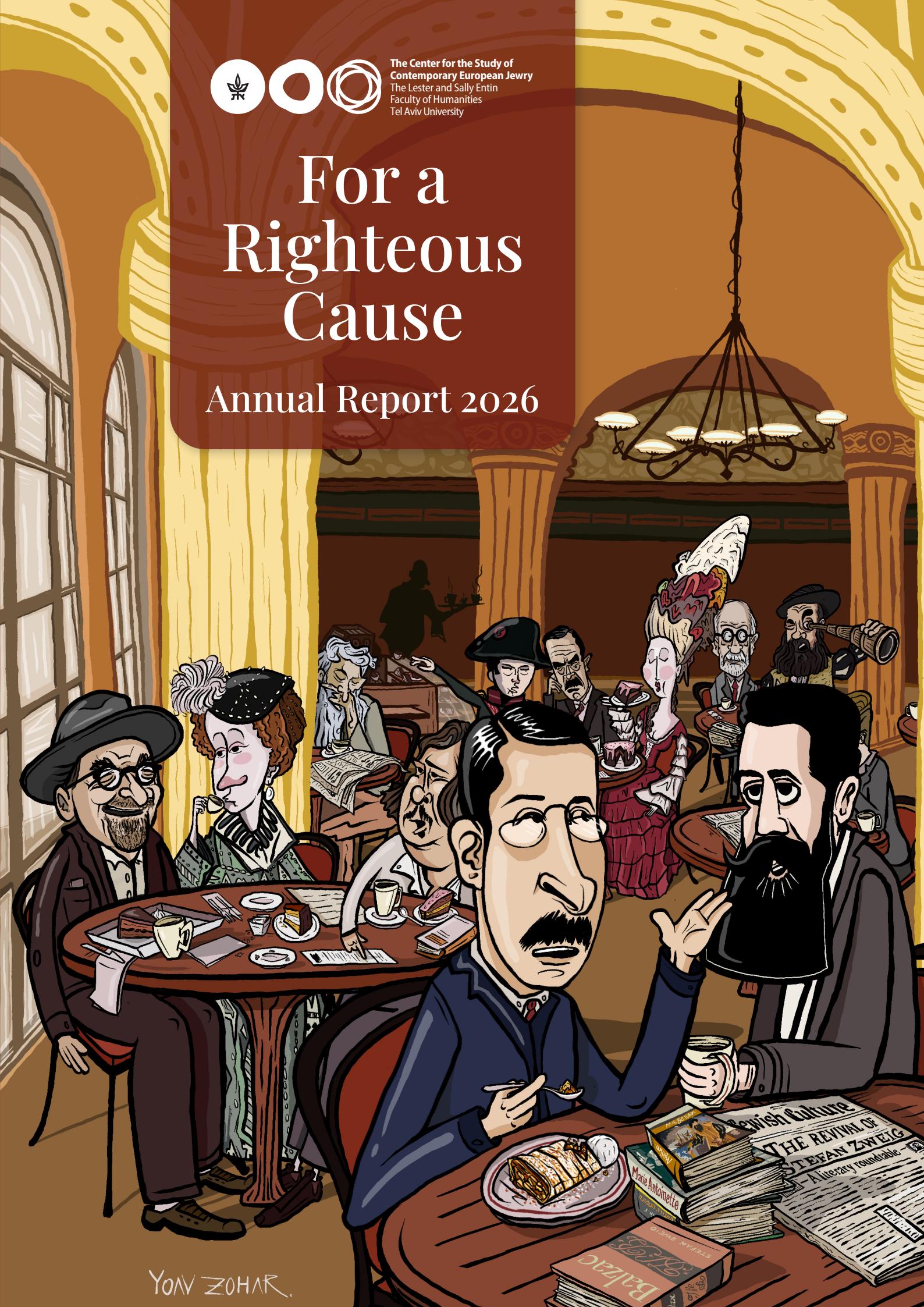




The Center for the Study of
Contemporary European Jewry
The Lester and Sally Entin
Faculty of Humanities
Tel Aviv University

For a Righteous Cause

Annual Report 2026



YOAV ZOHAR.



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The Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry at Tel Aviv University supports research on Jewish history, culture and politics. 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. In cooperation with the Irwin Cotler Institute for Democracy, Human Rights and Justice, it publishes the flagship annual Antisemitism Worldwide Report.

The annual For a Righteous Cause Report, published by the Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry since 2022 on the eve of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, documents and analyzes some of year's most important developments and initiatives in the fight against antisemitism and racism at large across the world as well as projects focused on the preservation of Jewish heritage and discourses on contemporary Jewish identity. It explores educational programs, legislation, and judicial and political action with the aim to express gratitude to those who joined the righteous cause; encourage others to follow their example, and present policy proposals to improve existing programs.

A six-month team effort by experts based with the Center and beyond it, the Report relies on field observations, interviews, and diverse publications and data. It gives particular attention to initiatives in countries often overlooked by the media.

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November 2025

EUROPE

THE LOST CONTINENT

Since October 7, 2023, there have been marked differences between how European countries have approached the Gaza conflict. A number of European governments, which do not form a distinguishable bloc on any other issue, have taken particularly hostile stances toward Israel. These manifested in the speed of the shift of those countries from post-October 7 sympathies to harsh criticism of Israel and their positioning at the forefront of demands to penalize Israel for its Gaza policies.

The anti-Israel group included Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Slovenia, and Spain. It singled itself out as a distinctly anti-Israel voice on May 17, 2025, when it issued a joint, unequivocal statement about the need to pressure Israel more to change its policies: “We will not be silent in front of the man-made humanitarian catastrophe that is taking place before our eyes in Gaza [...] we call upon the government of Israel to immediately reverse its current policy.”¹ Belgium was a leading voice in the group until a change of government and prime minister in February 2025 moderated its criticism at a time when anti-Israel sentiments intensified almost everywhere else. The change resulted in deep frictions within its government.

The emergence of an Israel-skeptic bloc of European governments and publics (henceforth: the P-8) in the immediate aftermath of October 7, 2023, is anything but self-explanatory. Why has Slovenia become so much more critical of Israel than Croatia? Why Spain and not Portugal? Iceland and not Denmark? Norway and not Finland? Malta and not Greece? Ireland and not the United Kingdom? Belgium and not Switzerland? Luxembourg and not Austria?

Our investigation of this riddle involved data and discourse analysis as well as interviews with more than 30 European politicians, diplomats, journalists, and scholars. It cautions against easy, simplified overarching explanations as to what drives Israel-skeptic policies. It suggests that what most Israelis believe to be the core reasons for critical European agendas against their country – are not. It informs about direct links between distinct histories, present local realities, and the Middle Eastern policies taken by governments.

A word about what was at stake is in order. By the spring of 2025, Israeli military operations already ensured that the existential threat the country faced following October 7, 2023, was defeated, even if not eliminated entirely. At that point, a majority of Israelis wanted to see an end to the war, and Israel lost the support not only of a majority of Europeans, but also of the majority of the American public.

Yet a year earlier, an end to the war would have had different implications, for Israel and for the world. If the war had ended then, the leadership of Hamas would have survived, victorious.

¹ “‘We Will not Stay Silent,’ 7 European Countries Say in Response to Israeli Attacks on Gaza,” *Middle East Monitor*, May 17, 2025, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20250517-we-will-not-stay-silent-7-european-countries-say-in-response-to-israeli-attacks-on-gaza/>.

The vast majority of its *jihadists* would have remained alive and mongering. The Hamas regime would have been kept completely intact, preparing for the next round, with hundreds of millions of admirers recognizing that it was able to defeat the Zionists where far superior forces have failed.

Since its foundation at the start of the first Intifada in 1987, Hamas unequivocally and consistently opposed a two-state solution, leaving no room, not even theoretically, for a peaceful territorial compromise. Liberal Europe, which considers the two-state formula as the only just and enduring resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, should have been the first to demand and act for the destruction of the Islamist group. It never did, not really.

Hamas could at no point hope to match Israel's military strength. It was, however, wise in identifying its soft spots, and those of the liberal West. On the side of Israel, the extreme sensitivity of its citizenry to hostages – even more so in the case of soldiers than civilians. On the side of the liberal West, the sensitivity to civilian casualties. The war machine Hamas built aimed at those soft spots: to bring Israel to its knees by taking a large number of hostages, and then tie its hands through the cynical, cold-blooded usage of Palestinian civilians as human shields and total indifference to their well-being.

When historians analyze the Gaza war in a hundred years from now, they will probably argue that the main strategic mistake by Hamas on October 7, 2023, was that it could not overcome its sadistic thirst for Jewish blood. Had Hamas settled for the killing and kidnapping of soldiers, Israel would still have *casus belli*, but may not have had an American and a majority-European carte blanche to storm Gaza in 2023 and 2024 the way it did.

Yet if the wheel of world diplomacy had been stirred by the P-8 European states, Israel may well have been forced to stop short of crushing Hamas in 2023-2024, despite the war crimes the Islamist group had committed and its continued declared determination to seek Israel's annihilation. During the early months of the war, that is, when the United States and the major European powers still stood by Israel, statements and gestures by P-8 leaders harshly condemned Hamas, yet at the same time compared its war crimes to the actions taken by the IDF and practically pressured Israel to end its military operations with the Islamist regime fully and victoriously in power.

For example, already a week after the October 7 attack, then Spanish Social Rights Minister Ione Belarra stated that Israel was conducting a “genocide attempt” in Gaza. The Spanish Foreign Ministry defended the legitimacy of her statement.² Also within a week of October 7, Luxembourg's Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, Jean Asselborn, issued a statement in which, alongside a strong condemnation of Hamas and a call for the unconditional release of the hostages, he called for de-escalation and the immediate cessation of hostilities and expressed

² “Israel Says Some Spanish Officials Align with Hamas, Government Rejects,” Reuters, October 16, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-says-some-spanish-officials-align-with-hamas-government-rejects-2023-10-16/>.



