



TEL AVIV אוניברסיטת
UNIVERSITY תל אביב

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**Moshe Kantor Database for the Study of Contemporary
Antisemitism and Racism**

Antisemitism Worldwide 2019 and the Beginning of 2020



This report is dedicated to Dr. Esther Webman of blessed memory, our dear friend and colleague, who passed away abruptly on June 16th 2020.



Trends and Developments in Antisemitic Manifestations, 2019

First came Halle, and then Corona.

Although this report should deal with antisemitism in 2019 we cannot and should not disregard the implications of the coronavirus. It inspired antisemitic expressions that will be addressed here, while taken in proportion with regard to its larger effects.

Executive Summary

- The Coronavirus-inspired antisemitic expressions constitute forms of traditional Jew-hatred. In addition, extreme right activists, who advocate for the spreading of the virus among Jews, and Muslim Middle-Eastern circles, levelled new anti-Jewish accusations.
- 2019 witnessed a rise of 18% in major violent cases compared to 2018 (456 cases in 2019 compared to 387 in 2018), seven Jews were killed, and a rise in most other manifestations, in most countries. At least 53 synagogues (12%) and 28 community centers and schools (6 percent) were attacked. An increase in life-endangering threats (47%) and in attacks on private properties (24 %).
- The return of traditional, classic antisemitic stereotypes as well as the intensification of anti-Israeli and Islamist antisemitism, have contributed to the growing role of the antisemitic discourse that moved from the fringes of society into the mainstream public discourse.
- Despite the adoption of the 2016 IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism by more than 20 countries and by a host of institutes and organizations, it is still widely under-appreciated and not enough in use in order to identify and define antisemitic incidents.
- According to a 2019 FRA report, 41% of Jews aged 16-34 have considered emigrating from Europe because of antisemitism over the last 5 years. Antisemitism is the main factor pushing for emigration, a decision which might be enhanced by the perceptions regarding governments' responses to antisemitism, which are overwhelmingly considered inadequate.
- In Germany, the shooting at the Halle synagogue, on October 9, has become a landmark in the antisemitic activity in Germany that embodies all the present problems. The police registered 1839 antisemitic incidents nationwide, 5 cases a day, mostly perpetrated by neo-Nazis and extreme right-wingers. The role of radical Muslims in everyday harassments is yet to be fully assessed. Additionally, surveys have shown that the knowledge about the Holocaust is diminishing in Germany.

- In the US, a new phenomenon is emerging, one of increased violent antisemitic manifestations, with shooting sprees and numerous casualties, inspired by right wing ideologies as well as by certain groups within the Black Hebrew Israelites and the Nation of Islam.
- Online antisemitism proves to be increasingly dangerous: The perpetrators of major antisemitic attacks in 2019 were active in disseminating antisemitic propaganda online, through international networks of likeminded activists. “What happens on the internet does not stay on the internet” and the networks that propagate hate speech, whatever ideology inspires them, can have a direct impact on the life of groups targeted by various forms of hatred.
- A growing discrepancy between on-the-ground reality and governmental efforts.
- Underreporting by Jews in some countries corroborated by unidentified perpetrators.
- Problems facing the Monitoring Agencies remained unresolved.
- Surveys continue to raise awareness about the surging antisemitism.
- A number of significant achievements during 2019:
 - The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief presented a report to the U.N. General Assembly entitled “Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance,” warning against growing antisemitism inspired by Nazi and Islamist ideologies;
 - The EU established a working group to guide Member States in implementing steps against antisemitism.
 - The German - and Austrian - parliaments defined the BDS as a movement that uses antisemitic tactics, and reached a resolution according to which “the pattern of argument and methods of the BDS movement are anti-Semitic.”
 - The World Holocaust Forum, initiated and supported by Dr. Moshe Kantor, President of the European Jewish congress, held its fifth meeting on January 23, 2020 in Yad Vashem, under the auspices of President Reuven Rivlin, with heads of 52 states coming to declare their commitment to "Remembering the Holocaust, Fighting Antisemitism".

The Coronavirus impact:

Since the beginning of March 2020, we have been receiving disturbing information on accusations of Jews, Zionists and Israelis, as individuals and as a collective, for causing and spreading the Coronavirus. Still, a word of caution is called for - let us put things in proportion:

First, blaming Jews for “why things go wrong,” as stated in the IHRA 2016 Working definition of Antisemitism, is a common practice as old as antisemitism, therefore, these manifestations do not represent a new development. In the past, world and national calamities, natural disasters, plagues, tsunamis, earthquakes, as well as world wars and economic crises were followed by accusations of the Jews for being their main perpetrators. Our task as researchers is to identify exactly the groups and movements that level these charges, the leaders who support or even spread them, and how much public attention is indeed given to them. Let us map the sources of these accusations but at the same time be careful not to readily attribute to Jews the status of a scapegoat in these exceptional times. So far, these accusations appear to be promoted mainly by the extreme rightists, ultra conservative Christian circles, Islamists, and to a minor extent by the far-left, each group according to its narrative and beliefs - Here are a few examples, all from March, just after the Coronavirus broke out and the death toll started rising worldwide:

