Human Rights Council (HRC)

The rise in global antisemitism

Research Report

Leiden Model United Nations 2024

"Out of this world"

Forum: Human Rights Council

Issue: The rise in global antisemitism

Position: Deputy Chair

Introduction

Antisemitism has been a deeply concerning issue for centuries, manifesting in various forms, including religious, social, economic, and racial. However, in the months following the Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7th, 2023, there has been a significant increase in antisemitic attacks globally, at a rate unseen since World War 2. Hamas supporters and antisemitic actors have threatened and targeted Jewish individuals and institutions worldwide. This surge not only threatens Jewish communities around the world but also undermines broader democratic values, such as human rights, tolerance, diversity, and social cohesion. Antisemitism has been a forerunner of other irrational hatreds that reflect deeper societal issues such as extremism, scapegoating, and racism.

For the past five years, antisemitic violence around the world has been escalating, with mass shootings in synagogues, violent assaults on Jewish individuals, and the desecration of Jewish cemeteries. Although antisemitism has long existed, the current global social and political climate has fueled conspiracy theories, with populist leaders and antisemitic actors using the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a golden opportunity to exploit antisemitic stereotypes for political advantage.

Despite the efforts of many countries and organisations to counter antisemitism through education, legislation, and international cooperation, Jews continue to face violence, discrimination, and exclusion from many parts of the world.

This alarming rise in antisemitism prompts the global community to adopt strategic plans to combat the pressing issues at hand, protect the livelihoods of the members of the Jewish community, and create a more inclusive and fair society.

Definition of Key Terms

Antisemitism

Prejudice, hostility, hate, or discrimination towards Jewish people on religious, cultural, or ethnic grounds, or cruel and unfair treatment of people because they are Jewish.

Zionism

a political movement that had as its original aim the creation of a country for Jewish people, and that now supports the state of Israel.

Holocaust

The killing of millions of Jews and others by the Nazis before and during the Second World War.

Neo-Nazism

Neo-Nazism comprises the post-World War II militant, social, and political movements that seek to revive and reinstate Nazi ideology. It borrows elements from Nazi doctrine, including antisemitism, ultranationalism, racism, xenophobia, ableism, homophobia, anti-communism, and creating a "Fourth

Reich". Holocaust denial is common in neo-Nazi circles.

Anti-Defamation League (ADL)

ADL is the leading anti-hate organisation in the world. Founded in 1913, its timeless mission is “to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.” Today, the ADL remains committed to combating all forms of antisemitism and prejudice, leveraging innovation and collaborations to create change. As a global leader in fighting antisemitism, extremism, and bigotry, the ADL strives to safeguard democracy and promote a fair, inclusive society for everyone.

The Irwin Cotler Institute at Tel Aviv University

They are devoted to instruction, training, and policy-oriented research on human rights, democracy, justice, and the fight against antisemitism and racism at large.

Populism

Populism is a range of political stances that emphasise the idea of "the people" and often juxtapose this group with "the elite". It is frequently associated with anti-establishment and anti-political sentiment. It is based upon an “us versus them” ideology.

General Overview

Historical Roots of Antisemitism

Antisemitism has existed for millennia, with early forms appearing in Ancient Greece and Rome, where Jews were discriminated against for their monotheistic beliefs. During the Middle Ages, Christian antisemitism grew, as Jews were blamed for the death of Jesus Christ and often became scapegoats for societal problems like the Black Death. This religious-based animosity laid the foundation for centuries of discrimination, pogroms, and violence against Jewish communities.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, however, religious antisemitism morphed into racial antisemitism marking a significant shift, particularly in Europe, where Jews were viewed as an inferior race. This form of antisemitism culminated in the Holocaust, one of the darkest periods in human history and the key to understanding modern antisemitism and its devastating consequences.

The Holocaust

The Holocaust, also known as the Shoah, was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and extermination of six million Jews by Nazi Germany between 1941 and 1945. This genocide marked the peak of antisemitic ideology, where Jews were dehumanized and subjected to unimaginable atrocities, including concentration camps, forced labor, and mass executions.

The Holocaust had a profound impact on global perceptions of antisemitism. The world, in the aftermath of World War II, collectively acknowledged the need to confront hatred and bigotry. Organisations such as the United Nations and Anti-Defamation League were instrumental in ensuring the lessons of the Holocaust were not forgotten, advocating for human rights and Holocaust education worldwide. However, despite global efforts, antisemitism did not disappear; it merely transformed.

Why does antisemitism still exist?