Pro-Palestinian demonstration in Logrono, La Rioja, Spain, October 4, 2025

concerns about the humanitarian situation created by Israel's military actions.³ Not a month went by since the war began, and the Icelandic parliament issued a condemnation of Hamas and in the same breath a condemnation of "all subsequent actions of the Israeli government in violation of international humanitarian law, including untold suffering, loss of life, civilian casualties and destruction of civilian infrastructure,"⁴ while the Belgian government questioned, alongside its condemnation of Hamas, the legality of some Israeli airstrikes, condemned what it termed the Israeli collective punishment of the Palestinian population, and called for targeted sanctions and accountability for those responsible.⁵ Less than two months into the start of the war, while visiting Israel, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and his Belgian counterpart, Alexander De Croo, lauded the temporary cease-fire in the Gaza Strip and called for it to be made permanent, *de facto* asking to impose defeat on Israel.⁶

³ The Luxembourg Government, "Statement by Minister Jean Asselborn Regarding the Situation in Gaza following the Terrorist Attacks by Hamas," [gouvernement.lu](https://gouvernement.lu/en/actualites/toutes_actualites/communiques/2023/10-octobre/13-asselborn-gaza.html), October 13, 2023, https://gouvernement.lu/en/actualites/toutes_actualites/communiques/2023/10-octobre/13-asselborn-gaza.html.

⁴ Government of Iceland, "Conflict in the Middle East: Iceland's Response," [government.is](https://www.government.is/topics/foreign-affairs/conflict-in-the-middle-east/), November 9, 2023, <https://www.government.is/topics/foreign-affairs/conflict-in-the-middle-east/>.

⁵ Claudio Francavilla, "Belgium Overcomes EU Struggles to Send Strong Message on Gaza," Human Rights Watch, November 16, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/11/16/belgium-overcomes-eu-struggles-send-strong-message-gaza>.

⁶ Eric Sylvers, "Spain and Belgium Leaders Call for Permanent Ceasefire in Gaza," *Wall Street Journal*, November 24, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/israel-hamas-war-gaza-strip-2023-11-21/card/spain-and-belgium-leaders-call-for-permanent-cease-fire-in-gaza-003ZwnBxVpWZ2hggykS3>.

Four months into the war, in February 2024 (when thousands of Gazan civilians had already been killed), the Prime Ministers of Spain and Ireland, Pedro Sánchez and Leo Varadkar, implored EU leaders to take action over the situation in Gaza and demanded an immediate assessment of whether Israel is complying with human rights obligations that are stipulated in its trade deal with the bloc. They noted that they “are deeply concerned at the deteriorating situation in Israel and in Gaza, especially the impact the ongoing conflict is having on innocent Palestinians, especially children and women.”⁷ The same month, the Foreign Minister of Malta, Ian Borg, called shortly before his country assumed the rotating presidency of the United Nations Security Council, for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza. He vigorously condemned the October 7 massacre, yet noted that Palestinian civilians should not be killed because of it.⁸

In May 2024, Spain, Ireland, and Norway became the first European countries since the start of the war to recognize Palestine as a state, followed by Slovenia the next month (Iceland offered a similar recognition already in November 2011; it was followed by Sweden in 2014). The symbolic recognitions were intended as a show of support for the two-state solution,⁹ but served as a means to pressure Israel to end the war in Gaza. The statements that accompanied them failed to explain how a two-state solution and just peace could ever be achieved if Hamas remained in power. In January 2024, Slovenia supported the genocide case against Israel that South Africa submitted to the International Court of Justice. Spain followed suit in June 2024; Ireland in January 2025.

During 2024, the United Nations’ General Assembly voted 17 times on Israel-related issues. Israel-specific issues preoccupied the biased General Assembly more than those of any other state in the world, and similar to all of them combined. The voting coincidence of P-8 countries with the pro-Israel United States (with which Israel had a 90% voting coincidence) was almost as low as that of anti-Israel countries such as Pakistan and Turkey (and, in the case of Malta, was astonishingly even worse): 17% in the case of Belgium, Iceland, Ireland, and Norway, 13% for Luxembourg, Slovenia, and Spain, and 7% for Malta.¹⁰

Where data are available, they suggest that the hostile approach to Israel of P-8 countries aligned with public opinions. According to YouGov, in May 2024, as well as in May 2025, the

⁷ Lisa O’Carroll, “Ireland and Spain Demand EU Reviews Israel Trade Deal over Rights Obligations,” *The Guardian*, February 14, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/14/ireland-and-spain-demand-eu-reviews-israel-trade-deal-over-rights-obligations>.

⁸ Burak Bir, “Now Is the Time for a Permanent Ceasefire in Gaza: Maltese Foreign Minister,” *Anadolu Agency*, February 18, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/now-is-the-time-for-permanent-cease-fire-in-gaza-maltese-foreign-minister/3140839#>.

⁹ Rob Picheta, “Spain, Ireland and Norway Have Recognized Palestinian Statehood. Where Does Europe Stand on the Issue?” *CNN*, May 28, 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/05/28/middleeast/spain-ireland-norway-recognize-palestinian-statehood-intl>; Government of Norway, “Recognition of Palestine – Statement by Norway,” *regjeringen.no*, May 22, 2024, <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/9eee5896be514763a83199eeb51c6d40/recognitionofpalestinestatementbynorway.pdf>.

¹⁰ Department of State, “Report to Congress on Voting Practices in the United Nations for 2024,” *state.gov*, July 2025, pp. 71-80, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Voting-Practices-in-the-United-Nations-for-2024.pdf>.

net favorability of Israel in Spain was as low as -55,¹¹ while Pew Research found in the spring of 2025 that 75% of the Spanish public viewed Israel negatively.¹² In Iceland, in the fall of 2024, 72.5% of the public sympathized more with the Palestinians than with Israel. A mere 9.5% expressed the opposite sentiment, with 53.6% demanding a severing of diplomatic relations.¹³ In Ireland, a survey (highly-biasedly phrased) conducted three months after the October 7 attack found that 71% of the public holds that the Palestinians live under an apartheid system.¹⁴ Philippe Poirier, a political scientist from the University of Luxembourg who has been tracking attitudes toward Jews and Israel in the Grand Duchy for the past decade, suggested that by 2025, some 80% of the population identified more with the Palestinians than with Israel.¹⁵ Roger Strickland, the Honorary Consul of Israel (and the Philippines) in Malta, a Catholic and offspring of a legendary Maltese prime minister, informed that public opinion in the country has turned overwhelmingly against Israel. “I tell people here, thank God we have Israel to protect the Eastern Mediterranean. Maltese don’t really sympathize with this. They look at me and they say: ‘Are you crazy?’ The younger generation, I think, is 100% on the Palestinian side. I have a 22-year-old daughter who is a lawyer, and she refuses to talk to me about Israel and my role as honorary consul. Her friends are all on the same page.”¹⁶

Is it antisemitism? The most immediate explanation for the intensity of P-8 criticism against Israel blames antisemitism. It is a favorite of Israeli politicians because it provides an ultimate and overarching defense of Israeli policies.

The linkage between antisemitism and a political climate that applies double standards to Israel makes sense, regardless of which is the chicken and which is the egg. However, as an explanation for P-8 diplomatic conduct, it is extremely weak.

As readers of this Center’s publications know, antisemitism is a tricky concept to define, and has become trickier in recent years. It is obvious why hatred directed verbally or physically against Jews as individuals, communities, or as a people because of their Jewish identity is antisemitism. It is also obvious that harsh criticism of Israel, even if misinformed, is not antisemitism. It is, however, difficult in some cases to credibly determine when double standards applied against the State of the Jews, or delegitimizations of the right of the State of the Jews to exist, are clear-cut antisemitism. The risk of cyclicity is ever-present: labelling criticism of Israel as antisemitism and then explaining antisemitism as the reason for the criticism.

¹¹ Mathew Smith, Head of Data Journalism, YouGov, “Net Favorability towards Israel Reaches New Lows in Key Western European Countries,” YouGov, June 3, 2025, <https://yougov.co.uk/international/articles/52279-net-favourability-towards-israel-reaches-new-lows-in-key-western-european-countries>.

¹² Laura Silver, “Most People across 24 Surveyed Countries Have Negative Views of Israel and Netanyahu,” Pew Research Center, June 3, 2025, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/06/03/most-people-across-24-surveyed-countries-have-negative-views-of-israel-and-netanyahu/>.

¹³ Jelena Ciric, “Majority of Icelanders Sympathetic to Palestinian Cause,” *Iceland Review*, October 2024, https://www.icelandreview.com/news/majority-of-icelanders-sympathetic-to-palestinian-cause/?srsltid=AfmB0ool-BrcexNSLMQoP8X6a5FO1gTONGvmsAomavpO98Sz4_oJ1XTi.

¹⁴ Amnesty International, “New Poll Shows an Overwhelming Majority of Irish People Believe Palestinians Live Under an Israeli Apartheid System,” amnesty.ie, January 18, 2024, <https://www.amnesty.ie/israeli-apartheid-poll/>.

¹⁵ Interview by the authors, August 28, 2025.

¹⁶ Interview by the authors, August 21, 2025.

Yet, whichever criteria are applied, none of the P-8 countries shine, in comparative European perspective, as particularly antisemitic.

