eventually confronted a dire fate;”<sup>6</sup> yet, the American Jewish experience was the exception to the rule.

Violent attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions in recent years have shattered the perception of exceptionalism.<sup>7</sup> So, too, have recent social and political trends – rising populism and political polarization, an increase in the general number of hate crimes nationwide, and the empowerment of illiberal tendencies on the political left and right. American Jews are now concerned that the liberal and democratic foundations of American society and politics are eroding, and that the institutions they and other minorities rely on for protection are weakening to the point that their survival is no longer assured.<sup>8</sup>

Yet, while there is a broadly shared perception that antisemitism is a problem in contemporary America, there is disagreement over what antisemitism is and “whether it is more of a problem on the right or the left.”<sup>9</sup> Two broad types of antisemitism are generally identified: “traditional” or “classic” antisemitism, typically associated with the political right, and “new” antisemitism, typically associated with the political left. Still, this distinction is overlooked by some.<sup>10</sup> While it is evident that antisemitism “transcends political affiliation”<sup>11</sup> and that antisemitism manifests itself on both the political right and the political left, the perception of the threat each poses differs.<sup>12</sup>

The antisemitism of the political right, expressed by white supremacists, including neo-Nazis, Christian identitarians, and others on the alt-right, in the words of Bari Weiss, “does not hide its face. It is blunt in its goals.”<sup>13</sup> Its embrace of classic antisemitic concepts such as the “blood libel” and conspiracies of world domination emerged into the open in Charlottesville in August 2017, where a white supremacist gathering declared loudly that “Jews will not replace us.”

The murderous attacks on synagogues in Pittsburgh (2018) and Poway (2019) were carried out by white supremacists who embraced antisemitic conspiracies that Jews were out to

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 217, 220, 266-267.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Greenblatt, *It Could Happen Here: Why America is Tipping from Hate to the Unthinkable – And How We Can Stop It* (New York: Mariner Books, 2022), 171, digital edition.

<sup>7</sup> Greenblatt, *It Could Happen Here*, and Wisse, “Is the Writing on the Wall for America’s Jews?”

<sup>8</sup> Alvin Rosenfeld, “How are American Jews Faring in an Era of Rising Antisemitism?,” INSS Special Publication, December 23, 2021, <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/rising-antisemitism/>; Wisse, “Is the Writing on the Wall for America’s Jews?,” and Greenblatt, *It Could Happen Here*, 197.

<sup>9</sup> Tamkin, *Bad Jews*, 326.

<sup>10</sup> Graham Wright et al., “Antisemitism and Polarization: The Political Dynamics of American Jewish Concerns about Traditional and Israel-Related Antisemitism,” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* (2022), 4-6; and Dov Waxman et al., “Arguing about Antisemitism: Why We Disagree about Antisemitism, and What We Can Do About It,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45, vol. 9 (2022), 1805-1808.

<sup>11</sup> Tamkin, *Bad Jews*, 326.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example: Bari Weiss, *How to Fight Antisemitism* (New York: Crown, 2019), 80, 83-84, digital edition.

<sup>13</sup> Weiss, *How to Fight Antisemitism*, 92.



replace white Americans with immigrants and “dirty foreigners.” Some adherents of the QAnon conspiracy embraced tropes of world Jewish financial domination and control of elites, while the outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis fed antisemitic conspiracies that the virus was a “Jewish hoax” and that Jews invented the vaccine to poison people.<sup>14</sup>

Conspiracies and hate that were once relegated to the fringes of the far-right have seeped into the mainstream of the political right, reaching new audiences. A version of the “great replacement theory” shouted in Charlottesville, cloaked in more moderate and not overtly antisemitic language, has broadly spread in segments of the Republican Party. Fox News talk show host and conservative political commentator Tucker Carlson gave voice to the conspiracy theory on his show, suggesting “left-wing elites” are encouraging immigration to America. The theory has since been echoed by Republican legislators in Congress and has become a popular position among Republicans.<sup>15</sup>

Left-wing antisemitism pushes toward the mainstream from the other direction. Antisemitism on the political left, particularly among progressives, is rooted in longstanding views of nefarious Jewish power and influence, but also in the idea that Jewish Americans are considered or perceived to be privileged in terms of class and ethnicity, meaning that they are economically successful and “white.”<sup>16</sup> It is, however, “typically camouflaged in language familiar to Jewish tongues and ears: the language of social justice and anti-racism, of equality and liberation.”<sup>17</sup>

David Bernstein, the author of *Woke Antisemitism* (2022), argues that “progressive ideologues believe that only people with power can be racists. Under this winner-take-all power paradigm, the formula is ‘racism=bigotry + power,’ which means that you cannot be racist if you don’t have power, and if you do have power, you cannot be the victim.”<sup>18</sup>

This linking of power to racism and the binary prism of oppressors and oppressed “enables the expression of the usual resentment and ill-will toward Jews and Israel.”<sup>19</sup> Indeed, American Jews have come to be seen by some on the left as oppressors, part of a privileged group, and part of the power establishment in America. The argument that follows is that because of their “power” and “privilege,” they are incapable of being the object of racism and discrimination,

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Ciarán O’Connor, “The Conspiracy Consortium: Examining Discussions of Covid-19 among Right-Wing Extremist Telegram Channels,” *ISD Global*, December 17, 2021, <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/The-Conspiracy-Consortium.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Philip Bump, “Nearly Half of Republicans Agree with ‘Great Replacement Theory,’” *The Washington Post*, May 9, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/05/09/nearly-half-republicans-agree-with-great-replacement-theory/>; and Cassie Miller, “SPLC Poll Finds Substantial Support for ‘Great Replacement’ Theory and Other Hard-Right Ideas,” Southern Poverty Law Center, June 1, 2022, <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2022/06/01/poll-finds-support-great-replacement-hard-right-ideas#replacement>.

<sup>16</sup> Weiss, *How to Fight Antisemitism*, 95.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>18</sup> David Bernstein, *Woke Antisemitism: How a Progressive Ideology Harms Jews* (New York: Wicked Son, 2022), 67, digital edition.

<sup>19</sup> Bernstein, *Woke Antisemitism*, 52.

particularly discrimination from other minority groups. Thus, Jewish claims of racism should be dismissed.<sup>20</sup>

An illustrative example of this fraught maxim is the recent case of Kyrie Irving, a superstar guard on the NBA's Brooklyn Nets (who now plays with the Dallas Mavericks). Irving shared a link to an unknown antisemitic film in October 2022, transforming it into a bestseller.<sup>21</sup> Criticism of his tweet, his initial refusal to apologize, and his incredulous claims that "[I] cannot be antisemitic if I know where I come from," gave way in a matter of days to a new narrative that deemed his punishment excessive and connected to the color of skin.

While not absolving him of responsibility for his actions, Irving, one of the most famous sportspeople on the planet, a person who earns tens of millions of dollars a year and is privileged on the basis of his social status, cultural reach, and substantial income, came to be viewed as a victim strictly through the prism of his race. His actions, which caused harm and raised concerns in the Jewish community, were downplayed and pushed to the side.

Irving's transformation from accused to victim underscored the fundamental problem of viewing antisemitism strictly through the prism of fraught power relationships and race. The multimillionaire black athlete who, in the eyes of the warped hierarchy of progressive dogma, was the victim, actually had the ability and platform to push an obscure antisemitic screed to the top of Amazon's bestseller list. That is the very essence of power.

The progressive ideological paradigm of "oppressor and oppressed," in which identity is linked to privilege and power to racism, causes further damage and feeds antisemitism by situating American Jews on the "wrong side" of America's culture wars. In considering Jews as "white" or "white adjacent," Jews become both complicit in the oppression of minorities and the beneficiaries of the system that oppresses minorities.<sup>22</sup>

This has led some progressive American Jews to be excluded from social justice coalitions. One example is the 2021 Sunrise Movement preventing Jewish organizations (which they deemed "Zionist organizations") from participating in a climate change rally. Another example is the dismissal of antisemitism from the list of issues discussed in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training courses on bias and fostering diversity.

The result is that the American Jewish community is pressured from both sides of the political map. The threat to Jews posed by antisemitism on the far-right and the far-left differs in form and intensity. The advance of both into the center has created an environment in which American Jews feel off-balance and in search of a new normal.

— **Dr. Carl Yonker and Jesse Weinberg**

<sup>20</sup> For more on this intellectual outlook of "oppressed-oppressor," see Ibrahim X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (New York: One World, 2019).

<sup>21</sup> Tania Ganguli and Sopan Deb, "What to Know About Irving's Antisemitic Movie Post and the Fallout," *The New York Times*, November 21, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/kyrie-irving-antisemitic.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Bernstein, *Woke Antisemitism*, 82.

# ANTISEMITISM, CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM, AND THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

Days before Thanksgiving 2022, former US president Donald Trump hosted for dinner at Mar-a-Lago two celebrities: Kanye West, a rapper and producer who had made a slew of antisemitic remarks, and Nick Fuentes, a white supremacist and Christian nationalist live-streamer known for his antisemitic views and denial of the Holocaust.