For centuries, antisemitism has fueled harmful stereotypes and myths, portraying Jews as powerful figures controlling wealth and global affairs. In times of crisis, whether economic or social, Jews have often been unfairly blamed, becoming scapegoats for financial collapses or political instability. This kind of hatred has been exploited by authoritarian and populist leaders who use antisemitism to shift attention away from internal issues, rallying people against a fabricated "Jewish elite." Even today, antisemitic conspiracy theories persist, with claims of Jewish control over the media and global politics gaining traction, particularly in online spaces where misinformation spreads quickly. These narratives, while rooted in centuries-old prejudices, have found new life in modern platforms, making the fight against antisemitism more urgent than ever.

How has antisemitism escalated in recent years?

1. Far-right movements: In Europe and the U.S., far-right and neo-Nazi groups have gained traction, often blaming Jews for societal problems. These groups are responsible for numerous violent attacks on Jewish communities.

2. Far-left antisemitism: Often conflated with anti-Zionism, some elements of the far-left criticise Jews under the guise of opposition to Israel's policies. While criticising Israel's government is not inherently antisemitic, these critiques sometimes invoke antisemitic tropes.

3. Radical Islamist antisemitism: In parts of the Middle East, antisemitic rhetoric has been a component of opposition to Israel, often manifesting in violent attacks or hate speech.

Antisemitic violence

Notable recent incidents of antisemitic violence include the 2018 Pittsburgh synagogue shooting and the 2019 Halle attack in Germany. Both events were driven by conspiracy theories and white supremacist ideologies, highlighting the dangerous intersection between online radicalization and real-world violence.

2018 Pittsburgh synagogue shooting
The shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in U.S. history. The gunman, a white supremacist, believed in the conspiracy that Jews were orchestrating mass immigration to weaken America's white population—a variation of the "great replacement theory." Eleven people were killed, and the event triggered widespread fear and mourning within the Jewish community.

2019 Halle attack in Germany
In Halle, Germany, a far-right extremist attempted to attack a synagogue during Yom Kippur, one of the holiest days in Judaism. Though the attacker failed to breach the building, he killed two people outside. The attack was live-streamed, reminiscent of the Christchurch mosque shootings, illustrating the global nature of modern hate crimes and their ties to the internet.

Anti-Defamation League

Founded in 1913, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) is one of the most prominent organisations fighting antisemitism and bigotry globally. The ADL monitors antisemitic incidents, combats hate speech, and advocates for stronger hate crime legislation. It also works to raise awareness about Holocaust denial and antisemitic conspiracy theories.

The ADL's work has been instrumental in promoting policy changes and public awareness. The organisation has partnered with governments and tech companies to remove antisemitic content from social media and has developed tools to track antisemitic incidents worldwide. Despite their efforts, however, antisemitism continues to thrive, especially in the digital age.

The 2023 report stressed that the increased hatred of Jews could not simply be put down to emotions raised by Israel's retaliatory offensive against Hamas in Gaza, saying that many "outrageous" expressions of antisemitism occurred before that campaign began.

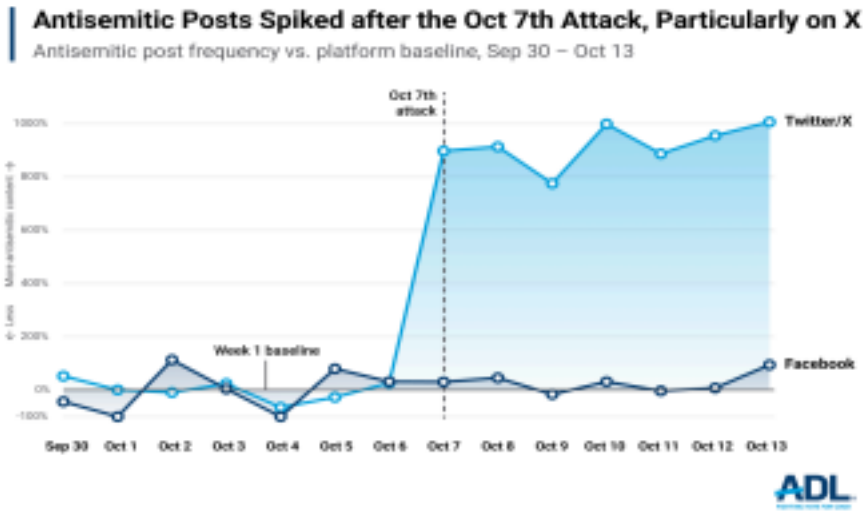
The report also warns that if the current trends persist, Jewish communities worldwide may no longer be able to live safely and freely. In Germany, antisemitic incidents rose from 1,365 between January and September to 2,249 between October and December. In the United States, antisemitic incidents jumped from around 3,500 in the first nine months to nearly 4,000 by year's end, with an average of three bomb threats daily against Jewish institutions.

Online Antisemitism and Social Media

Social media has significantly amplified the reach of antisemitic rhetoric. Online platforms allow for the rapid spread of hate speech, conspiracy theories, and even violent calls to action. As antisemitic content proliferates in online spaces, particularly on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, it becomes harder to combat.