To be sure, the overall trend has been of an increase in antisemitism following October 7, 2023, also in some P-8 countries. Antisemitisme.be, a nongovernmental organization that records antisemitic incidents in Belgium, reported an increase from a record 117 antisemitic incidents in 2023 to a new record of 129 in 2024.¹⁷ In Spain, the Observatorio de Antisemitismo en España, established in 2009 by the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain (FCJE), recorded 170 incidents in 2024 compared to 60 in 2023 and 35 in 2022.¹⁸ In Norway, the average annual number of anti-Jewish crimes recorded by the police more than doubled in 2023 to 50, while declining to 45 in 2024.¹⁹ In 2023, the nongovernmental organization Research and Information on Antisemitism in Luxembourg (RIAL) reported the occurrence of 105 antisemitic incidents compared to 65 in 2022. Seventy of these involved verbal abuse in connection to the war in Gaza.²⁰

Still, the trend of an increase in antisemitic incidents was not different, and in some cases was more pronounced, in countries that vigorously supported Israel during the early phases of the war, including Germany and Austria in Europe, and Argentina in South America.²¹ Moreover, with the exception of Norway, Jewish organizations and activists in P-8 countries have not reported in recent years a sense of growing insecurity due to antisemitic attacks or complained about governmental indifference to their concerns. In our conversation, the Executive Director of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain, Carolina Aisen, emphasized the good communication of the communities with law enforcement agencies,²² and cautioned against exaggerated evaluations of the scope of antisemitic threats in the country.²³ The newly-appointed Chief Rabbi of Madrid, Moisés Chicurel, shared a similar sentiment in an interview with the Haredi newspaper *Yated Neeman*. He said that he had never faced any hostility while walking around Madrid visibly identifiable as Jewish, and praised the local and national police forces for their protection of the community.²⁴ In Antwerp, where about two-thirds of Belgium's Jews live, members of the Jewish community noted the city as a positive exception to the general trend of antisemitism in Europe.²⁵

¹⁷ Antisemitisme.Be, “Antisemitism in Belgium – Annual Report 2024 [French],” antisemitisme.be, 2025, p. 3, <https://cdn.sanity.io/files/kyuaifoy/production/67ca292bcee4cb4334e26d6e6a6d5d88191d0023.pdf>.

¹⁸ The Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry and the Irwin Cotler Institute for Democracy, Human Rights and Justice, *Antisemitism Worldwide Report for 2024*, April 2025, p. 25, https://cst.tau.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/AntisemitismWorldwide_2024.pdf.

¹⁹ Norwegian Police, “Hate Crimes in Norway [Norwegian],” politiet.no, May 2025, p. 32, <https://www.politiet.no/globalassets/dokumenter-strategier-og-horinger/oslo/rapporter/hatkriminalitet-norge/hatkriminalitet-i-norge---arsrapport-2024.pdf>.

²⁰ Department of State, “Luxembourg 2023 International Religious Freedom Report,” state.gov, March 2024, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/547499-LUXEMBOURG-2023-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf>.

²¹ The Center and the Irwin Cotler Institute, *Antisemitism Worldwide Report for 2024*, pp. 19, 21-22, 25.

²² Ibid., p. 25.

²³ Conversation with Prof. Uriya Shavit and Dr. Carl Yonker, October 1, 2024.

²⁴ N. Markovitz, “The Diplomatic Inquisition [Hebrew],” *Yated Neeman*, September 29, 2025, p. 68.

²⁵ Israel Rosner, “Hate Graffiti Found on the Wall of the Great Synagogue in Antwerp [Hebrew],” *Yated Neeman*, August 19, 2025, p. 22.

One reason why the number of antisemitic attacks in P-8 countries is relatively small is that their Jewish populations are relatively small. Of the eight, only Belgium has a significant number of Jewish citizens, almost 30,000, although even there they comprise approximately only 0.25% of the population. In Iceland, Malta and Slovenia, there are only several dozen Jews respectively, in Luxembourg about 1,200 according to the more generous estimations, in Norway, some 1,500, and in Ireland, approximately 3,000. In Spain, Jews comprise less than 0.1% of the population.

However, also on the notional-abstract level, there is no evidence to suggest that the publics in P-8 countries hold distinctly deep-seated hateful or prejudiced views against Jews that drive their governments to adopt agendas that are hostile to Israel. None of the P-8 countries has a political party with a past or a present of expressly antisemitic views as a significant political force. Those of the P-8 included in recent surveys about public attitudes towards Jews have not emerged as more antisemitic than several of the most pro-Israel countries in Europe.

The Global Index on antisemitism published by the Anti-Defamation League highlights the share of respondents who answered “definitely true” or “probably true” to six or more of what it defines as 11 negative stereotypes about Jews. The Index published in early 2025 found Norway to have one of the lowest scores, with only 8% of respondents identifying with the majority of antisemitic falsehoods, compared to 49% in Eastern Europe and 24% in the Americas (and 97% in the West Bank and Gaza).²⁶ The survey released in 2023 showed that while Spain (26%) and Belgium (22%) scored higher than non-P-8 West European countries surveyed, including France (15%) and Germany (12%), they scored lower than the most pro-Israel country in the European Union, Hungary (37%), as well as lower than Poland (35%).²⁷

A comparative survey by the Pew Research Center from 2018 of 15 European countries showed publics in Norway (95%) and Belgium (89%) to have particularly high contention rates with a prospect of Jews as members of their families. The shares in Ireland (70%) and Spain (79%) were lower – but still higher than in the pro-Israel Germany and Austria. They were also higher than the shares of respondents in Ireland and Spain who were content with having a Muslim as a member of the family (60% in Ireland, 74% in Spain).²⁸ Significant minorities in Spain, Belgium, and Norway agreed with the statements that Jews overstate their historical suffering and pursue their own interests rather than those of the countries where they live, but so was the case for Italy and Portugal, and to a lesser extent for Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and France.²⁹

A long but crucial digression: There developed fatigue in Europe about what some hold to be the simplification, overstretching, and politicization of the fight against antisemitism. The problem is that the fatigue involves not only conscious antisemites, but also people who are

²⁶ ADL, “46% of Adults Worldwide Hold Significant Antisemitic Beliefs, ADL Poll Finds,” [adl.org](https://adl.org/resources/press-release/46-adults-worldwide-hold-significant-antisemitic-beliefs-adl-poll-finds), January 14, 2025, <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/46-adults-worldwide-hold-significant-antisemitic-beliefs-adl-poll-finds>.

²⁷ ADL, “The ADL Global 100: An Index of Antisemitism,” [adl.org](https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/2023-05/ADL-Global100-2023_1.pdf), May 2023 https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/2023-05/ADL-Global100-2023_1.pdf.

²⁸ Pew Research Center, “Being Christian in Western Europe,” [pewforum.org](https://www.pewforum.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2018/05/Being-Christian-in-Western-Europe-FOR-WEB1.pdf), May 29, 2018, p. 64, <https://www.pewforum.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2018/05/Being-Christian-in-Western-Europe-FOR-WEB1.pdf>.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 74.

highly critical of Israel but are not antisemites, as well as long-time friends of Israel and the Jewish people. It injures the prospects for informed dialogues that can clear misunderstandings, and it risks hurting the struggle against the actual and dangerous growth in old-fashioned Jew-hatred across the world.

Reverend Prof. Stefan Attard, the Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Malta, still remembers fondly the four months he spent at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem more than twenty years ago. “You see everything. The people you meet, the cultures, the museums, the sites, every day something was happening.” A suicide attack on a bus he witnessed left its mark. “When you are there, you do get the Israeli perspective. When you are not, well, then you might just hear of some kind of explosion that happened.”³⁰

On June 26, 2025, the Senate of Attard’s university issued a strong condemnation of Israel’s policies in Gaza. “These recurring breaches of international law, cumulatively amounting to ethnic cleansing and genocide, can under no circumstances be explained as self-defense,” the statement read.³¹

Attard embraced us with fatherly priestly warmth in his office two months later, together with members of his faculty. “I always get the feeling that when it comes to the discourse on antisemitism, there’s too much of this rhetoric,” he said. “Like, you get the impression that Israelis, and Jews, are automatically, by default, seeing themselves as being victims of persecution, victims of antisemitism, and so on. Of course, this is coming from real instances of such cases. But then, when the rhetoric is constantly [about antisemitism], I think it has an adverse effect.”³²

Dr. George Vital Zammit, a political scientist from the same university, opened our conversation aggressively: “Let me start by clarifying something important. I do not agree that there is antisemitism in the countries you are studying,” he said, before being asked about the topic. “For me, criticizing Netanyahu is not antisemitism, just as criticizing Putin for the war in Ukraine does not make someone anti-Russian. Western leaders, when faced with images of destruction in Gaza, will inevitably voice criticism. This is a political reaction, not a cultural or religious prejudice.”³³

Yves Cruchten, 50, is a senior member of parliament for the Socialist Party of Luxembourg (LSAP) that is currently in the opposition. One of his colleagues described him to us as “mega anti-Israel.” He called for the suspension of the trade agreement between the EU and Israel.

On a pleasant summer day, the bearded and soft-spoken Cruchten, a former Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, welcomed us at his office in the center of Luxembourg City in short pants and a warm smile. He emphasized outright his condemnation of the October 7 attack and that his criticism of Israel’s response was never against the Israeli people but against their government. “Of course [Israel] had to react. Of course [Israel] had to protect [its] population.

³⁰ Interview by the authors, August 20, 2025.

³¹ Nicole Meilak, “University of Malta Senate Condemns Israel’s War in Gaza,” *Malta Today*, June 28, 2025, <https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/135641/universitySenateCondemnsIsraelsWarInGaza>.

³² Interview by the authors, August 20, 2025.

³³ Interview by the authors, August 20, 2025.



Palestine Cola in Luxembourg City (left) and Pro-Palestinian graffiti in Valletta (right), August 2025

[It had] to make sure that things like October 7 never, never, never happen again, and to punish those who have committed those crimes. It was obvious that there [would have to be] a strong response, a military response. I don't say that [what happened in the war] is totally wrong, but between the [initial] reaction and what [happened later], I think we were in another situation.”³⁴

Cruchten stressed it was unjust to describe him as antisemitic because of his conviction that Israel was committing war crimes. “You shouldn’t be labeled as such; you should not be put with the worst of the worst, only because you are critical of the Israeli government. That is something that hurts me big time. I just spoke two weeks ago with a rabbi about this, and he understood me. He said, ‘Yeah, I feel you.’ The problem is that the definition we have for antisemitism, the IHRA definition, you can put so many things [under it].”³⁵

Is it Muslim migration? The equally popular explanation for P-8 hostility to Israel highlights the influence of Muslims across the continent. The argument, often preached with an unconcealed sense of schadenfreude, is that Europe has been “taken over” by Muslim migrants, who change its character and, among other impacts, push its political leaderships to anti-Israel positions.