Trump's open association with both men (and subsequent refusal to apologize and condemn their views) raised alarm about the mainstreaming and normalization of antisemitism in the Republican Party. The declared candidate for the Republican nomination in 2024 provided an unprecedented platform for anti-Jewish hate. The dinner invitation demonstrated a disconnect between the official boundary laid out by the Republican Party and its leaders and a willingness among some in the party to nevertheless affiliate and engage with Christian nationalists and others who espouse those views.

The resurgence of Christian nationalism in America coincided with Trump's presidency, but it was far from a new phenomenon. Broadly defined, Christian nationalism is "a cultural framework that blurs distinctions between Christian identity and American identity, viewing the two as closely related and seeking to enhance and preserve their union."<sup>1</sup> It is neither synonymous with the idea that America is a "Christian nation" nor with "evangelicalism" or "white evangelicalism."<sup>2</sup>

In their 2020 study on Christian nationalism, Whitehead and Perry categorized Americans as "ambassadors, accommodators, resisters, and rejecters" regarding their views on Christian nationalism. The socio-demographic characteristics of ambassadors (19.8% of the sample) revealed diverse backgrounds. Their average age is 54.3 years. Gender favored women 55.3% to 44.7%. The majority (69.9%) were White, compared to Black (11%) and Hispanic (11.4%). 38.7% of the "ambassadors" graduated high school, and 37.1% had some academic education.<sup>3</sup>

The connections between Christian nationalist ideology and white supremacy and antisemitism, which have been discussed in recent scholarship and research, are also not new.<sup>4</sup> Whitehead

<sup>1</sup> Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry, *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 51, digital edition.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 55, 60.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-73.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Whitehead and Perry, *Taking America Back for God*; Philip S. Gorski and Samuel L. Perry, *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022); and Paul A. Djupe and Jacob Dennen, "Christian Nationalists and QAnon Followers Tend to Be Anti-Semitic. That was Seen in the Capitol Attack," *The Washington Post*, January 26, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/01/26/christian-nationalists-qanon-followers-tend-be-anti-semitic-that-was-visible-capitol-attack/>.

and Perry observe that Christian nationalist “antipathy toward Jews may seem surprising given the strong pro-Israel sentiment of prominent supporters of [the ideology],” but note that Christian nationalists are careful to distinguish “Israel as a nation from Judaism as a religion.”<sup>5</sup> According to their study, “the more one adheres to Christian nationalism the more likely they are to view Jews as a threat to their values, freedom, and safety.”<sup>6</sup>

Still, one need not embrace or espouse antisemitic views to be a Christian nationalist, nor do all Christian nationalists implicitly or explicitly embrace such views. It is a source of contention and division among Christian nationalists. As Gorski noted, “garden variety Christian nationalists are probably not explicitly or consciously antisemitic,” though a “hardcore faction” is.<sup>7</sup>

Andrew Torba founded Gab, a social network platform, in 2016 as an alternative to Twitter, enabling more “freedom of speech” and far less moderated content. The platform became a haven for far-right, racist, antisemitic, and conspiratorial views, but it also served as the platform for Torba to promote his Christian nationalist views with the aim of creating a parallel Christian society that can take America back for God.<sup>8</sup> Over the years, Torba has made numerous antisemitic comments on Gab, including suggesting American Jews have dual loyalty, blaming Jews for killing Jesus, and hinting that Jews control the government and media.<sup>9</sup>

Trump’s dinner-party companion Fuentes first gained notoriety following the 2017 Charlottesville white nationalist “Unite the Right” rally (where demonstrators chanted “Jews will not replace us”).<sup>10</sup> On social media platforms and his America First live-stream, Fuentes spread his white supremacist and Christian nationalist views, including making multiple comments that minimized the Holocaust, suggested Jewish control of the media and government, and blamed Jews for world problems.<sup>11</sup>

In the years following Charlottesville, Fuentes focused on expanding the reach of America First and encouraging his supporters (known as Groypers) to infiltrate mainstream conservative institutions and influence the conservative movement’s rightward shift. To this end, Fuentes launched the America First Political Action Conference (AFPAC) in February 2020 to compete with the mainstream Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), which he and the Groypers considered too moderate.

<sup>5</sup> Whitehead and Perry, *Taking America Back for God*, 187.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>7</sup> Kelsey Vlamis, “Trump, Kanye West, and Nick Fuentes Pushing Antisemitism to the Forefront of the GOP [...]” *Business Insider*, December 12, 2022, <https://www.businessinsider.com/kanye-west-trump-antisemitism-may-pull-christian-nationalists-apart-2022-12>.

<sup>8</sup> Tess Owen, “Gab Founder Andrew Torba Wants to Build a Christian Nationalist Internet,” *Vice News*, September 29, 2022, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/wxnpz5/gab-andrew-torba-christian-nationalist>.

<sup>9</sup> “Gab CEO Andrew Torba Broadcasts His Antisemitism Across Social Media Platforms,” ADL, December 15, 2021, <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/gab-ceo-andrew-torba-broadcasts-his-antisemitism-across-social-media-platforms>.

<sup>10</sup> Vice News, “Charlottesville: Race and Terror – Vice News Tonight (HBO),” *YouTube*, August 15, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P54sP0NlNgg>.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Nicholas J. Fuentes (@nickjfuentes), *Telegram*, January 1, 2022, <https://t.me/nickjfuentes/4926>, and Nicholas J. Fuentes (@nickjfuentes), *Telegram*, July 30, 2019, <https://t.me/nickjfuentes/467>.

Through AFPAC, Fuentes has developed ties with several former and current far-right Republican members of Congress as well as other state and local Republican officials throughout the country, including Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.), Rep. Paul Gosar (R-Az.), former Rep. Steve King (R-Ia.), Idaho Lieutenant Governor Janice McGeachin, and Arizona state Sen. Wendy Rogers. Greene, Gosar, and Rogers were all featured speakers at AFPAC’s third annual meeting in 2022, alongside Christian nationalists like Torba and white supremacists like Vincent James.<sup>12</sup>

Before introducing Greene at AFPAC III, Fuentes called young white men the “secret sauce” for a stronger America and praised Russia to chants of “Putin, Putin.”<sup>13</sup> After the conference, Rogers, who won reelection in November, photo-shopped a picture of her, Fuentes, and Torba behind a dead rhinoceros branded with the letters CPAC with a Star of David.<sup>14</sup> The message of the picture was evident – CPAC and mainstream conservatives were Jewish-influenced “RINOs” (Republicans in Name Only, a pejorative term popularized in the 1990s) who had been “slayed” by those truly aligned with the Republican Party’s ideology.

Torba’s participation in (and Gab’s sponsorship of) AFPAC III pointed to the deepening ties between the two Christian nationalists. Fuentes expressed his trust in Gab and Torba “because Gab is run by a faithful Christian. And not some Judeo-Christian either, a Christian.”<sup>15</sup>

Fuentes’ phrasing was deliberate; as Torba, he rejects the “Judeo-Christian” idea, arguing there is no connection between Judaism and Christianity and embracing replacement theology that holds Christians have replaced Jews as God’s chosen people – which Torba elaborates on in his 2022 manifesto *Christian Nationalism: A Guide for Taking Dominion and Discipling Nations*.<sup>16</sup>

Following the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, Fuentes declared that the US should be governed by “Christian law” and that Jews should not be allowed to serve in government. He argued that it was only after “we subtract one Jewish woman [Ruth Bader Ginsburg] and increase one Catholic woman” that *Roe* was overturned, suggesting it was proof no such Judeo-Christian movement existed.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout 2022, Fuentes’ rants against Jews on his America First live-stream were common. Following Kanye West’s antisemitic outburst in October, Fuentes accused American Jews of serving Satan and hating Jesus, saying they should “get the fuck out of America” for essentially denying Christ and declaring that he “[pisses] on your Talmud.”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> America First Foundation (AFF), “AFPAC III – America First Political Action Conference 2022,” AFF, <https://americafirstfoundation.org/afpac/>.

<sup>13</sup> Ben Lorber (@BenLorber8), “Shortly Before Bringing Up MTG [...],” *Twitter*, February 26, 2022, <https://twitter.com/BenLorber8/status/1497407269587206144>.

<sup>14</sup> Wendy Rogers (@wendyrogersaz), *Telegram*, February 26, 2022, <https://t.me/wendyrogersaz/3859>.

<sup>15</sup> Nicholas J. Fuentes (@nickjfuentes), *Telegram*, January 25, 2022, <https://t.me/nickjfuentes/5232>.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Torba and Andrew Isker, *Christian Nationalism: A Guide for Taking Dominion and Discipling Nations* (Gab AI Inc, 2022).

<sup>17</sup> Kyle Mantyla, “Nick Fuentes Says SCOTUS Ruling Overturning Roe Shows Why People ‘That Don’t Serve Jesus’ Cannot Hold Public Office,” *Right Wing Watch*, June 27, 2022, <https://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/nick-fuentes-says-scotus-ruling-overturning-roe-shows-why-people-that-dont-serve-jesus-cannot-hold-public-office/>.