Many tech companies have taken steps to moderate hate speech, but the scale and speed of dissemination make it a difficult task. Online echo chambers often radicalised individuals, leading to real-world violence, as seen in the Pittsburgh and Halle attacks.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) has also pushed for countries to adopt a working definition of antisemitism to better identify and combat this form of hatred. This definition includes various forms of antisemitic rhetoric, including online hate speech and Holocaust denial.



Major Parties Involved

Israel

Israel, as the world's only Jewish state, plays a central role in discussions about antisemitism. Criticism of Israeli government policies, particularly regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, often crosses into antisemitism when it demonises or delegitimizes the state of Israel or uses antisemitic tropes. Israel advocates globally against antisemitism, especially through its foreign ministry and the Irwin Cotler Institute at Tel Aviv University, which focuses on human rights and antisemitism education. Israel often serves as a lightning rod in international politics, with antisemitic sentiments frequently being masked as anti-Zionism, leading to strained relations with both Muslim-majority countries and certain Western far-left movements.

The United States of America

The United States plays a significant role in both combating and experiencing antisemitism. The U.S. is home to the largest Jewish community outside of Israel, and organisations like the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and American Jewish Committee (AJC) have been at the forefront of efforts to address antisemitic hate crimes, particularly in recent years with the rise of far-right extremism. The U.S. government has been active in countering antisemitism through policies like the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism. However, the U.S. has seen a rise in antisemitic attacks, including mass shootings at synagogues and increased hate speech online. The political polarisation in the U.S. has, at times, intensified antisemitic rhetoric, particularly from both far-right and far-left groups.

France

France has one of the largest Jewish populations in Europe, but it has also been a hotspot for antisemitic violence and rhetoric. The country has witnessed a series of violent attacks on Jewish communities, such as the 2015 **Hyper Cacher supermarket attack** and ongoing vandalism of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues. French Jews often find themselves targeted by both Islamist extremists and far-right groups. The French government has taken steps to address this rise, implementing strong hate speech laws and actively promoting Holocaust education. However, France struggles with balancing freedom of speech and the rise of antisemitic narratives, especially within its far-left political factions that conflate anti-Zionism with antisemitism.

European Union (EU)

The European Union (EU) has taken a leading role in addressing antisemitism across Europe,

coordinating efforts through initiatives such as the EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life. Member states are encouraged to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, and the EU has supported legislation that combats hate speech and Holocaust denial. However, antisemitism remains a challenge across the continent, with Jewish communities in countries like Germany, the UK, and Hungary facing increasing threats from far-right and far-left extremists. The EU works to balance its internal policies while encouraging global cooperation against antisemitism through diplomatic channels and international partnerships.

Iran

Iran has long been a state sponsor of antisemitic rhetoric, often linking its opposition to Israel with broader antisemitic sentiments. The Iranian regime, particularly under the leadership of the late Ayatollah Khomeini and his successors, has consistently called for the destruction of Israel, sometimes using antisemitic propaganda to bolster its position. Iranian-backed groups, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, have also promoted antisemitic views and engaged in violent acts against Jewish targets globally. Iran's role in the Middle East exacerbates tensions and antisemitic attitudes, especially within the region's Islamist movements that align with Tehran's anti-Israel stance. The state also funds antisemitic media content, both online and in traditional forms, which contributes to the global spread of antisemitic views.

Neo-Nazi Groups

Neo-Nazi groups are among the most overt proponents of antisemitism today. Rooted in the ideology of Adolf Hitler's Third Reich, these groups promote Holocaust denial, racial superiority, and a deep hatred of Jews. Active in both the U.S. and Europe, neo-Nazi groups have been responsible for numerous violent attacks, including the 2019 Halle attack in Germany. These groups exploit social and economic frustrations to spread antisemitic propaganda, often rallying around white supremacist ideologies and portraying Jews as controllers of global finance and politics. In recent years, neo-Nazi groups have grown increasingly active online, using encrypted platforms to spread their message and recruit members globally.

Islamist Extremist Groups

Islamist extremist groups, such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda, frequently incorporate antisemitic ideology into their broader anti-Western and anti-Israeli propaganda. These groups justify their hatred through distorted interpretations of religious texts, framing Jews as historical enemies of Islam. Antisemitic rhetoric is used to garner support, both in the Middle East and within diaspora communities in Europe. In addition to verbal incitement, Islamist extremists have been linked to numerous attacks targeting Jews, such as the 2015 Charlie Hebdo and Hyper Cacher supermarket attacks in France. This form of antisemitism is intertwined with anti-Zionism, often framing the conflict between Israel and Palestine as a religious war.

Timeline of Events

1933-1945 The rise of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust marked the most extreme and deadly peak of antisemitism in history.