³⁴ Interview by the authors, August 25, 2025.

³⁵ Ibid.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressed this sentiment explicitly in his Sparta Speech in September 2025. He said that “limitless migration” has resulted in Muslims becoming a “significant minority – very vocal, very, very belligerent.” He claimed that Muslim citizens are pressuring European governments to adopt anti-Israel policies.³⁶

The generalizing and ever-casual way labels are put on “Muslim migrants” would have had Israeli officials cry out, and rightly so, about antisemitism had such statements been applied against Jews. Attributing European governments’ stance on the war in Gaza to the influence of Muslim minorities is misleading in two ways: there did not develop in Europe, on continental or national levels, a unified religious-grounded “Muslim vote”; and the political impact of citizens of Muslim faith in Europe has remained, to date, marginal – including in the majority of P-8 countries.

Not all Muslims across the continent contextualize their identity primarily through religion, and the majority of those who do, do so through a plethora of ethnic-national and ideological frameworks that reflect contesting interpretations of Islam. There are no European or state-level Islamic institutions that advance communal political goals. The emergence of a religio-legal corpus on Muslim minorities that described voting as a religious duty and tied that duty to assisting Muslim causes globally had not led in any European country to the rise of communal shari‘a-based electoral powerbrokers whose instructions are heeded. With rare anecdotal exceptions, all attempts to establish political parties with Islamist agendas ended with embarrassing failures, including when running in districts with significant Muslim minorities. Few politicians of Muslim faith have made it to top positions in European governments, and those who did were not religiously radical, if religious at all.

Already before October 7, statements of support for the Palestinian cause and collections of donations for Gaza were commonplace during Friday congregational prayers in European mosques. Yet for a variety of reasons, including fears of the reactions of police and intelligence agencies, mosque leaderships tend to moderate the tone when broaching explicit political issues. As strange as this may sound, mosques provide a safer environment for Israelis than certain university campuses.

The share of Muslims in Europe has steadily grown since the 1980s, with the more generous estimations putting it in EU countries at approximately six percent. Still, residence should not be confused with citizenship, and only the latter provides a right to vote in national elections. Excluding non-naturalized refugees and others, the actual number of Muslims who have a political say in Europe is significantly smaller than their shares of different national populations.

Minority voters in Europe do not hold the national-level political sway they potentially hold in the United States. In Michigan in 2024, Kamala Harris underperformed President Biden in 2020

³⁶ Nava Freiberg and Lazar Berman, “Netanyahu Admits Israel Economically Isolated, Says Will Need to Become ‘Super-Sparta,’” *Times of Israel*, September 15, 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-admits-israel-is-economically-isolated-will-need-to-become-self-reliant/>.

in part because of protest votes regarding their administration's Gaza policy³⁷ (although it is far from obvious that Harris would have won Michigan even if a war in Gaza had not broken out, and would have anyhow lost the elections even if she had won that state). The importance of the Muslim (and Christian-Arab) vote in Michigan is, however, a product of the unique and distorting American electoral college system: A swing state where every tiny electoral group has the capacity to determine the outcome for the entire Union. There is no equivalent of that distortion in Europe, including where variations of the first-past-the-post system are applied.

If the presence of Muslim citizens was a key factor in governments' taking a harsh anti-Israel stance, one would expect to see at least some correlation between the share of Muslims in the national populations, their political impact, and the direction of Middle Eastern policies. However, the opposite is the case.

Six of the P-8 countries have negligible Muslim minorities or ones that are smaller than the European average. In Iceland, the European country that has become the most steadfast in opposition to Israel's policies, approximately only 1% of the population is Muslim. Only a minority of those Muslims attends one of the three mosques in the capital Reykjavik in the viciously divided Islamic scene that developed in the country, and that has distinguished itself more for petty internal struggles than for common action.³⁸

In Spain, slightly less than 5% of the population is Muslim, but no more than half of the Muslims have citizenship.³⁹ One member of the current government, Sira Abed Rego, was born in Valencia to a Spanish mother and a Palestinian father. A member of the European Parliament since 2019, she was nominated Minister of Youth and Children in November 2023, despite addressing the October 7 massacre by emphasizing the right of the Palestinians to resist Israel.⁴⁰ Other than her, only one politician known to be Muslim has ascended on the national stage, although for a short time – Muhammad Chaib Akhdim, of Moroccan descent, who served in parliament representing the Socialists' Party of Catalonia in 2018-2019. Only a few Muslim politicians left an imprint on regional-level politics. "The left-wing parties have not been successful in incorporating Muslim candidates, even though they often speak in favor of inclusion. There is a kind of symbolic multiculturalism, but when it comes to real representation, it remains almost absent," said Pablo Biderbost, a political scientist from the University of Salamanca.⁴¹

In Slovenia, the share of Muslims is less than 3% of the population, and most are from Bosnia and Albania. No member of the parliament is known to be Muslim.

³⁷ Tim Perkins, "They Blew It": Democrats Lost 22,000 Votes in Michigan's Heavily Arab American Cities," *The Guardian*, November 9, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/nov/09/democrats-lose-michigan-arab-american-voters>.

³⁸ On the history and frictions of Islam in Iceland: Uriya Shavit and Fabian Spengler, *Shar'ia and Life: Authority, Compromise and Mission in European Mosques* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2023), pp. 81-92.

³⁹ Union De Comunidades Islamicas De Espana, "Demographic Study of the Muslim Population [Spanish]," observatorio.hispanomuslim.es, December 31, 2024, p. 16, <http://observatorio.hispanomuslim.es/estademograf.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Gabe Friedman, "Spanish Politician Who on October 7 Said Palestinians Had 'Right to Resist' Is Made a Cabinet Minister," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, November 20, 2023, <https://www.jta.org/2023/11/20/global/spanish-politician-who-on-oct-7-said-palestinians-have-right-to-resist-is-made-a-cabinet-minister>.

⁴¹ Interview by Antonio Peña, September 18, 2025.

In Malta, Muslims comprise approximately 4% of the population (the percentage of citizens is smaller). “We don’t have a Muslim vote here,” said Honorary Consul Strickland. “It has absolutely no relevance whatsoever.”⁴² No member of the Maltese parliament is known to be Muslim.

In Ireland, Muslims comprise approximately 2% of the population – a sharp increase from a decade ago, yet they are still a small minority, and a highly ethnically diverse one that lacks political weight. Not a single member of the current Irish parliament is a Muslim.

In Luxembourg, Muslims comprised approximately 3% of the population four years ago, though their share of the population may have increased recently.⁴³ “The Muslim community has grown lately because of many refugees that we have taken in, but it is still a small community. It has no electoral power. It is not an organized community politically. If there is the fear that Muslim communities are influencing the political sphere here, I must say it is absolutely wrong,”⁴⁴ said MP Cruchten. He noted that his blunt criticism of Israel was unlikely to win him or lose him a single vote in the next elections.

Norway and Belgium stand out among P-8 countries regarding the political influence of Muslim migrants – but only just. Norway, with a population of some 5.6 million citizens, had almost 200,000 people registered in Muslim religious communities in 2025.⁴⁵ Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life projected that by 2030 the percentage of Muslims in Norway will be 6.5%.⁴⁶ The current representation of Muslims in parliament approximately reflects their share of the population, but to date, only two Norwegian Muslim citizens have made it to prominent political positions. These are Abid Raja, who served as Minister of Culture, Sports and Equality for almost two years in 2020-2021, and Hadia Tajik. Born to parents who migrated from Pakistan, she served in 2012 as Minister of Culture for a year, and a decade later as Minister of Labor and Social Inclusion for half a year. On October 8, 2023, Tajik posted a condemnation of Hamas, albeit far from a strongly worded one.⁴⁷

In Belgium, Muslims account for approximately 7% of the population. In the capital Brussels, as many as one-fifth of the residents are Muslim. The number of representatives who are known to be Muslim in the current parliament is close to their share of the population. Muslim voters ushered in the electoral rise of the Marxist-leaning and anti-Zionist “The Workers Party of Belgium,” which currently holds 10% of the seats in parliament. It is in the opposition, yet its strong anti-Israel views pressure more mainstream socialists who compete for the same votes, including the Flemish social democrats (Vooruit), who are in the current coalition, to escalate their rhetoric against Israel. Still, Belgian Marxists did not need the encouragement of Muslims to present a strongly-worded agenda against Israel and the United States; and

⁴² Interview by the authors, August 21, 2025.

⁴³ “Religions in Luxembourg.” Luxtoday, July 27, 2025, <https://luxtoday.lu/en/knowledge/religion-in-luxembourg>.

⁴⁴ Interview by the authors, August 25, 2025.

⁴⁵ Statistics Norway, “Religious Communities and Life Stance Communities,” ssb.no, June 11, 2025, <https://www.ssb.no/en/kultur-og-fritid/religion-og-livssyn/statistikk/trus-og-livssynssamfunn-utanfor-den-norske-kyrkja>.

⁴⁶ Pew Research Center, *The Future of the Global Muslim Population*, January 2011, p. 162.

⁴⁷ Hadia Tajik (@hadiatajik.nno), “Hamas Has Launched a Terrorist Attack against Israel... [Norwegian],” Facebook, October 8, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/hadiatajik.no/posts/hamas-har-med-sitt-terrorangrep-mot-israel-gjort-livet-meir-utrygt-b%C3%A5de-for-isra/898385651658982/>.

Belgium is the only one of the P-8 countries that shifted toward a more balanced approach regarding the conflict as the war in Gaza progressed.