<sup>18</sup> Right Wing Watch (@RightWingWatch), “Galvanized by His Idol Ye’s Latest Antisemitic Outbursts [...],” *Twitter*, October 17, 2022, <https://twitter.com/RightWingWatch/status/1582028599812820992>.

In the weeks before his dinner with Trump, Fuentes stated that: “Jews have too much power in our [American] society. Christians should have all the power, everyone else very little;”<sup>19</sup> that Americans should “thank the Jewish media” for the popularity of abortion in the country; and that “we [Christian nationalists, his supporters] need to take control of the media or take control of the government and force the people to believe what we believe.”<sup>20</sup>

For Fuentes, dinner with the former president constituted a pinnacle moment in his yearslong efforts to push the Republican Party further to the right.<sup>21</sup> Fuentes’ ally Vincent James boasted that the movement had “infiltrated the mainstream flank of the GOP” as people come to see that their beliefs are “the inevitable conclusion and the necessary reaction actually to what’s happening to the country today.”<sup>22</sup> Torba issued a call to his supporters to pray for Ye (Kanye West) because “God is using him” and noted that Ye (Kanye West) “talks about the need for our leaders to uphold Christian values, not Zionist ones,” praising for “naming the enemy” in reference to Jews.<sup>23</sup>

Given Fuentes’ outspoken antisemitism and illiberal views, the Republican Party has sought to distance itself from his views, but doing the same from Torba and Gab has been more challenging, given Gab’s broad appeal.<sup>24</sup>

The Republican Party has been confronted by similar challenges in the past. Matthew Continetti observes that American conservatism since the 1920s has, at times, “embraced a demagogic leader who pulls it toward the political fringe.”<sup>25</sup> Figures from Henry Ford, Father Charles Coughlin, and Charles Lindbergh to Pat Buchanan and Donald Trump have served as “tribunes of discontent [who] have succumbed to conspiracy theories, racism, and antisemitism.”<sup>26</sup> Torba and Fuentes are no Ford or Coughlin in terms of their clout. Still, they are certainly demagogues and influential leaders seeking to transform the fringes of the Republican Party into its mainstream.

Following Greene and Gosar’s appearance at AFPAC, the Republican leadership in Congress condemned the two lawmakers and other party members for associating with an openly white nationalist group. Then-House Minority Leader Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California called Fuentes’ antisemitic and pro-Putin rhetoric “appalling” and “unacceptable,” while Senate Minority

19 Nicholas J. Fuentes (@nickjfuentes), *Telegram*, November 15, 2022, <https://t.me/nickjfuentes/9339>.

20 Right Wing Watch, “White Nationalist Nick Fuentes Admits [...]”, *Twitter*, November 12, 2022, <https://twitter.com/RightWingWatch/status/1590763508043771905>.

21 Southern Poverty Law Center, “White Nationalist Nick Fuentes on Pushing GOP to an Extreme Far-Right Position [May 2021]”, *YouTube*, February 4, 2022, <https://youtu.be/eah2Qi1zcE8>.

22 Right Wing Watch, “White Nationalist Vincent James Brags [...]”, *Vimeo*, November 30, 2022, <https://vimeo.com/776727262>.

23 Andrew Torba, “Pray for Ye,” *Gab News*, December 1, 2022, <https://news.gab.com/2022/12/pray-for-ye/>, and Right Wing Watch (@RightWingWatch), “Antisemitic Christian Nationalist Andrew Torba Says Trump [...]”, *Twitter*, November 30, 2022, <https://twitter.com/RightWingWatch/status/1597985612182982656>.

24 Ja’han Jones, “GOP has a Love-‘Hate’ Relationship with Gab Founder Andrew Torba,” *MSNBC*, August 11, 2022, <https://www.msnbc.com/the-reidout/reidout-blog/gab-republicans-andrew-torba-blake-masters-rcna42628>.

25 Matthew Continetti, *The Right – The Hundred-Year War for American Conservatism* (New York: Basic Books, 2022), 25, digital edition.

26 *Ibid.*



Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky declared “there’s no place in the Republican Party for white supremacists or antisemitism.”<sup>27</sup> However, the Republican National Committee (RNC) and Congressional Republicans did not censure either Greene or Gosar.

Months later, Trump’s dinner with Fuentes raised the question of where the boundary of acceptable views is drawn among the party’s voter base again. The former president refused to apologize and avoided directly criticizing West or Fuentes, perhaps fearing he would alienate far-right supporters.<sup>28</sup>

Several leading Republicans issued statements of various strengths condemning antisemitism and Fuentes. On the other hand, the Republican Jewish Coalition made a rather ambiguous statement that clearly condemned Fuentes and West for their “virulent antisemitism” but failed to mention Trump. Instead, it called for all politicians not to meet with such figures.<sup>29</sup>

Other Jewish Republicans spoke out against the meeting but did condition the continued legitimacy of Trump on an unequivocal apology on his part. While there appears to be broad agreement that Trump crossed a red line with the dinner, it remains to be seen if Jewish Republicans will shift their support away from the former president.

At the same time, Republican congressional leaders McCarthy and McConnell denounced Fuentes, antisemitism, and white supremacy, with McCarthy saying Fuentes “has no place in this Republican Party,” while McConnell, alluding to Trump, suggested, “anyone meeting with people advocating that point of view... are highly unlikely to ever be elected president of the United States.”<sup>30</sup> The strongest criticism came from former Vice President Mike Pence, who said Trump should apologize for meeting Fuentes and West and denounce their beliefs.<sup>31</sup> In January 2023, the Republican National Committee unanimously adopted a resolution condemning antisemitism, Nick Fuentes, and Kanye West.<sup>32</sup>

While Republican leaders assured that antisemitism has no place in the party, a December Yahoo News/You Gov poll provided concerning insights regarding the Republican voting base. First, 36% of Republicans approved of the former president’s decision to host West and Fuentes, while 37% were not sure and 28% disapproved. Second, while 59% of Republicans said Kanye West’s statements about Hitler and the Jewish people were antisemitic, 19% said

<sup>27</sup> Burgess Everett and Olivia Beavers, “Greene and Gosar Increasingly Isolated in Hill GOP after Speaking at White Nationalist Event,” *Politico*, February 28, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/02/28/mcconnell-greene-gosar-white-nationalist-event-00012401>.

<sup>28</sup> Hugo Lowell, “Donald Trump ‘Shied Away from Criticizing Nick Fuentes,’” *The Guardian*, November 28, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/nov/28/donald-trump-shied-away-from-criticising-nick-fuentes>.

<sup>29</sup> Jonathan Weisman, “Jewish Allies Call Trump’s Dinner with Antisemites a Breaking Point,” *The New York Times*, November 28, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/28/us/politics/trump-kanye-west-nick-fuentes-antisemitism.html>.

<sup>30</sup> Dustin Jones, “Republican Leaders Denounce Trump’s Dinner with White Nationalist Nick Fuentes,” *NPR*, November 29, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/11/29/1139742844/republicans-denounce-trump-dinner-white-supremacist-nick-fuentes>.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Ja’Han Jones, “RNC Throws Ye Under the Bus with Resolution ‘Condemning’ Antisemitism,” *MSNBC*, January 31, 2023, <https://www.msnbc.com/the-reidout/reidout-blog/rnc-antisemitism-ye-fuentes-gop-rcna68182>.



they were not.<sup>33</sup> Thus it seems that despite the pronouncements of Republican leaders on antisemitism and Nick Fuentes, a significant portion of the party's base does not share the official party position.

Despite his antics and history of tolerating those holding racist, hateful views, Donald Trump remains the frontrunner in the race for the Republican Party's presidential nomination in 2024. Even if he ends up losing, his support base is critical to the party's electoral success.<sup>34</sup>

This begs the questions: to what extent will the official boundary of the Republican Party regarding antisemitism be observed, and how far is the party willing to go to win votes from the antisemite minority within its base? The future of Jews in America – and, in fact, of the Union at large – may depend on the answer.

— **Dr. Carl. Yonker**

<sup>33</sup> Andrew Romano, "Poll: Trump Loses Ground with Republicans After Kanye West, Nick Fuentes Dinner," *Yahoo News*, December 7, 2022, <https://news.yahoo.com/poll-trump-loses-ground-with-republicans-after-kanye-west-nick-fuentes-dinner-100204385.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Nate Cohn, "The Tilt – Is Trump Way Up or Way Down?," *The New York Times*, February 3, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/03/upshot/polls-trump-desantis-republicans.html>.