1948 The establishment of Israel, provided refuge for many Jewish refugees.

1960s-1980s Soviet state-sponsored antisemitism and rising antisemitism in the Middle East tied to the Israeli-Arab conflict.

2000s-2010s A global resurgence of antisemitism, exacerbated by populism, the rise of far-right movements, online hate, and tensions related to Israel.

2004 International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

2015 The European Commission Coordinator on Combating Antisemitism is appointed to address rising antisemitic incidents in Europe.

2017 U.S. Anti-Semitism Awareness Act.

2020-2022 Antisemitic incidents and violence increased after conspiracy theories about Jewish involvement in the COVID-19 pandemic spread across all platforms of social media

October 2023 Hamas' attacks on Israel and subsequent rise in global antisemitism.

Possible Solutions

Tackling antisemitism requires a multi-faceted approach that balances education, legislation, and international cooperation. Here are some possible solutions that balance these factors:

1. Education and Holocaust Remembrance: Expanding Holocaust education programs in schools worldwide can help combat ignorance about Jewish history and counter antisemitic conspiracy theories. The United Nations and UNESCO could support global initiatives to promote Holocaust education and antisemitism awareness.
2. Strengthening Legal Frameworks: Countries should adopt and enforce comprehensive hate crime laws that specifically target antisemitism. International bodies like the UN could offer guidance on crafting such legislation while providing technical assistance to countries where legal frameworks are weak.
3. Online Regulation and Monitoring: Governments should work with tech companies to enforce stronger regulations on hate speech and antisemitic content online. The implementation of AI-driven monitoring systems could help detect and remove harmful content more efficiently.
4. Promoting Interfaith Dialogue: Encouraging dialogue between Jewish and non-Jewish communities, especially in regions with a history of antisemitism, can build understanding and reduce tensions. International organisations and NGOs can spearhead these efforts by supporting local interfaith programs.

Sources

- Anti-Defamation League. (2023). *Fighting hate for good: Combating antisemitism and hate*. https://www.adl.org/
- Anti-Defamation League. (2023, May 5). *ADL warns of global surge in antisemitism*. France24. https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20240505-adl-warns-of-global-surge-in-anti-semitism
- Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry & Anti-Defamation League. (2023). *Annual report on global antisemitism*. Tel Aviv University. https://english.tau.ac.il/news/antisemitism-report-2024
- European Union. (2021). *EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life (2021–2030)*. https://ec.europa.eu/
- International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. (2016). *Working definition of antisemitism*. https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism
- Irwin Cotler Institute. (2022). *About the Irwin Cotler Institute*. Tel Aviv University. https://en-social-sciences.tau.ac.il/irwin_cotler_institute
- Kershner, I. (2018). *Israel grapples with the rise of antisemitism in the West*. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/
- National Public Radio. (2018, October 27). *Pittsburgh synagogue shooting: What we know about the attack that killed 11*. https://www.npr.org/
- Southern Poverty Law Center. (2023). *Neo-Nazi groups in the U.S.* https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/neo-nazi
- Tel Aviv University. (2023). *Antisemitism worldwide report*. The Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry. https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/kantor/reports ● Time Magazine. (2023). *Why antisemitism is on the rise globally*. https://time.com/6763293/antisemitism/
- Times of Israel. (2023). *In global surge of antisemitism, France stands out with near*

quadrupling of cases. https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-global-surge-of-antisemitism-france-stands-out-with-near-quadrupling-of-cases/

- United States Department of State. (2023). *Combat antisemitism movements symposium: Human rights in crisis - The inter-American role in combating the rise of global antisemitism*. https://www.state.gov/combat-antisemitism-movements-symposium-human-rights-in-crisis-the-inter-american-role-in-combating-the-rise-of-global-antisemitism/
- Deutsche Welle. (2023, February 6). *Antisemitism rising dramatically across the world, report finds*. https://www.dw.com/en/antisemitism-rising-dramatically-across-the-world-report-finds/a-69000456
- Reuters. (2023, October 31). *How surge in antisemitism is af ecting countries around the world*. https://www.reuters.com/world/how-surge-antisemitism-is-affecting-countries-around-world-2023-10-31/
- The Media Line. (2023). *Global report shows steep rise in antisemitism in 2023*. https://themedialine.org/headlines/global-report-shows-steep-rise-in-antisemitism-in-2023/ ● Al Jazeera. (2023, April 13). *What is behind rising antisemitism around the world?* https://www.aljazeera.com/program/upfront/2023/4/13/what-is-behind-rising-antisemitism-around-the-world
- CNN. (2023, October 31). *Antisemitism in an unstable world*. https://edition.cnn.com/2023/10/31/politics/antisemitism-unstable-world-analysis/index.html
- Anti-Defamation League. (2023). *Global antisemitic incidents in the wake of Hamas war on Israel*. https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/global-antisemitic-incidents-wake-hamas-war-israel.