What is it, then? Our study identified six aspects that are common to the P-8 countries and encouraged particularly hostile approaches to Israel since October 7, 2023. None of these aspects independently explains the intensity of anti-Israel views and policies there, yet their accumulation might. None is unique to the P-8 countries in the European context, yet their combination and depth is.

These are: (a) left-oriented coalition governments; (b) the minimal role of antisemitism and Holocaust remembrance in political discourse; (c) national narratives receptive to identification with the Palestinian cause; (d) pre-existence of deep-seated anti-Israel views; (e) the meager international and national implications of diplomatic decisions regarding the Middle East; and (f) modest scopes of pro-Israel public diplomacy.

European socialists and other left-leaning parties are distinctly more critical of Israel than conservative and populist ones. Their dominance of governing coalitions in the majority of P-8 countries is one explanation why those countries adopted a vigorous anti-Israel line during the war.

Of the P-8, leftist, left-center, or broad coalitions led by leftist politicians have been in power during the war in Spain, Ireland, Iceland, Malta, Norway, and Slovenia. Ireland elected in October 2025 by a landslide 63% a radical leftist and particularly anti-Israel politician, Catherine Connolly, as its new President, a ceremonial role.

Belgium and Luxembourg are exceptions that do not disprove the rule. Belgium had seen since 2020 coalitions led by the center-right. In Luxembourg, a coalition alliance of greens, socialists, and liberals was replaced in 2023 by a coalition led by the conservatives and joined by the centrist liberals. However, in neither country was a strictly conservative or conservative-populist coalition formed. In Belgium, a shift towards a more conservative coalition in January 2025 (albeit not a strictly conservative one) resulted in a change of approach favoring Israel. In both, the governments would have been far more hostile to Israel had the left been in power.

There are a number of reasons for the leftist anti-Israel bent. One is that Israeli politics have been dominated for almost half a century by conservative coalitions, and since 2022, by a coalition with a distinct radical-religious and populist bent. The priorities and the political vocabulary of Israeli officials have become alienating for left-leaning European politicians. The more that disparity brought Israel closer to European conservatism and populism, the more the chasm with Israel became a defining feature in European domestic politics. Some leftist European activists and leaders, who in their youth grew up on the ethos of Israel as a socialist utopia and a sheep overcoming wolves, and even experienced the utopia firsthand as volunteers on kibbutzim, have grown personally frustrated and angry with what has become of it. Post-Six Day War Israel is a personal broken dream for them.

Another reason are the expectations from Israel as democracy and a close European partner to maintain certain human rights standards, and the sense of some leftist European politicians that in the case of Israel, unlike that of countries that are more distant from the European system,

criticism can actually make a difference. Asked why he has been so much more vociferous against Israel than against other countries that do not uphold his standards of human rights, Luxembourgian MP Cruchten told us: “We see Israel as a Western country that shares a lot of our values. And therefore it is even twice more painful to see it committing crimes against humanity.” When asked why he had never called for trade sanctions against other countries with far from unblemished records on human rights, for example, China, a crucial economic partner of Luxembourg, there was a long silence, after which Cruchten replied in a way untypical of politicians: “I have no answer to that. It’s a difficult one. I understand that. It’s a very legitimate question.” After some more contemplation, he added: “We have to also be critical of China, but China is not starving children at the moment.”⁴⁸

Yet another reason for the anti-Israel bent is that the emphasis put by European leftists on human rights has been receptive to and distorted by critical theories, primarily those imported from American academia, that see weakness and victimhood as inherent representatives of justice, and power and affluence as inherent representatives of injustice. While guided by the intention to expose the hidden interests and structures that shape politics and human relations at large, these theories have ironically demonstrated a tendency to lead to one-dimensional analyses of social and political phenomena. Seeing Israel as the ultimate villain no matter what is one such one-dimensional analysis.

The anti-Israel leftist bent in Europe owes in part also to the roots of some members of leftist parties in Marxist movements, including such that have historical links with Palestinian groups, and their lingering anti-American sentiments. That some of Europe’s biggest supporters of Putin’s fascist Russia’s unprovoked war and crimes against humanity in Ukraine also happen to be the biggest antagonists of Israel speaks for itself. Their passion is not for human rights as a universal concept, but for seeing a weakened United States; not for the improvement of the liberal international system, but for its total destruction.

Spain, the largest of the P-8, has been governed by the most radical leftist coalition of the group. “The Spanish left has always been deeply anti-American, against NATO and the US bases. Israel has been seen as Washington’s outpost in the Middle East, while Palestine became the anti-imperialist cause. The left in Spain speaks about Israel through symbols – imperialism, resistance – but without concrete proposals. It’s more about identity than policy,” said Manuel Jesús García Martín, former provincial executive with the Spanish Socialists’ Workers Party (PSOE).⁴⁹ Daniel Fernández de Miguel, scholar of contemporary history at Universidad Complutense de Madrid, explained: “Spain’s current government is the most left-wing in Europe. [Its anti-Israel policy was designed] to demonstrate independence from Washington and the Western bloc, so it aligned with the Global South and Arab countries.”⁵⁰

The fragile base of the governing coalition in Madrid helped fuel those long-existing sentiments. “The current government was trying to divert attention from domestic problems and build an international image that would help its electoral prospects,” said Víctor Blázquez Martín,

⁴⁸ Interview by the authors, August 25, 2025.

⁴⁹ Interview by Antonio Peña, September 23, 2025.

⁵⁰ Interview by Antonio Peña, September 18, 2025.

associate professor of political science at Universidad Carlos III de Madrid.⁵¹ “Pedro Sánchez has been using the Palestinian issue as a cover for his internal crises. It is a political calculation. He is not moved by conviction, but by how his [policy regarding the conflict in Gaza] serves him internationally,” said Prof. Alfonso Ballesteros Soriano, a scholar of the philosophy of law at Universidad Miguel Hernández de Elche.⁵²

With some irony, in the case of several P-8 countries the political strength of the anti-Israel camp may have been helped by the relatively negligible demographic presence of Muslim migrants. Some European countries where migration has become a hotly debated issue have seen the rise of populist parties, with Germany and France being the primary examples. Some of these parties tend to stress their support for Israel as an ally and a model in the fight against Islamism and for the preservation of Judeo-Christian values. They do so in part as a means to fend off allegations that they have fascist and antisemitic roots. Their popularity, which comes in part from traditional socialist electoral bases, shrinks anti-Israel coalitions even where those coalitions win power, and increases the Palestinian-skeptic voices on the political spectrum.

The only two P-8 countries where populist parties have had modest yet sustained political success are Spain and Norway. In Spain, the pro-Israel migration-skeptic Vox, founded in 2013, won 12.4% of the votes in the 2023 elections, a decline from their 2019 record and short of frustrating the formation of a leftist coalition. In Norway, the migration-skeptic Progress Party won 11.7% of the votes in the 2021 elections and a record 23.9% of the votes in the September 2025 elections. That achievement did not deprive the incumbent socialist-led coalition of its majority and thus did not facilitate a turnaround in the approach to Israel, but it added pro-Israel voices to the parliamentary opposition, where Progress members dominate the Friends of Israel caucus.

The role of antisemitism and the Holocaust in public discourses is the most ironic of the explanations for hostility toward Israel in the P-8 countries.

The Second World War exists today in Europe as a topical issue. It lingers over cultural and social debates, rings alarm bells, and supports political demands for gratitude, condemnation, and revisionism.

There are states whose role during the Second World War is a source of national pride. This small list includes Britain, Denmark, and Albania. There are states for which the Second World War is a source of shame and reflection. This list includes Germany, Austria, and, to a far lesser extent, Italy. A third category are states for whom the Holocaust plays complex, sensitive, and very publicly present political and cultural roles due to mixed legacies of being under Nazi occupation on the one hand and having had large antisemitic segments of the population that collaborated with the Nazis on the other. These include, among others, France, the Baltic states, and Poland.

P-8 countries belong (and are not unique in that) to two other categories. They either played no significant role in the Holocaust, commendable or shameful, as is the case of Ireland, Iceland,

⁵¹ Interview by Antonio Peña, September 25, 2025.

⁵² Interview by Antonio Peña, September 18, 2025.

Photo by Uriya Shavit



The Holocaust Memorial in Luxembourg City, August 2025

and Malta, or played a mixed role that is today subject to some public discussion, but has not become a centerpiece of school education, political discourse, and painful debates regarding national history and identity.

The latter category includes Spain, which cooperated with Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, but gave refuge to thousands of Jews.⁵³ It includes Slovenia, where, under Nazi German and Italian occupations, the majority of Jews were murdered, but that as a nation never fully reckoned with its pro-Nazi collaborators. It includes Belgium, where almost half of the Jewish population was murdered in the Holocaust, and which witnessed both collaboration and the underground heroism of saviors. It includes Norway, where about half of the Jewish population was heroically

⁵³ See the analysis of Israeli diplomat Raphael Schutz, former ambassador to Madrid: N. Markovitz, “The Diplomatic Inquisition [Hebrew],” *Yated Neeman*, September 29, 2025, p. 69.

saved with the help of the resistance movement, and the other half was murdered, including through the assistance of Norwegian collaborators.⁵⁴ It includes Luxembourg, where the vast majority of the 3,500 Jews present before the Holocaust were murdered, including those who escaped to France, and whose history involves the righteous acts of citizens who gave shelter to Jews and those who collaborated with the Nazis in hunting down the last Jew.⁵⁵

While present, in none of these countries has the Holocaust become a fiercely discussed and debated national wound or a major topic for study and contemplation at schools. It is remembered; it does not dominate the public memory. That difference provides a partial explanation for the intensity of the criticism against Israel in P-8 countries.