# ANTISEMITISM AND THE HEBREW ISRAELITES

In the fall of 2022, the Hebrew Israelite spiritual movement gained widespread media attention after two popular African American celebrities shared elements of the movement’s ideology with their millions of social media followers.<sup>1</sup>

Ye, the rapper formerly known as Kanye West, unleashed a stream of antisemitic invective on Twitter and elsewhere and then attempted to deflect criticism by expressing a core Israelite tenet: that Black people like him are, in fact, Jews and therefore cannot be antisemitic.<sup>2</sup> Around the same time, the NBA star Kyrie Irving promoted on his social media accounts a documentary that makes a number of inflammatory claims about Jews, including that they are imposters who stole the identity of Black, Hispanic and Native American peoples.<sup>3</sup>

Emboldened by these celebrity endorsements of their worldview, members of Israel United in Christ (IUIC), an Hebrew Israelite group, which has been designated a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center,<sup>4</sup> marched through the streets of Brooklyn chanting, “We are the real Jews.”<sup>5</sup>

Prior to the Ye (Kanye West) and Irving controversies, some Jews were already wary of Hebrew Israelites. For decades, the more radical among these groups have openly preached their intolerance for Jews, whites, LGBTQ people, and other minorities on street corners across the United States. They do not actively encourage violence, but in December 2019, two people with ties to an Hebrew Israelite group in New York murdered three people in a targeted attack on a kosher grocery store in Jersey City, New Jersey. Later that month, a schizophrenic man who held some Israelite beliefs stabbed Jews at a rabbi’s house in Monsey, New York.

Today, Hebrew Israelism is closely linked with antisemitism in the public consciousness – so much so that the Simon Wiesenthal Center included “Black Hebrew Israelites” on its list of the top antisemitic people and incidents of 2022.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> While the term “Black Hebrew Israelites” is commonly used in media reports in reference to this movement, adherents do not actually identify that way, and not all are Black. They call themselves Hebrew Israelites, Hebrews, or Israelites, and those are the terms I have chosen to use in this article. Importantly, Hebrew Israelites are distinct from Black Jews, that is, Black people who are Jewish by birth or conversion.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Esensten, “‘Black People are Actually Jew[s]’: The Historical Origins of Kanye West’s Inflammatory Comments,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, October 12, 2022, <https://www.jta.org/2022/10/12/religion/black-people-are-actually-jews-the-historical-origins-of-kanye-wests-inflammatory-comments>.

<sup>3</sup> Tania Ganguli and Sopan Deb, “What to Know About Irving’s Antisemitic Movie Post and the Fallout,” *The New York Times*, November 21, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/kyrie-irving-antisemitic.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, “Radical Hebrew Israelites,” <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/radical-hebrew-israelites>.

<sup>5</sup> Ari Ingel (@OGAride), “Black Hebrew Israelites Out in Force Today, Chanting ‘We are the Real Jews,’” *Twitter*, November 20, 2022, <https://twitter.com/OGAride/status/1594559767791345664>.

<sup>6</sup> Simon Wiesenthal Center, “2022 Top Ten Worst Global Anti-Semitic Incidents,” <https://www.wiesenthal.com/assets/pdf/2022-top-ten-worst-global.pdf>.

There are, however, different sects within the movement, not all of which are hostile to Jews. Also, there are elements of Israelite doctrine that some Jews might find distasteful but that are not necessarily hateful.

Hebrew Israelism arose in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when a number of former slaves turned preachers began spreading the message that African Americans are the true children of Israel, who were also Black. This belief, coupled with the conviction that slavery was a divine punishment for disobeying God’s commandments, resonated with some Black people coming out of slavery.

According to historian Jacob Dorman, “The idea that African slavery in the Americas was not a mark of shame but instead a mark of distinction as God’s chosen people appealed to some African Americans, who appreciated the way the doctrine gave them pride and dignity in the context of Jim Crow segregation that sought to subordinate and humiliate them at every turn.”<sup>7</sup>

The pioneers of the movement — figures such as Bishop William Saunders Crowdy of Oklahoma and Bishop William Christian of Arkansas — drew upon a variety of sources in formulating their theology, from Pentecostalism to Spiritualism to Freemasonry. With the Great Migration of Black people from the American South, Hebrew Israelism spread across northern cities and found new adherents and expressions.

Some Israelite congregations fashioned themselves to a degree after mainstream Jewish communities, worshiping in Hebrew and wearing Jewish prayer shawls. One of the more influential of these congregations was the Commandment Keepers, which was founded in 1919 by a Caribbean-born rabbi named Wentworth Arthur Matthew.

The 1960s were a period of upheaval, both in American society at large with the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements and in the Israelite world in particular. In 1967, a group of Chicago-based Israelites began migrating to Liberia and then to Israel, which they understood to be their ancestral homeland. (Now known as the African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem, they are based in Dimona; most do not hold full Israeli citizenship due to the fact that they are not considered Jewish.)<sup>8</sup>

Then in 1969, a member of the Commandment Keepers named Abba Bivens broke away to start his own congregation. Bivens emphasized strict observance of Biblical law and Jesus’ messianic status, along with a total rejection of the Jewish establishment and white people in general.<sup>9</sup>

His ideology, which came to be known as One West for the address in New York where he had his headquarters, would influence splinter groups that are referred to as “radical” or “extremist” by watchdog organizations. They include the Israelite School of Universal Practical Knowledge

<sup>7</sup> Jacob Dorman, *Chosen People: The Rise of American Black Israelite Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 185.

<sup>8</sup> For more on the origins of this community, its ideology, and its place in Israeli society, visit: [andrewesensten.net/ahij](http://andrewesensten.net/ahij).

<sup>9</sup> Sam Kestenbaum, “‘I’m an Israelite’: Kendrick Lamar’s Spiritual Search, Hebrew Israelite Religion, and the Politics of a Celebrity Encounter,” in *Kendrick Lamar and the Making of Black Meaning*, eds. Christopher M. Driscoll, Anthony B. Pinn, and Monica R. Miller (New York: Routledge, 2021), 277.

(ISUPK), based in Pennsylvania; the Israelite Church of God in Jesus Christ, based in New York; Israel United in Christ, also based in New York; and Sicarii, based in California.<sup>10</sup>

The Israelites do not publicize their membership figures. The only publicly available data on the population of people living in the United States who identify as Israelites are from a small national survey conducted in 2019 by an evangelical Christian research firm. According to that survey, there are approximately 1.6 million Israelites in the US.<sup>11</sup> Observers of the movement believe those who belong to the specific groups that are hostile to Jews represent a small percentage of that number.<sup>12</sup>

When do claims made by members of various Hebrew Israelite sects cross the line from historically and/or theologically contested to unequivocally antisemitic?

To attempt to answer this question, let us analyze several claims advanced by Israelites during recent public demonstrations, along with a few made in “Hebrews to Negroes: Wake Up Black America,” the 2018 documentary that Kyrie Irving endorsed. The definition of antisemitism used for this purpose is the “working definition” drafted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and adopted by the United States and other countries since 2016.<sup>13</sup>

*Claims: All Black and Hispanic people descend from the 12 tribes of Israel and, therefore, are Semitic and cannot hold antisemitic views. Jews are the “synagogue of Satan.”*

At a November 9, 2022, rally outside of Barclays Center in Brooklyn that was organized by Israel United in Christ, the group’s purple-clad members distributed a flier to passersby that contained elements of their doctrine. At the top, the following statement appears: “The So Called Blacks And Hispanics Are ‘The Twelve Tribes of Israel!’ You Are The Children Of The Slave Trade.” Below that, it read: “We Are Not Anti-Semetic [sic], We Are Semetic [sic].”<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> This is an egregiously condensed history of a fascinating and complex movement. For fuller histories, see Dorman’s book, as well as Bruce D. Haynes, *The Soul of Judaism: Jews of African Descent in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2018) and James E. Landing, *Black Judaism: Story of An American Movement* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> “African American Attitudes Toward Israel,” LifeWay Research, November 2019, <https://research.lifeway.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/The-Philos-Project-African-American-Attitudes-Toward-Israel-Report.pdf>. The 1.6 million figure is almost certainly an undercount. Some survey respondents likely did not feel comfortable publicly identifying themselves as Israelites due to the public scrutiny that the movement has faced in recent years. There are also Hispanic and Native American people who identify as Israelites but were not part of the survey pool.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew Esensten, “How Many Hebrew Israelites are There, and How Worried Should Jews Be?,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, November 25, 2022, <https://www.jta.org/2022/11/25/united-states/how-many-hebrew-israelites-are-there-and-how-worried-should-jews-be>.

<sup>13</sup> The definition, which can be found in full at <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism>, describes several “manifestations” of antisemitism. The most relevant to the current discussion is this one: “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.”

<sup>14</sup> James Inniss (@jmikey), “The Black Israelites (I’m Not Sure if that’s What They Call Themselves),” *Twitter*, November 9, 2022, <https://twitter.com/jmikey/status/1590488638240219136/photo/1>.

The theory that all Black and Hispanic people are descendants of the ancient Israelite tribes (and are therefore Semitic) is an improbable but not antisemitic one. As articulated, the theory does not explicitly challenge the identity of halachic Jews who are not Black or Hispanic. But elsewhere on the flier, Jews are referenced in ways that do just that. Instead of the word “Jews,” the writers of the flier employ the terms “Edomites” and “Amalek.” “Edomites,” which refers to descendants of the Biblical Esau, Jacob’s twin brother, is a catch-all Hebrew Israelite term for white people. “Amalek” refers to Esau’s grandson and the Amalekites’ leader. The Amalekites were enemies of the ancient Israelites, so “Amalek” is a derogatory used by Hebrew Israelites to refer to Jewish people today. Israelites use these terms to cast doubt on Jews’ connections to Jacob/Israel, whom Jews consider to be one of their patriarchs, along with Abraham and Isaac.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, the flier contains a passage from the book of Revelation that is often used to demonize Jews: “I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.” (Rev. 2:9) This Biblical passage is popular among radical Israelites and the Nation of Islam (NOI). Minister Louis Farrakhan, the NOI’s notoriously antisemitic leader, has cited it during his sermons.<sup>16</sup> In light of how the phrase “synagogue of Satan” has been weaponized by those hostile to Jews, the inclusion of the passage on IUIC’s flier could be considered antisemitic.

*Claim: People of color are the authentic Jews.*

Marching through the streets of Brooklyn on November 20, 2022, hundreds of members of IUIC chanted: “Hey Jacob, yeah it’s time to wake up! We’ve got good news for you, you are the real Jews. And that’s the good news.”<sup>17</sup> On some occasions, they replaced the word “you” in the phrase “you are the real Jews” with “we.”

In Hebrew Israelite lingo, “Jacob,” sometimes shortened to “Jake,” refers to people of color — specifically Black, Hispanic, and Native American people — who have yet to awaken to their “true” identity as descendants of Jacob and his 12 sons, the progenitors of the 12 tribes of Israel. (Jacob was renamed Israel after he wrestled with an angel in the book of Genesis.)

The intended audience for this message was not the public at large but rather potential new IUIC members. (Indeed, IUIC devotes significant time and resources to proselytizing on the street and online, with the goal of recruiting 144,000 members to usher in the apocalypse.)

The question of who is a Jew has long been debated, especially among Jews themselves. Scholars and religious leaders are divided about whether it is antisemitic for Israelites to assert their authenticity as genealogical descendants of the Israelites (and specifically as descendants of the tribe of Judah, from which “Jew” derives). Some differentiate between positive statements of identity, i.e., “we are authentic Jews,” and antagonistic ones, i.e., “we are authentic Jews, and the *other* people who call themselves Jews today are imposters.”

<sup>15</sup> SPLC, “Radical Hebrew Israelites.”

<sup>16</sup> Anti-Defamation League, “Farrakhan: In His Own Words,” January 12, 2013, <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/farrakhan-his-own-words>.

<sup>17</sup> Ari Ingel (@OGArise), “Black Hebrew Israelites Out in Force Today,” *Twitter*, November 21, 2022, <https://twitter.com/ogarise/status/1594559767791345664?s=61&t=KWVP25rllK8FL4o3i7rgRg>.

In evaluating whether articulations of authenticity are antisemitic, it is necessary to look at their context and intention. In the case of IUIC members chanting “we are the real Jews” as they march through a city with a large Jewish population, their intention would seem to be to cast doubt on the identity of halachic Jews, whom they often refer to as “so-called Jews” in their literature and speeches. The context and intention point to this particular chant being antisemitic.

By contrast, the African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem have tempered their assertions of authenticity as they have become more integrated into Israeli society. In the early 1970s, when government authorities raised questions about how they were connected to Judaism and the land of Israel, they asserted that they were “the true descendants of the Israelites, and the true inheritors of this land,” in the words of community leader Ben Ammi Ben Israel (1939-2014).<sup>18</sup>

Today, they continue to enthusiastically assert their connection to the ancient Israelites (and not just to the tribe of Judah), and they view Israel as their birthright. They also make a distinction between themselves as Israelites who follow an Old Testament-based lifestyle set forth by God and Jews who practice a man-made religion. But they no longer publicly challenge Jewish identity or sovereignty in Israel.

*Claim: Jews are devilish actors who stole the identity of the “real” Jews.*

On December 3, a Hebrew Israelite from the militant Sicarii sect said the following in a video shot in Brooklyn that was widely shared on social media: “We support Hitler. Because Hitler was killing your people, man, Hitler knew who the real Jews was. Hitler wasn’t oppressing my people. He was coming for your necks. And let me give you a wake up call, man: You’re not a Jew. You’re not a Jew, right? You’re the seed of the devil, man.”<sup>19</sup>

To the horror of the Jewish man filming him, the street preacher continued, “These brothers on these platforms, Kanye and Kyrie, shaking things up, it’s because it’s a great awakening happening. The real Jews are back on the streets, and you so-called fake Jews who stole our identity are about to go into slavery. Because you’re not a Jew. You’re Esau. [The Holocaust] did happen, and we’re glad that it happened.”

This diatribe is a clear-cut example of antisemitic speech. The Israelite preacher celebrates the murder of Jews during the Holocaust, rejects a Jewish man’s Jewishness twice — first by explicitly telling him he is not a Jew at all and then by calling him a “fake” one — and asserts that Jews stole the identity of the “real” children of Israel. Taken together, these statements reflect a deep hatred of Jews.

The belief that Hitler knew who the “real” Jews were is based on a fabricated quote that has been circulating on the internet for some time. The quote also reads, in part, “Because the white Jews know that the Negroes are the real Children of Israel and to keep America’s secret, the Jews will blackmail America. They will extort America, their plan for world domination

<sup>18</sup> David Landau, “Black Hebrews’ Threaten Doom If Newcomers Fail to Receive Housing,” *The Jerusalem Post*, August 31, 1971, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/928633856>.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Rapaport (@MichaelRapaport), “This Was in Brooklyn Outside Barclays Yesterday,” *Twitter*, December 4, 2022, <https://twitter.com/ogaride/status/1594559767791345664?s=61&t=KWVP25rllK8FL4o3i7rgRg>.



won't work if the Negroes know who they were." In July 2020, the NFL player DeSean Jackson was fined by his team for sharing this quote on Instagram.

*Claims: Jews are converts with no genealogical connection to the ancient Israelites. Jews have lied about their identity in order to achieve world domination.*

"Hebrews to Negroes" was written, produced, and directed by Ronald Dalton, Jr., who is not known to be associated with a specific Hebrew Israelite group. He claims to have received divine revelations, which inspired him to make the film.<sup>20</sup>

One of the claims Dalton puts forth is a genetic one: "Black people...are realizing that the Sephardic, Ashkenazi, and Mizrahi Jews in Israel are just religious converts with no biblical blood connection to the ancient Twelve Tribes of Israel."

This statement is bizarre. While Judaism is a religion that accepts converts, and some Sephardic, Ashkenazi, and Mizrahi Jews are converts to the faith, the majority of Jews around the world were born into Jewish families. Given the current state of genetic testing and tracing, it is impossible to link anyone living today, Jewish or not, to the ancient Israelite population. In any case, Jews trace their lineage back to ancient Israel not through DNA but through historical, archaeological, cultural, and spiritual paths.

Dalton also asserts in his film that Jews gained power over others through deception, and their lies include the following: "1) The Jews are 'Israelites,' and thus God's Chosen People; 2) Jesus Christ was a Jew; 3) That 6 million Jews were killed in a holocaust during WWII; 4) That all races are equal, or that all are brothers; and, 5) That Jews are just another religious group."<sup>21</sup>

By promoting the myth that Jews are engaged in a conspiracy to control the world and denying the scope of the Holocaust, Dalton has clearly crossed the line into antisemitic territory.

To what extent does Hebrew Israelite ideology put Jews in real-world danger?

While there have been isolated cases of violence perpetrated against Jews by those who were exposed to Israelite beliefs, no Israelite groups promote violence as a means of achieving their spiritual goals. A recent report from George Washington University's Program on Extremism states, "The predominant threat today is from individuals loosely affiliated with or inspired by the movement rather than by groups, organizations, or institutions."<sup>22</sup>

— **Andrew Esensten**

<sup>20</sup> Louis Keene, "We Watched the Movie Kyrie Irving Shared So You Don't Have To," *Forward*, November 15, 2022, <https://forward.com/news/524892/hebrews-to-negroes-movie-summary/>.

<sup>21</sup> According to the ADL, Dalton did not come up with these five lies. The original source of the quote is an antisemitic screed published in 1978 by Walter White Jr. titled "The Hidden Tyranny." Anti-Defamation League, "Hebrews to Negroes: What You Need to Know," November 3, 2022, <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/hebrews-negroes-what-you-need-know>.

<sup>22</sup> The Program on Extremism, The George Washington University, "Contemporary Violent Extremism and the Black Hebrew Israelite Movement," September 2022, <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/ContemporaryViolentExtremism-BlackHebrewIsraeliteMovement090722.pdf>.



# HATE SPEECH AND THE FIRST AMENDMENT

*“Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press.”<sup>1</sup>*

The foundation for the United States’ stance on protecting almost all speech, and thus allowing most forms of hate speech, including antisemitism and Holocaust denial, is rooted in the First Amendment, or more precisely, in the Supreme Court’s interpretation of it.

The American Supreme Court does not balance freedom of speech with other constitutional rights but guards it as an almost absolute right. In cases involving antisemitic and racist hate speech, American courts have generally ruled that restricting hate speech would violate free speech rights.

Still, some limitations have been set in place throughout the years.