A comparison between Spain and Germany is instructive. A Staatsräson of the Federal Republic is that Germany bears a unique responsibility for the continued existence and security of the State of Israel, and thus the alliance with Israel is a core national interest. Criticism of Israel or of Jews is an exceptionally sensitive issue in German politics and culture. Israel has active strongholds of almost unconditional support in the country, including in friendship associations with thousands of members and in the largest media group, Axel Springer. Israelis who have spoken to a German audience on topical issues will recall how much hesitation and apologetics precede any question about Israeli policies that may ring critical.

These sensitivities and sentiments are completely absent from Spanish public discourse.

The aforementioned Pew Research Center poll conducted in the spring of 2025, which informed that 75% of the Spanish public holds unfavorable views of Israel, also informed that no less than 64% of Germans share the same view. This is, perhaps, the most damning and alarming of all the data about attitudes toward Israel published in the recent year.

Yet there are important nuances. First, whereas the unfavorable majority formed in Germany after almost two years of war included only 15% who described themselves as holding a “very unfavorable” view regarding Israel, in Spain, that majority included 46% who identified as holding a “very unfavorable” view. The anti-Israel camp in Spain is thus more radical and passionate in its opposition, whereas, even with the turnaround of public opinion, most Germans who are critical of Israel are more hesitant in expressing that sentiment, with 49% satisfied with stating that they hold a “somewhat” unfavorable view.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ In 2012, then-Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg issued the first apology of its kind for the role Norwegians played in the murder of Jews: “Norway Apologizes for Deporting Jews during Holocaust,” BBC, January 27, 2012, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-16761558>.

⁵⁵ “Luxembourg Says Sorry to Jews for World War II Government Collaboration with Nazi Occupiers,” World Jewish Congress, June 9, 2015, <https://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/news/legislature-of-luxembourg-set-to-say-sorry-to-jews-for-world-war-ii-collaboration-with-nazi-occupiers-6-2-2015>. In 2015, the parliament issued an apology following the work of a panel of historians commissioned by the government that revealed the scope of enthusiastic participation by the local authorities in deporting Jews during the Holocaust. An impressive monument at the center of Luxembourg City, created by Holocaust survivor and sculptor Shlomo Selinger in 2018, commemorates the murdered Jews of the Grand Duchy.

⁵⁶ Laura Silver, “Most People across 24 Surveyed Countries Have Negative Views of Israel and Netanyahu,” Pew Research Center, June 3, 2025, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/06/03/most-people-across-24-surveyed-countries-have-negative-views-of-israel-and-netanyahu>.

Second, whereas the broad unfavorable public opinion in Germany gradually crystallized in response to the humanitarian situation that developed in Gaza, in Spain it existed already before and in the immediate aftermath of the October 7 attack, as indicated by YouGov surveys. In August 2021, when Israel had a centrist government, it was at -32% net favorability in Spain, compared to -12% in Germany. In November 2023, the net favorability of Israel in Germany was a mere -4%; in Spain, it was -50%.⁵⁷ The Spanish public, like its government, did not sympathize with Israel even in the immediate aftermath of October 7 and did not need an ongoing humanitarian disaster in Gaza to turn against it.

The different historical sentiments were reflected in policies. While the German government ultimately criticized Israel for its policies and issued a limited arms embargo, these actions stirred a fierce debate within the ruling conservative party, and were followed by a statement from Chancellor Friedrich Merz that “we have a clear compass: Germany is committed to Israel’s existence and security.”⁵⁸ Merz threatened that Germany would withdraw from the Eurovision, should the Spanish-led push to expel Israel succeed, describing the very entertainment of this initiative as “scandalous.”⁵⁹ As strong as the public unease about the situation in Gaza was, it led Germany in a very different direction than Spain.

In other large European countries where the Holocaust maintains a looming presence in national discourses and for which data are available, these nuances are less pronounced than in Germany, yet the existence of a more restrained public opinion in comparison to Spain is evident. The share of those holding a “very unfavorable” view toward Israel in Poland in the spring of 2025 was less than half that in Spain at a mere 22%; in France, it was 29%, and in Italy, 37%.⁶⁰ The net favorability of Israel was also considerably better than in Spain, although grim, at -25% in France and -37% in Italy (data for Poland were not available).⁶¹

All politics are local. This observation is associated with a former speaker of the American House of Representatives, Tip O’Neill. It is valid globally.

Nations, as do individuals, tend to identify with situations that remind them of themselves. Their pride. Their fears. Their struggles. The layers that make a national ethos.

The third aspect common to Israel-hostile P-8 countries is national narratives that are receptive to identification with the Palestinian cause. In the case of six of them, their historical memory is of independence acquired through laborious struggles and of being a weaker side coveted by stronger forces. That memory encourages perceptions of the Palestinians as a David whose struggles are reminiscent of their own, and of Israel, or what Israel has grown to become, as the Goliaths from which they were liberated.

⁵⁷ Mathew Smith, Head of Data Journalism, YouGov, “Net Favorability towards Israel Reaches New Lows in Key Western European Countries,” YouGov, June 3, 2025, <https://yougov.co.uk/international/articles/52279-net-favourability-towards-israel-reaches-new-lows-in-key-western-european-countries>.

⁵⁸ Tweet by Friedrich Merz, October 10, 2025: <https://x.com/bundeskanzler/status/1976541402956955859>.

⁵⁹ David Mouriquand, “German Chancellor Friedrich Merz Threatens to Boycott Eurovision Song Contest if Israel Is Excluded,” EuroNews, October 6, 2025, <https://www.euronews.com/culture/2025/10/06/german-chancellor-friedrich-merz-threatens-to-boycott-eurovision-song-contest-if-israel-is>.

⁶⁰ Silver, “Most People across 24 Surveyed Countries Have Negative Views of Israel and Netanyahu.”

⁶¹ Smith, “Net Favorability towards Israel Reaches New Lows in Key Western European Countries.”

There is little need to explain why, in the Republic of Ireland, which gained independence after centuries of brutally imposed British rule, such sentiments are strong, let alone given the crucial role British imperialism played in the creation of Israel. Perhaps there is also no need to explain why this is the case in tiny Malta. With 315 square kilometers, one of the smallest countries in the world achieved independence from Britain only in 1964, after centuries in which it exchanged hands between Muslim and Christian invaders and had not experienced a moment of independence. It forsook its relations with the Crown only in 1974.

Other historical memories receptive to Palestinian narratives are less familiar or expected. For example, Luxembourg.

Willem III, almost two meters tall, not always happy, not always glorious, reigned over the Netherlands as King, and, separately, over Luxembourg as Grand Duke. In the former he allowed liberalization, in the latter he kept power for himself. His erratic behavior, despotic tendencies, and scandalous addiction to sensual pleasures made him unpopular. Linguistically German and historically part of the Reich, Luxembourg's shrunk borders under his rule were the outcome of a complicated arrangement intended to establish a buffer zone between France and Prussia and prevent an all-out European war. France coveted the territory during his reign, but he secured its independent status and neutrality.

Willem III died in 1890. He was survived only by a daughter, Wilhelmina. The laws of Luxembourg, unlike those of the Netherlands, did not allow for a woman on the throne. A very distant cousin from the House of Nassau-Weilburg was offered the crown. The Grand Duchy was saved. But the peace did not last long.

We learned about the complicated history of the Grand Duchy and its long path to independence and security from the German-Luxembourgian journalist Thomas Klein, deputy head of the political department at the *Luxemburger Wort*. Ahead of the October 2025 abdication of the 70-year-old Grand Duke Henri, Klein published a series of articles on the pan-European politics that led to Luxembourg becoming a Grand Duchy, the only one of its kind in the world.

Klein explained that a history that involves borders shrunk by bigger powers, brutal occupations, and a right to exist as an independent sovereign state that was anything but obvious, encourages some in Luxembourg to compare their past struggles for liberation to those of the Palestinians.

"There is a saying here, *Wir wollen bleiben, was wir sind* – we want to remain who we are. For most of history, there was a question whether Luxembourg is viable as a state. The French said they would take over Luxembourg. And the Belgians, and the Dutch, and so forth," he said. In the 20th century, Germany swiftly occupied Luxembourg twice – in the First World War and the Second World War. The Grand Duchy survived all the assaults, but its public developed an appreciation that independence should not be taken for granted, coupled with sympathy with those who do not have it, and thus, when citizens of the Grand Duchy see the Palestinians, "they think that this could have been them."⁶²

⁶² Interview by the authors, August 28, 2025.

Prof. David Howarth, a Canadian-British political scientist from the University of Luxembourg, who has lived in the Grand Duchy since 2012, said: “Luxembourg is a country that lost considerable territory over the years. When the Nazis occupied it, they marched in a boom and said, ‘Well, you are all Germans now.’ That might help understand why many in Luxembourg are alert to the problems of the Palestinians.”⁶³

A national narrative receptive to identification with stateless nations struggling for dignity and independence can be also found in Slovenia. Home to slightly more than 2.1 million people on a territory almost equal in size to that of Israel, it is associated today with winter sports, basketball, and stalactite caves. Few outsiders remember that the former Yugoslav republic gained independence in the summer of 1991 following a 10 Day War of independence against the Serbian-dominated Yugoslav military. Belgrade aimed to prevent the disintegration of what, not long before, seemed the model for the possibility of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious state. In that war, the Slovenians overcame Yugoslav armored and air superiority through careful planning, massive secret mobilization, and clever use of asymmetric guerrilla warfare. David prevailed. In 1948, a national ethos grounded in that image would easily identify with the young Zionist state. In 2025, the Slovenians saw themselves in the Palestinians.

Norway is today a symbol of stability and peace; it is thus easy to forget that it gained full independence (under an imported Danish royal) only in 1905, after a century in which Sweden crushed its independence ambitions and imposed on it a union following a military campaign.

Iceland, approximately five times the size of Israel with less than 5% of its population and no military force, is another beacon of complacent serenity and secured independence that seems today to have always been so. Yet it gained independence from Denmark only in 1918 after six centuries of Danish rule, most of which direct, and fully detached from the Danish crown only in 1944.