The First Amendment protects citizens from governmental restrictions on speech. Therefore, any laws prohibiting either behavior or expressions related to racial, religious, or gender bias are considered by the Supreme Court as prohibiting certain *content* or a certain *viewpoint*. Thus, they are deemed to violate the First Amendment.

However, laws against certain *modes* of prohibited expression that veer into action, such as those causing violence or public disorder, may be deemed not to violate the First Amendment. This is the “content neutrality principle.” Any restrictions on speech made by law must be “content neutral,” point of view neutral, and based on the mode of expression.

The Supreme Court has recognized that the distinction between these types of speech is “not a precise one,” but the question is whether the prohibition of any speech is based on the message it conveys, given that the government cannot show preference towards a specific viewpoint or perspective.<sup>2</sup>

For example, in 1992, the Supreme Court ruled that a law that prohibited the use of language or symbols based on race, color, or creed was unconstitutional because it was content based.<sup>3</sup> It emphasized that the prohibition must be neutral as to the person’s viewpoint, but that free speech protections do not extend to *action*, and therefore words that veer into calling for violence may be prohibited.

<sup>1</sup> The First Amendment was ratified on December 15, 1791. Freedom of speech protection has been extended from Federal laws also to prohibiting the states from enacting any such laws, by the Supreme Court’s interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment on July 9, 1868.

<sup>2</sup> Leslie Gielow Jacobs, “Clarifying the Content-Based/Content Neutral and Content/Viewpoint Determinations,” *McGeorge School of Law Scholarly Articles* Rev. 595 (2003), <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=facultyarticles>.

<sup>3</sup> *R.A.V. v. City of St. Paul Minnesota*, 505 U.S. 377 (1992), <https://www.thefire.org/supreme-court/rav-v-city-st-paul-minnesota>.

The Court developed further enhancements to the contours of protected free speech over the years.

A Supreme Court case from 1969 involved a Klu Klux Klan rally filmed by a local news crew in Ohio. The state law prohibited “the publication of any hateful or violent showing,” and the organizer was convicted. But the Supreme Court held that a state may only prohibit speech that “is directed to inciting imminent lawless action.”<sup>4</sup> It is not enough that the speaker is calling to break the law. It must also be proven that such speech (1) poses an imminent danger of unlawful action, that (2) the speaker has the *intention* to incite such action, and (3) there is the *likelihood* that this will be the consequence of that speech—certainly, a very high bar.

One may therefore express in the United States blatantly racist, antisemitic, anti-immigrant, xenophobic, and transphobic statements in public and even call to break the law, but unless it is proven that one *intended* to incite lawless action and that such action was likely on account of one’s expression, one remains free to do so.

The imminent lawless action test has remained fundamental in determining what types of speech can be prohibited. In 1992<sup>5</sup> and 2003,<sup>6</sup> two Supreme Court cases involved cross burnings used to intimidate the African American community. The Court held that states may prohibit cross burning only if they are done with a “specific intent to inspire fear of bodily harm,”<sup>7</sup> despite the well-known history of cross burning being used as an intimidation tactic against Black communities.

In 2017, the Supreme Court ruled on the latest hate speech case. The case involved a rock group of Asian-Americans called “The Slants.” “Slants” is a derogatory term used against Asians, but the band had said it wished to “self-own” the insult by appropriating it, like the way some had done with the N-word in the Black community. The Slants also requested to trademark the name, but the Federal Patent and Trademark Office rejected their claim since the term was disparaging to racial groups.<sup>8</sup>

The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the rock group and declared that the Trademark Office could not deny a trademark on this basis. So, freedom of speech is so vigorously protected in the US that one is free to trademark, and thus profit from, a disparaging racial term.

Most hate speech is now disseminated via social media. Consequently, current hate speech case law and research focus more on online hate speech. In this respect, the US free speech perspective is encountering several new challenges; chief among them, matters of jurisdiction.

The transnational aspect of the internet has made American law less relevant in regulating online hate speech. Twitter and other online platforms are already obliged to comply with the laws of countries outside the US. Some countries, such as Germany and France, claim broad jurisdictional reach when it comes to hate speech. For example, Germany’s online hate

<sup>4</sup> Brandenburg v. Ohio, 395 U.S. 444 (1969), <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/395/444/>.

<sup>5</sup> R.A.V. v. City of St. Paul Minnesota, <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/505/377/>.

<sup>6</sup> Virginia v. Black, 538 U.S. 343 (2003), <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/538/343/>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Matal v. Tam - 137 S. Ct. 1744 (2017), Harvard Law Review, <https://harvardlawreview.org/2017/11/matal-v-tam/>.

speech law applies to any social media networks with two million or more registered users in Germany.<sup>9</sup> According to German law, these platforms can incur fines of up to 50 million euros if they do not remove offensive posts within 24 hours, and they must release periodic compliance reports.<sup>10</sup> French law also lists several reporting and monitoring obligations for social media companies with more than 10 million users per month in France.<sup>11</sup>

US companies operating across Europe, such as Twitter, Google, and Facebook must also comply with European Union law, specifically the Digital Services Act. It stipulates that internet service providers must act expeditiously to remove access to illegal content (per European legal standards) once it has been reported.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, since US social media companies are either publicly traded companies (like Google's parent company Alphabet Inc., and Facebook and Instagram's Meta Platforms Inc.) or private companies (like Twitter, since late October 2022) and are not federal or state entities, they are not required under the First Amendment to provide free speech to their users. Federal authorities are forbidden from limiting free speech (such as federally-funded universities and governmental bodies), but private entities are entitled to constrict speech.

As a person may kick someone out of his house for speaking hatefully, so may a social media platform. Conversely, companies may *choose* to provide broader free speech platforms to their users – but then risk the legal exposure of violating hate speech laws in jurisdictions outside the US.

Since these platforms also operate outside the US and in most countries around the world, it is more prudent for their terms of service and hate speech policies to resemble the European view. Indeed, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube's policies are closer to the European hate speech prohibition model than the US's.

Before buying Twitter, Elon Musk had called himself a “free speech absolutist” and, after taking control of the company, he tweeted, “The bird is freed.” The European Internal Market Commissioner's responded: “In Europe, the bird will fly by our rules.”<sup>13</sup>

After a few months at the helm, free speech absolutism rang a bit differently. “By ‘free speech,’ I simply mean that which matches the law,” Musk said. Certainly, a quixotic free speech ethos is

<sup>9</sup> The Network Enforcement Act (Netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz, NetzDG; German: Gesetz zur Verbesserung der Rechtsdurchsetzung in sozialen Netzwerken), passed on June 30, 2017, and entered into effect in January 2018. English translation available at: [https://www.bmj.de/DE/Themen/FokusThemen/NetzDG/NetzDG\\_EN\\_node.html](https://www.bmj.de/DE/Themen/FokusThemen/NetzDG/NetzDG_EN_node.html).

<sup>10</sup> Although a court ruling in March 2022 ruled the German law violated European Union data protection laws. “German Court Rules against Online Hate-Speech Law,” *Reuters*, March 1, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/german-court-rules-against-online-hate-speech-law-2022-03-01/>.

<sup>11</sup> Florence G'Sell, “A French Perspective on Elon Musk's Twitter,” *LawFare Blog*, January 3, 2023, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/french-perspective-elon-musks-twitter>.

<sup>12</sup> The Digital Services Act, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020PC0825&from=en>.

<sup>13</sup> Wilhelmine Preussen, “EU Commissioner to Elon Musk: Twitter Will Play by Our Rules,” *Politico*, October 28, 2022, <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-commissioner-to-musk-twitter-will-play-by-our-rules/>.

no match for the European Union’s strict internet hate speech laws.<sup>14</sup> Simply put, US companies operating in Europe must adhere to European regulations.<sup>15</sup> Twitter must also adhere to its own, albeit changeable, terms of service.

Indeed, after only a short time at Twitter, Musk had to remove a swastika posted by Kanye West swiftly and publicly.

In 2022, West, a rapper and producer, began discussing and posting antisemitic remarks and images, including his admiration for Hitler. In October, he accused “Jewish media” and “Jewish Zionists” of canceling his shows.<sup>16</sup> This continued during an interview with Tucker Carlson on Fox News in early October, talking about bizarre conspiratorial ideas, including that black people were the real “Jewish race.”<sup>17</sup>

A few days later, West posted that he would go “death con 3 on JEWISH PEOPLE” on Twitter.<sup>18</sup> He repeated ideas of Jewish control and manipulation during interviews in the days that followed. In December, he said on the Alex Jones Show that “I see good things about Hitler”<sup>19</sup> and tweeted an image of a swastika inside a Star of David.<sup>20</sup> He was suspended from Twitter, and his financial fallout was quick in coming.<sup>21</sup> Balenciaga, Gap, Adidas, and other companies severed ties with him, and his billionaire status was decimated in a matter of a few tumultuous weeks.<sup>22</sup> West’s behavior then inspired related antisemitic incidents, including protestors displaying a banner that read, “Kanye is right about the Jews.”<sup>23</sup>

To be sure, had West uttered some of his latest statements while visiting Paris, Vienna, or Berlin, for example, he could have been charged with those countries’ hate speech laws and

<sup>14</sup> “European Commission authorities have expressed concerns and insisted that Musk’s Twitter comply with the Digital Services Act (DSA). Recently, Thierry Breton, the European Commissioner for the Internal Market, warned Musk that his company could face penalties of up to 6% of its global revenue or even a ban throughout Europe if it violates the Digital Service Act.” Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Elon Musk (@elonmusk), “The Extreme Antibody Reaction from those who Fear Free Speech Says it All,” *Twitter*, April 26, 2022, <https://twitter.com/elonmusk/status/1519020176884305920>.

<sup>16</sup> Remi Tumin, “Kanye West Faces Costly Fallout: A Timeline,” *The New York Times*, December 19, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/kanye-west-timeline.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Anne Merlan, “Watch the Disturbing Kanye Interview Clips that Tucker Carlson Didn’t Put on Air,” *Vice News*, October 11, 2022, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/3ad77y/kanye-west-tucker-carlson-leaked-footage-antisemitism-fake-children>.

<sup>18</sup> “Twitter, Instagram Block Kanye West over Antisemitic Posts,” *Associated Press*, October 11, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/twitter-inc-entertainment-music-ba5c710ec59d195fe4d83cb2c9343589>.

<sup>19</sup> “Ye says ‘I See Good Things about Hitler’ on Conspiracy Theorist Alex Jones’ Show,” *NPR*, December 2, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/12/02/1140218872/ye-antisemitism-alex-jones-podcast>.

<sup>20</sup> John Yoon, “Kanye West is Suspended from Twitter after Posting a Swastika,” *The New York Times*, December 2, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/02/business/media/kanye-west-twitter-suspension.html?searchResultPosition=2>.

<sup>21</sup> Tumin, “Kanye West Faces Costly Fallout.”

<sup>22</sup> Chris Isidore, “Kanye West No Longer a Billionaire, Says Forbes,” *CNN*, October 25, 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/10/25/business/kanye-west-ye-billionaire/index.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Starr, “‘Kanye is Right About the Jews’ Banner Hung Over LA Highway,” *The Jerusalem Post*, October 23, 2022, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-720336>.

possibly imprisoned. Denying the Holocaust and glorifying Nazism is prohibited in several Western countries.<sup>24</sup>

However, this is not the case under US law, as mentioned above.

But the Kanye West case does illustrate America's unique approach to handling antisemitism and racism. While the legal system staunchly protects the First Amendment right to racist, antisemitic speech, large segments of civil society find it abhorrent.

West is legally protected to spew his antisemitic views, but it has rendered him with pariah status in a commercial, capitalistic controlled setting. In a country so diverse in its ethnicities, religions, and nationalities, no company can afford to associate in the slightest with West's antisemitic notions.

It could be argued that cultural norms in the US have become stricter, particularly because of the legal system's continued allowing of hate speech. In my opinion, there appears to be an inverse correlation between the leniency of hate speech laws and cultural acceptance at large. Because there are no laws against hate speech, there is little social tolerance for it, and companies quickly disassociate with problematic utterances.

In my opinion, the political correctness that is reviled by the political right may have come to deter what is not deterred by the American legal system, to course-correct and perhaps over-correct such a broad permissiveness. Perhaps because of this legal freedom to say almost anything, "virtue signaling" in America has become more necessary on the part of the liberal left.

At any rate, in its dedicated pursuit of free speech, the US Supreme Court, in my view, tramples on other rights in the process. Providing one person with the right to free speech may violate another person's right to live in an environment free of discrimination or the right to equal treatment. While the European Court of Human Rights balances between the various rights, the US Supreme Court does not. It recognizes only a few rights (the Second Amendment right to bear arms is another example) and then protects them almost absolutely.

— **Adv. Talia Naamat**

<sup>24</sup> Nikolay Koposov, *Memory Laws, Memory Wars: The Politics of the Past in Europe and Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).



# WHAT WENT WRONG?

## Joseph Lieberman Reflects on the Rise of Antisemitism in America and Prays Trump Will Not Be Elected

Joseph (Joe) Lieberman is the only American Jew to ever run on the national ticket of a major political party. In 2000, he was the Democratic Party's nominee for vice president as Al Gore's running mate. The Gore-Lieberman ticket won the popular vote in an election ultimately decided by conservative justices on the Supreme Court.

As Connecticut's senator from 1989 to 2013, Lieberman was known as one of Israel's strongest supporters in Congress. In 2006, he broke from the Democratic Party and was reelected as an independent. In 2008, the Republican nominee John McCain initially considered him as running mate, a choice not made that McCain later much regretted. Lieberman endorsed McCain against Barack Obama. In 2017, Lieberman was Donald Trump's preferred candidate for FBI director.

Considered one of the last remaining non-partisan voices in American national political discourse, Lieberman, 81, is uniquely positioned to reflect on the current crisis of antisemitism in American society. In February 2023, he gave the Annual Report on Antisemitism Worldwide a special interview.

**Senator, we are very grateful for your time.**

I am grateful for your work on this subject; it engages my mind and heart, I would say.

**In your view, what is the state of antisemitism in America today?**

It's rising, and that's serious. I want to put it in context. For most of my life, which has been a very public life, I have not experienced antisemitism. And that's a remarkable thing to say.

When I ran for vice president in 2000, people told me there was a little bit of a flurry of antisemitic stuff on the internet when I first got chosen. But, of course, the internet was much less developed at the time, and there was really nothing like the social media chat rooms, et cetera, that we have today. I faced no overt antisemitism in that election.

And I always like to feel that, notwithstanding all the litigation about how the votes in Florida were counted, you know, in the end, the first time there was somebody Jewish on a national ticket in America, Gore and I got 545,000 more votes than the other ticket. It is a statement of what we had hoped and believed: that my religion would not essentially be a factor or stop him [Gore] from being president.



On the night before he [Gore] was going to announce that I was his choice for vice president, he kindly sent a plane to New Haven, Connecticut. The Gores invited our family to have dinner with them. He said there that he had decided about two weeks before that I was his first choice for vice president, but he felt a sort of obligation to himself, to the party, et cetera, to speak to a small number of people he trusted confidentially to ask them whether America was ready for a Jewish person on a national ticket. In other words, whether it would stop him from winning, from becoming president.

And he [Gore] said the responses were fascinating. He said: I spoke to some Jewish people, and I spoke to some Christian people, more Christians. And, he said, among the Jewish people, there were either expressions of anxiety about the public reaction, what it would be, or people said America's not Redwood. Among the Christians, everyone said it would not be a problem. And then he [Gore] said to me, I think wisely, [that he] realized that the fear of antisemitism among Jews is much greater than the reality of antisemitism among non-Jews, and particularly Christians or the ones he talked to.

Now, we had an interesting conversation about it. He understood, and I backed it up, that this is the result of Jewish history. But it showed a changed environment anyway, and it really was his confidence. His perception was validated by the numerical results of the election.

But I just want to go back and make sure I'm not being too sort of naive or pie in the sky. Occasionally when I would do something controversial in the Senate, I would get a letter that was opposed to what I did. [For example] supporting the Iraq war. And I would get a letter that alleged that I was doing it to protect Israel. And it was clear the language was antisemitic. Didn't happen very much, but I don't want to say I never saw any antisemitism. But I never felt it stood in the way of my career.

However, when I have told this story since, somebody will always say to me: well, do you think that if there was a Jewish person on a national ticket today they would face antisemitism? And my answer used to be no. Now, unfortunately, it's probably [that they would face antisemitism] – although it would depend on the candidate, et cetera, whether that would stop them from being elected.

But here's what I want to say that really answers your question about how I feel today. I would always say, and I say to you, that the fact that I did not experience antisemitism in 2000 or in Connecticut didn't mean that I believe there are no antisemites in America. Of course there are antisemites in America. But the prevailing ethic was hostile to them going public with this hatred. That has changed, and that is what is worrisome about where we are.

### **Why? What caused the change?**

Needless to say, I've thought about that. And I have two, maybe obvious, maybe three obvious, thoughts, but they are theories. But one probably is more than a theory, which is that the internet – for all that it has brought into our lives positively – has given people with bad motivations or hatred in their heart or vulnerability [that they now] find their way on the web or on the dark web to the most vile and violent conversations and motivating conversations.

I do think, and I'll say it briefly because we could go on for an hour or two hours, that there's been a general decline in public discourse, not just in politics but in the entertainment culture. Things are said and done on TV and in movies; I mean, we're a far cry from what used to be when I was growing up.

The other thing is, you know, leadership matters, and leaders have begun to be loose and provocative. And I'm talking about political leaders here, not to mention a celebrity like Kanye West. I'll come back there just for a minute. But you know, Trump. I supported things he did. I opposed different things, but he was the worst really because his language, he had no self-discipline about his language, and I never thought he was an antisemite, but he encouraged all sorts of bigotry by the kinds of really stupid things he said, and so that matters.