The alignment of Palestinian narratives with Belgian and Spanish national narratives is more complicated. As Luxembourg, Belgium twice experienced brutal German occupation. The liberation from which, and the vulnerability it exposed, are part of the national ethos. Belgium is also a fragile federal union at a graver risk of disintegration than any other EU country. That renders the right of collectives of people to self-determination a theme of interest and utility for some. A history of imperial power responsible for particularly heinous crimes with which it has never fully reckoned or made amends also plays a role; it encourages strong anti-colonial sentiments and deflections of those sentiments elsewhere.

Spain is home to several separatist groups, primarily the Catalans and the Basques, who share with the Palestinians an ethos of an oppressed nation denied the right to self-determination, and enthusiastically support their cause. The specter of international institutions or great powers imposing the creation of new independent states is horrifying for the mainstreams of Spanish politics, which is why the Kingdom has, for example, remained one of a few countries in Europe that have yet to recognize the independence of Kosovo. However, the current socialist government is dependent on the support of Catalan separatists as well as that of the

⁶³ Interview by the authors, August 27, 2025.

radical, Marxist-inclined left. It cannot satisfy their core ambitions, making a deflection to an independence struggle far away, on which there is consensus on the left, a desired option.

Because of the Spanish civil war, some, particularly on the left, are receptive to a distorted understanding of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict as a binary struggle between the oppressed and the oppressors, in which the cause of freedom worldwide is at stake. That analogy is receptive to the historical lesson that the oppressors are certain to lose unless aided by external righteous forces.

“Spanish society has a special sensitivity shaped by our Civil War and dictatorship about violations of human rights. Since the 1930s, the Spanish left has seen itself on the side of the oppressed. That’s why there’s sympathy for Palestinians as victims,” said José Manuel Rivas Otero, a professor at the University of Salamanca who specializes in conflict studies and comparative politics.⁶⁴ “The Spanish left has always had a kind of romantic idealization of the Palestinian movement influenced by the armed struggle against [Franco’s] dictatorship. [The Palestinian struggle] was seen as a fight against oppression, so there was identification with it,” explained Manuel Jesús García Martín.⁶⁵

Indeed, while they have speedily deteriorated since October 7, 2023, Spanish attitudes toward Israel were far from rosy already before the war in Gaza. This takes us to the fourth shared aspect of P-8 countries: They have distant or more recent legacies of bias for the Arab side. Their pro-Palestinian stance did not emerge two years ago. When the October 7 attack occurred, their governments, and a majority of their publics, already had Israel framed as an ultimate villain and the Palestinians as the ever victims. That frame was too strongly embedded for the horrors of October 7 to put it in question.

In the case of Spain, relations with Israel were almost never without complications. Under Franco, it cultivated good relations with Arab countries, in part because of its dependency on oil and other supplies. The anti-Israel policy continued also during the early phases of transition to democracy. In September 1979, Adolfo Suárez became the first European president to receive the leader of the PLO, Yasser Arafat. Spain recognized Israel only in 1986.

While the intensity of the Spanish support for the Palestinian cause has had its highs and lows since then, the core commitment remained intact, and often a step ahead of other European countries. Already on November 18, 2014, the Congress of Deputies overwhelmingly approved a non-legislative proposition presented by the Socialist Parliamentary Group in favor of the recognition of Palestine as an independent state. At the time, the prospective recognition was conditioned by the existence of consensus on the matter in the EU.⁶⁶

The Maltese affinity for the Palestinian cause has been equally strong. The founding prime minister of the tiny country, Dom Mintoff, emerged since 1973 as a harsh critic of Israel and a fierce advocate for Palestinian rights, granting the PLO official status in Malta and repeatedly

⁶⁴ Interview by Antonio Peña, September 25, 2025.

⁶⁵ Interview by Antonio Peña, September 23, 2025.

⁶⁶ Ignacio Álvarez-Ossorio Alvariño, “Spain and the Palestine Question,” *Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question*, <https://www.palquest.org/en/highlight/35847/spain-and-palestine-question>.

condemning what he termed as Israeli aggression. One result of the close relations he formed with Libya in the 1970s in his quest to find rich allies and assert a nonaligned, anti-colonial position was that thousands of Maltese found work there and were acquainted with the more radical Arab points of view on the conflict, which they later transferred home.

While relations with Israel had a good start after Malta gained its independence, were maintained even in strained days, and were enhanced in the 2000s, the core Maltese sympathy for the Palestinian cause never dwindled. During the Israeli siege on Yasser Arafat's compound in 2002, Maltese President Guido de Marco phoned him on a daily basis and sent personal messages through European leaders, urging Israel not to harm the Palestinian leader.⁶⁷ In 2019, then-Maltese President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca visited Israel and the Palestinian Authority, where she laid a wreath at the grave of Arafat in Ramallah and spoke about the unmitigated Maltese support for the right of the Palestinians to self-determination. The visit has not had the impact her Israeli hosts hoped for; today, no longer in office, she is one of the fiercest anti-Israel voices in Europe.

Ernest Hemingway said he went bankrupt in two ways: gradually, then suddenly. Several P-8 countries that did not have a long Anti-Israel history have witnessed in the 2010s a fundamental anti-Israel shift. What happened there was, at the time, dismissed by arrogant observers as anecdotal, rather than what it really reflected: small tides forecasting a heavy storm.

If you desire an assured triumph at a boring dinner party, try the next trivia question: Who was the first foreign head of state to address the Knesset?

It was Ásgeir Ásgeirsson of Iceland, on March 28, 1966. Ásgeirsson spoke about the support of the Icelandic people for the establishment of the State of Israel and the importance of advancing the cooperation between the countries, while the Speaker of the Knesset, Kadish Luz, spoke about the unique friendship between the Israeli and Icelandic peoples, and their shared advancement of welfare policies and parliamentary democratic institutions.

In recent years, that diplomatic honeymoon became all but forgotten history as Iceland embraced a particularly hostile agenda against Israel. Becoming the first European state to recognize a State of Palestine in 2011 was the cornerstone. Four years later, in September 2015, the City Council of Reykjavik, where more than a third of the island's population lives, passed a resolution banning all Israeli-made products (Israeli at large, rather than produced beyond the 1967 borders). The resolution, passed by a 9-to-5 majority, was proposed by Councilwoman Björk Vilhelmsdóttir, who said that she intends to spend the rest of the year doing humanitarian work in the Palestinian territories.

Another resolution by the City Council acknowledged the rights of the Palestinians to independence and a sovereign state of their own. It criticized what it called the Israeli government's "racist apartheid policy." Councilwoman Vilhelmsdóttir explained: "I believe that the city is sending

⁶⁷ Yannic Pace, "How the Palestine-Israel Conflict Has Spilled into Malta Over the Years," *Loving Malta*, May 18, 2025, <https://lovinmalta.com/opinion/analysis/how-the-palestine-israel-conflict-has-spilled-into-malta-over-the-years/>.

a clear message that it will not purchase products from Israel while Israel oppresses another people on the basis of ethnicity and race and continues having the wall inside Palestine.”⁶⁸

The boycott resolution was largely symbolic, as the City Council has no authority on diplomatic issues and had no trade relations with Israel. A week after its passage, it was retracted by the same Council, following a heated debate attended by BDS activists. Independence Party MP Björn Bjarnason argued that the boycott resolution should have clearly stated that it would only affect products from the occupied regions of Palestine, and not from Israel as a whole.⁶⁹

The fiasco may have seemed, at the time, a victory for Israel. Yet a crucial question was not broached: how did it happen that in a relatively quiet year in the Middle East, the local leaders of a European capital that is home to a small number of Arabs and Jews, in a country that had little involvement in the conflict before and has no national interests in the Middle East, developed such passionate, activist anti-Israeli sentiments?

The joke tells of a turtle that sits on the back of a galloping tiger. When they reach their destination, the turtle proudly exclaims: “How fast we run!”

There is a grain of truth in almost every joke, and the one in this brings us to the fifth shared aspect that explains P-8 hostility toward Israel. P-8 countries have in common not only a passion for the Palestinian cause, but also a limited capacity to influence Middle Eastern politics. The

Photo by Shutterstock



Anti-Israel demonstrators with Hizballah flag in Dublin, Ireland, October 5, 2024

⁶⁸ Itamar Eichner, “Iceland’s Capital Bans All Israeli Products [Hebrew],” *Ynet*, September 16, 2015, <https://www.ynet.co.il/article/4701022>.

⁶⁹ “Reykjavik Boycott of Israeli Products Retracted,” *Iceland Monitor*, September 23, 2015, https://icelandmonitor.mbl.is/news/politics_and_society/2015/09/22/reykjavik_boycott_of_israeli_products_retracted/.

scope of their bilateral economic, defense, and other ties with Israel implies that, unlike in the cases of Germany, France, or the United Kingdom, they have few levers to affect its policies directly. The structure of European institutions that requires consensus or close to consensus in decision-making implies that even in unity of purpose and action, they cannot, unless joined by others, make a difference.

Another political condition shared by P-8 countries is that they are, at present, less reliant on the United States than most other European countries. They are not at the forefront of the expansionist ambitions of fascist Russia as are Finland, the Baltic states, and the East European members of the EU. They do not court American goodwill to prevent the disintegration of NATO, as Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy are embarrassingly forced to do. They are not embroiled in delicate regional issues that require or have the potential to require American mediation and support, as are the Balkan states, Greece, and Cyprus. Unlike Denmark, they have not found themselves in a bizarre territorial dispute with an erratic, ill-intending American administration.

The combination of relative immunity from American wrath and relative incapacity to affect Middle Eastern politics placed the P-8 countries in an awkward win-win situation. Their hostile views regarding Israel had little direct impact, yet involved few risks. Where their demands regarding the reaction to the war were not heeded, P-8 leaders benefited from basking in virtue signaling. Where ultimately embraced, P-8 governments were able to enjoy the sensation of running like a tiger. This does not mean that they were not concerned at all about diplomatic repercussions. Of the eight, only Belgium, under its new right-leaning government, is yet to recognize a State of Palestine. Yet it is possible that the four P-8 states that entertained through much of 2025 recognizing a State of Palestine without actually going the extra mile until France and the United Kingdom did, took a cautious path because they feared punching above their actual diplomatic weight.