I'll tell you a quick story about Kanye West. So here's somebody who apparently has, I don't know, 20 million people following him on Twitter. Somebody in my shul, my beit kneset, tells me they're walking to shul that Shabbat, and he's wearing a kippah, and three or four young teenage African Americans are coming the other way, and one sees he's wearing a kippah. Nothing violent, but he [the teenager] says to him and not even screaming it, "Kanye is right about you people." Well, you know, that's the sort of antisemitism I'm telling you [about].

**In an interview with CBS News, you said that Trump's dining with those people [Kanye West and Nick Fuentes] and refusing to apologize for that ought to end his quest for reelection. But that didn't happen. According to the latest opinion polls, it did not harm him with his base.**

Didn't harm him. You know, one time he said, as you remember, that he could shoot somebody on 5th Avenue [in New York] and his supporters... However, I will tell you something: he maintains a certain core. Yeah, it is shocking. I mean, I was just talking about the kind of intemperate, sort of welcoming statements to bigotry that he made. For instance, after Charlottesville. I actually think I know what he meant by "there are good people on both sides," but to say that after people are shouting racist statements, and then they're chanting "the Jews will not take our place" publicly, and he [Trump] so he says, "there are good people on both sides." That was awful.

Leaders create [a] role model for people. And to have dinner with those two haters and never apologize. Shocking. But I'll tell you something. If he runs, well, he is running again, and if he gets nominated and without spending too much time on politics, I think that dinners like that, comments like he made, will shrink his support among the vast middle group of independents, moderates in our country, and it will mean that he won't get reelected. I hope and pray that.

**If a German politician, a French, or a British one had dined with an antisemite, that would be immediately the end of his or her career. But this is not the case in the United States.**

Yeah, it's shocking, I mean, and if I understand German law correctly, it would actually be a crime, yes. And France – I hope you're right. And I think you probably are, notwithstanding the presence of antisemitism there. But Trump gets away with murder. Really. Shocking. Anyway, so I'm concerned about the current state. Look, it's every day where the ADL puts out the numbers.

You know they've increased. I suppose in a country of 335 million, the absolute number is relatively low, but the growth is shocking, and the content of the antisemitism is shocking.

I will tell you, you've probably heard this, on American college campuses, some Jewish kids, God bless them, students are standing up and fighting it, but others are just putting their heads down and staying quiet. You know the old shush, "don't bother the goyim because if we fight back, they'll really kill us." Or, in the kids' cases, they just want to have fun going to college. "Don't bother me for being a Jew." And we're at a point in American society that I just did not foresee 20 years ago, even ten years ago, and I don't like it, and I'm working with people here to try to do something about it

**Other than the internet, what else is driving the antisemitic trends? Joe Rogan, on his podcast, repeated the trope of Jews loving money basically, and he has 11 million subscribers. We have Kanye West; we have Kyrie Irving.**

I'm not sure I have a good answer to that. I've thought about it.

There's a culture that's grown up in media that you know you can be successful if you appeal to a small part of the constituency. I mean, Roger Ailes was the one who broke through on this, although he was not at all an antisemite. And he was appealing to a conservative base when he created Fox News. And his attitude was, I don't need to get as many viewers as the three big broadcasters; I just need to get the conservatives, and I can sell advertising. And you know, he was making something like a billion dollars a year.

There is that background here that makes a lot of people uneasy, and they may be looking, as has happened over the ages, to antisemitism to blame the rich Jews, you know. What am I talking about? Well, we're living through a transformational time technologically, so a lot of people don't, you know, have the security that previous generations had in America. That they could go to work for a company, an industrial company, in Connecticut and spend their life there until they retired and they had a pension and Social Security and all that. So they're unsettled that way.

The other thing happening here, it's happening elsewhere in Europe certainly, is that the demographics are changing. And you know, in the foreseeable future, the non-white population of America will be a majority. It depends on who you talk to. Is it gonna be 50-50, 60-40? It's just changing, and they visit a lot of this stupidly on the immigrants. Most of the immigrants are working hard. They're not smuggling drugs. Now, does this directly relate to antisemitism? [...] the haters that are on social media, [they] sort of give them [the disaffected] an answer. But, you know how much this story repeats itself towards Jews. Part of it is that we [the Jews] are more successful, but we're not to blame for the things they [the disaffected] are upset about.

**You, and other prominent Jewish leaders, will say you are very angry with Trump or with certain members of the Democratic Party. But will not say "this guy is, for me, no longer legitimate," which would have been the case in the European political context.**

Interesting. Well, part of it is that I think Trump has encouraged antisemitism, but he's not an antisemite. On the other hand, I think Ilhan Omar has made really explicitly antisemitic

statements, and she's proven herself to be an antisemite notwithstanding. So I take your point. And I think that's, hopefully for me, but a lot of others [as well], that's going to end. I mean, there's a lot of work going on in the Jewish community to push back [against] antisemitism. I mean to push these antisemites who are out there. I can't tell whether the number of antisemites in America today is more than it was 20 years ago. Probably it is, maybe not too much, but what's changed is they're not hesitant to express that antisemitism publicly.

**In what year are we in the United States - 1929, 1932?**

I don't think we're anywhere [near] any of those because the world is so different today. But there are warnings. There are warnings from history of what can happen.

A real tough question that Congress is wrestling with: Do you try to remove the so-called Section 230 from the Communications Decency Act and hold the internet service [providers and] social media companies liable for what they put on, whether it's antisemitic, anti-Black, anti-Asian, whatever?

Because [Section] 230 was broken some years ago when they made an exception for child pornography and child abuse over the internet, that these companies could be held liable for allowing that to go on. So that's a battle that will be fought. It's something that might pass this session in Congress, notwithstanding how partisan things are, because people in both parties really want to do that. Obviously, the people [who] don't want them to do it are the big social media companies, and they still have a lot of clout, so they'll either sort of smother it or...

**And if you had one wish, if you were president, and you could do one thing, what would that one thing be?**

Well, I would speak about it as often as I had the opportunity. That's not the American way. The Declaration of Independence, the Founders, said they were creating the government to secure the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness that are endowed to everybody, not by the Constitution or the Declaration, but by our Creator, which some people refer to as Hakodesh Baruch Hu.

**In terms of legislation, what would you do?**

In legislation, I would try to do something about Section 230. I would also convene groups representing every element of our society; I mean different ethnic groups, different racial groups. We're all in this together, and so when an African American kid gets unjustly assaulted, or killed by a police officer, that's an assault on all of us. Just as we stand with them, hopefully, they will stand with us, [so] that, you know, in the case of Kanye West, that African American leaders will condemn him, and it's not just the Jews sort of fighting for ourselves.

Look, if I had my druthers, I would try to mandate more... we've lost it in our education system, [schoolkids need] courses on the founding values of this country and the mission, the responsibility everybody has to better realize those [values].

**What do you think the Democratic Party and the Republican Party can do better to not only combat antisemitism more generally, but also within party ranks?**

It has appeared in both parties lately [in actions against] Marjorie Taylor Green, a Republican, and [Ilhan] Omar and others in the Democratic Party. I mean, I thought, in a way, they let Omar off easy when she made some accommodating statements. Then she tweeted that nothing was gonna change her position on Israel in a way that made it seem half-hearted.

I think there is a sort of a “never again” quality to the Jewish community in America right now, still affected by the Shoah, also strengthened by the presence of Israel and what it means to be Jewish in the world when there is a Jewish homeland country. So there’s a lot of “I’m not going to take this anymore.” There are efforts by the organized Jewish community to really try to defeat some of these people [in] politics who express either subtly or explicitly antisemitic statements and also other kinds of hatred. Jews know that we have to act to protect ourselves. I think we also know in this country we’re not going to be most effective unless we convince non-Jews to join us. And I think there are a lot of them who are willing to do something.

**It seems that a lot of the antisemitic attacks are directed against ultra-Orthodox Jews simply because they are visibly Jewish.**

You’re right, the Orthodox Jews are identifiable, just like Asians. There have been horrific attacks on Asian people for no reason other than that they were identified as Asian by their faces. And yeah, look, the Asians are the new Jews.

If you go to college graduations in America today – there I went to my granddaughters’ last year at Emory, there are more Kims than Cohens graduating. And I suppose that could arouse jealousy too, but we should stand with them as they stand with us.

**History would have been very different if, in the year 2000, the will of the people had been respected. Is this something you think about a lot, or is it “let bygones be bygones”?**

No. I do think about it a lot. I think the decision of the Supreme Court was unjust. The whole Electoral College system. It’s the only country in the world that has this for reasons that are not at all relevant or justified, so I felt that Al Gore and I, and the country, were treated unfairly.

But it is my nature to go on, so I don’t... Even you’re asking the question now, there’s a kind of anger in me. It was unjust, and I do think things would have been different. Look, humans are imperfect, so you never achieve everything you want. But in a lot of ways, this country would have been different. Certainly, we would have dealt with climate change a lot earlier, and it is just barely now beginning to be adequately responded to by some of the legislation that passed last year in Congress, signed by President Biden.

[Editors’ Note: Donald J. Trump has not responded to a request for comment and clarification on his views regarding antisemitism].

**– Interview: Prof. Uriya Shavit and Dr. Carl Yonker**

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