The final aspect shared by P-8 countries is particularly frustrating to those who think Israel is not being treated fairly. The eight are characterized, although for different reasons, by weak pro-Israel public diplomacy (known in Hebrew as *hasbara*).

In two P-8 countries, Luxembourg and Iceland, Israel is represented through neighboring Israeli embassies (Belgium and Norway, respectively). In two, Malta and Slovenia, it is represented through a non-resident ambassador (the same for both). In one, Ireland, Israel closed its embassy a year into the war in retaliation for the escalation of the anti-Israel position. In all of the abovementioned five, the Jewish and Israeli-Jewish communities are tiny, and pro-Zionist Jewish activism is, unlike in several other European countries, minimal and under the radar where it exists at all.

Only three P-8 countries have fully functional Israeli embassies – Norway, Belgium, and Spain. As is the case of the five countries without a fully functioning diplomatic mission, the Jewish and Israeli-Jewish communities are tiny relative to the size of the population (in Belgium, where the number of Jews is the highest of the P-8, the majority are non-Zionist ultra-Orthodox). The impact of the Jewish and Israeli-Jewish populations on the public debate on the Middle Eastern conflict is thus negligible.

The absence of in-person, on-the-ground public, well-informed public diplomacy costs.

Yes – in theory, social media can be influenced from any point on the globe. Yet while social media, and the internet at large, are global instruments, they are largely consumed in national and local contexts, and to have an impact on those contexts, one has to be familiar with them culturally, politically, and linguistically. To work from within them, based on intimate knowledge of them, and not from the outside.

Yes – traditional media have lost much of their clout. Yet they are still crucial for public diplomacy, especially among decision-makers. To have a dominant voice in that media, Zoom calls are not enough. Journalists tend to be more attentive to sources of information who meet with them in person, and television producers prefer interviewees who can make it to the studio.

Where one voice is not heard, another is. If ever the story of how Iceland has become one of the most anti-Israel countries outside the Muslim world is written, a chapter will surely be dedicated to Salman Tamimi. The Palestinian sailor and construction worker turned high-tech professional moved to Iceland in 1971 at the age of 16. At the time, approximately 20 Muslims lived in the country.

In 1987, Tamimi founded the Iceland-Palestine Association and became an outspoken campaigner for Palestinian causes. In 2011, his sister, Amal, five years his younger, became the first foreign-born person to sit in the Icelandic parliament, although for a very short spell.

In a press interview in 2004, Tamimi explained why he believed Iceland should cut off its ties with Israel: “This idea that Israel is a tiny country trying to defend itself from all sides is a myth. It’s the most powerful nation in the region militarily. Their policies against the Palestinian

Photo by Uriya Shavit



Salman Tamimi preaches in Reykjavík, October 2017

people are in many ways worse than those which South Africa imposed upon the majority of its own people.”⁷⁰

At the time, the words sounded radical. Today, the Association prides itself on facilitating the Icelandic recognition of a State of Palestine in 2011.⁷¹

Kindhearted to guests, including Israelis, Tamimi was not an easy person. By his death in 2020, he had not only Israel on his list of rivals, but also some of his former partners in the mosque-scene he initiated in 1997 – and his sister. Yet the rival he despised the most never fought back. All through the decades in which Tamimi lobbied for the Palestinian cause in the Icelandic public, collecting donations, inviting lecturers, and sending volunteers, there was no counter-Israeli voice, no counter Iceland-Israel association to provide for a more nuanced public discussion.

Even non-aligned, moderate voices need to be echoed by similar voices, or else, biased pro-Palestinian extremism will flourish, establishing a threatening, imposing presence.

Corrine Cahen, born in 1973, is a member of the Luxembourgian parliament from the centrist Democratic Party that is in coalition. She is a former chairperson of her party, former Minister for Family Affairs and Integration, former manager of a small family shoe-shop chain, and former journalist. She is also a Jew who studied in the 1990s in Jerusalem in the high days of the suicide bus attacks, narrowly escaping one such attack. And she is a fierce critic of Benjamin Netanyahu, as she made clear early in our meeting.

The Christmas after the war began, the lively-spirited Cahen recorded a video for Instagram on the Middle East situation. “I will tell you what happened. I said in my message that I wanted peace and that in war, there are always two sides, and that the two sides have to decide to make peace. That a child is a child, and I don’t care if it is an Israeli child or a Palestinian child. That every human being matters.

“And then, after this was posted, I got this really, really hard shit storm on Instagram. What they wanted me to say was that Luxembourg should recognize Palestine, that Palestine should be freed from the river to the sea. I am completely secular. But my name is Jewish, I come from a Jewish family, so, you know, they immediately want me to say that Israel is wrong, and I didn’t say that.”

In his office in Valletta, Honorary Consul Strickland showed us with pride the front page of the *Times of Malta*, which he said his family owns. The just-published issue featured an extensive interview done through Zoom with the non-resident Israeli ambassador Ruth Cohen-Dar, one of the foreign office’s most seasoned diplomats.

We asked Strickland if that was not proof that efficient public diplomacy can also be done without a functioning, on-the-ground embassy.

⁷⁰ Paul Fontaine-Nikolov, “Reversing History,” *The Reykjavik Grapevine*, July 23, 2004, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140225235713/http://www.grapevine.is/Home/ReadArticle/REVERSING-HISTORY>.

⁷¹ “Goals of the Iceland-Palestine Association,” nd, <https://palestina.is/en/>.

He explained why Israel needs one in Malta. “If, say, I was a full-time ambassador here, and it was my full-time job, then Monday I would go have coffee with the Foreign Minister. Tuesday, with the French ambassador, she is completely pro-Palestine. Just have coffee, talk to her. Then with the Italian ambassador, the Spanish. Then with different ministers, with the Prime Minister, with the media. Speak for Israel around the clock. Organize a celebration on Independence Day. Meet up with the Chamber of Commerce. An honorary consul doesn’t have the time to do all these things. I have four companies, I have 170 employees, that is my first job.”

While Israel has not been playing all over the field in Malta, the Palestinians have. “Their public diplomacy is ongoing,” said Strickland. “They have an ambassador here [Fadi Hanania]. He is very active on social media. Somebody is funding him, and somebody is obviously paying for his suits and the nice cars, and his driver.”⁷²

Strickland’s 18-year-old son plays for a first-division Maltese football team. He invited us to watch their second match of the season. Sliema Wanderers versus Mosta. The small stadium overlooks gold-lighted medieval churches.

Only several dozen fans were present. The atmosphere was somewhat sleepy. The Sliema Wanderers lost to the inferior competition despite being in full control for 90 minutes.

The budgets of both teams on the pitch are, combined, about ten percent of the top Israeli premier league teams. We did not notice a marked difference in quality between the leagues. Despite heavy investments, never-ending optimism and a good amount of nationalistic bravado, Israeli football has been advancing backward, drifting away from European standards, surpassed by smaller states including Kosovo, Albania and Iceland. It is particularly weak on the defense.

Europe liked Israel more when it was a David. Tiny, vulnerable, struggling to survive against all odds. Israel should not apologize that, through many sacrifices, it is no longer a David. It should also recognize that negligence and arrogance often befall the Goliaths.

Policy Recommendations

1. Drawing on clause 19 of the American 20-point plan for the resolution of the Gaza conflict, the next Israeli government should present a creative and well-intending plan that offers a realistic prospect, even if extremely cautious and distant, for a form of mitigated Palestinian independence, and an Israeli commitment to avoid infrastructural actions that render such a prospect impractical. The Israeli plan should demand continued American and European commitments for the elimination of Hamas as a political and armed faction, an unequivocal Palestinian recognition of Israel as the national home of the Jewish people, and the intensive de-radicalization of Palestinian schools.

In the short rather than long term, the absence of such a plan will make Israel a pariah state in most of Europe, not just among the P-8 countries. It may lead to a similar result in the United States sooner rather than later.

⁷² Interview by the authors, August 21, 2025.

2. Israeli officials must reach out to the moderate elements of European social democracy, especially among the young, with both sides engaging in open dialogue that involves less preaching and more listening, and seeks common ground rather than virtue-signaling and confrontation.
3. Israeli officials should exercise more caution in labeling criticism and hostile diplomatic initiatives as antisemitism, even when these are harsh, unfair, hypocritical, and biased, and potentially legally justify these labels. Usage of that term should be preserved to clear-cut manifestations of Jew-hatred in order to maintain its credibility and avoid depleting it of meaning and effectiveness.
4. Israel must open fully functioning embassies in every European country. As the Maltese presidency of the UN Security Council during the war demonstrated, there are small and big states in Europe, but there are no unimportant states.

The budget for this essential initiative should derive foremost from closure of the gratuitous and damning Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism, which, as our Center pointed to time and again, does a disservice to the causes it is tasked with promoting.

5. Every Israeli embassy in Europe should employ a full-time trained official responsible for communication with the traditional media and engagement with NGOs and Jewish organizations, and another full-time trained official responsible for social media and engagement with student and youth organizations.
6. Israel must significantly increase the number of influencers (journalists, bloggers, educators, junior politicians, community organizers, and artists) invited to visit the country, including from P-8 and other hostile countries. Contrary to the current policy, it should give visitors as free a hand as possible in seeing the country for themselves, as nothing more effectively dispels false narratives. Israel should also significantly increase the number of scholarships awarded to non-Israelis interested in attending Israeli institutions of higher education, in particular those training to be politicians, diplomats, and journalists.

– Prof. Uriya Shavit, with contributions from Antonio Peña and Dmitrii Sukhanov