- The old canard of poisoning water wells, originating in medieval times;¹
- God is spreading the virus in synagogues as a punishment for the rejection of Jesus Christ;²
- Global Jewry and Zionism conspire, as they have always done, to undermine world economic stability in order to facilitate their control over it – a libel which is the essence of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*;³
- Smart Jewish and Israeli initiatives have already led to the production of a vaccine and a medicine to counter the plague, and they will be sold to the world at large for a huge profit.⁴
- A known Italian artist repainted a short while before Passover a 15th century famous illustration of the blood libel that depicts tormented Simon of Trento surrounded by old bloodthirsty Jews – Trento is in the midst of the most Corona stricken area in Northern Italy. Although not directly connected to the Coronavirus crisis, this incident demonstrates once again the recent return of classical antisemitism;⁵

¹ <https://besacenter.org/perspectives-papers/coronavirus-conspiracy-theories-jews/>
https://www.camera.org/article/blood-libels-conspiracy-theories-and-coronaviruses/?fbclid=IwAR14g7JWSe_XLKIWu4t_4X8S_xPCry3Uox4_jf319Ujv5Sp_SrBMmIrOWj0; <https://forward.com/news/441421/anti-semitic-coronavirus-response-thrives-online-even-on-mainstream/?fbclid=IwAR333d3wVjvx56hJg7GOT5wKMJS1C5qs1AwziqTJWNxnJvopKNM55Qrc1Kg>.

² <https://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/rick-wiles-says-god-is-spreading-the-coronavirus-in-synagogues-as-punishment-for-opposing-jesus/>.

³ <https://twitter.com/DrDavidDuke/status/1239953516850040840>;
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/abrambrown/2020/03/16/the-private-goldman-sachs-coronavirus-meeting-thats-setting-the-internet-on-fire/#5f88173050dd>.

⁴ https://twitter.com/Speeder_1488/status/1242318961452232705;
<https://twitter.com/DrDavidDuke/status/1241576803334074368>;
<https://twitter.com/DrDavidDuke/status/1243212272245379074>.

⁵ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/prominent-italian-painter-unveils-a-work-depicting-anti-semitic-blood-libel/>;
<https://www.israellycool.com/2020/03/27/italian-painter-giovanni-gasparro-revives-the-original-blood-libel-against-jews/>.

- Accusations of Israel and Jews by Turkey and Iran, where regime dignitaries and scientists accuse Zionists and Americans of creating the virus as a weapon against the Iranian people and against Muslims in general.⁶

Beside these accusations, the calls to attack Jews have acquired a new dimension. The FBI warned against calls coming from Neo-Nazis and White Supremacists to spread the contagion among Jews, by using quite ugly personal interactions.⁷ Moreover, cyberattacks on Jewish institutions and groups trying to congregate online are a novel trend resulting from the increasing use of different digital social platforms.

A word about proportion: While it is quite tempting to portray the above-mentioned examples as representing or at least reflecting a widely accepted public mood and atmosphere, it is important to note that the pandemic has aroused a variety of other reactions:

- People of Asian descent are attacked and abused in many public places;⁸
- Certain Muslim leaders see in the outbreak of the plague in China a divine punishment against the regime, responsible for oppressing the Muslim Uygur population;⁹
- White supremacists call for the infection of Jews and cops alike;¹⁰
- Radical Imams see the Coronavirus as a God-sent punishment on heathens and infidels;
- The Sunnis consider the high death rate in Iran as a proper retribution for the Shi'a regime's deeds;
- ISIS considers the plague as an outcome of a divine plan to punish all infidels, and forecasts a general weakening of the West which should be exploited in order to renew its major attacks.¹¹
- In some Arab social media, however, a different discourse emerges, expressing hope that Jews will find a solution;¹²

⁶ <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/turkey/.premium-as-coronavirus-cases-spike-in-turkey-so-does-anti-semitism-1.8682725>; <https://www.memri.org/reports/turkish-politicians-press-public-react-coronavirus-virus-serves-zionisms-goals-decreasing>; <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Iran-News/Irans-regime-pushes-antisemitic-conspiracies-about-coronavirus-620212>.

⁷ <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/03/26/white-supremacists-see-coronavirus-opportunity>; <https://abcnews.go.com/US/white-supremacists-encouraging-members-spread-coronavirus-cops-jews/story?id=69737522>.

⁸ <https://berlinspector.com/2020/02/05/europe-animosities-towards-chinese-and-other-asians-1/>; https://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/01/31/news/coronavirus_spunta_cartello_in_cinese_a_fontana_di_trevi_non_entrate_-247246234/?refresh_ce; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51581805>.

⁹ <https://besacenter.org/he/perspective-papers-he/מגפת-הקורונה-בעיני-אנשי-הדת-המוסלמים/>; <https://www.memri.org/reports/nj-friday-sermon-mohammad-abbasi-rutgers-university-faculty-member-coronavirus-divine>.

¹⁰ <https://www.policeone.com/coronavirus-covid-19/articles/fbi-white-supremacists-encouraging-members-to-infect-cops-jews-with-covid-19-j2AAfBOa7l2shUJV/>.

¹¹ <https://thediplomat.com/2020/03/divine-retribution-the-islamic-states-covid-19-propaganda/>.

¹² <https://besacenter.org/he/perspective-papers-he/מגפת-הקורונה-בעיני-אנשי-הדת-המוסלמים/>; <https://twitter.com/EdyCohen/status/1239876492701696001>.

These are but a few examples, since the material keeps flowing in: Conspiracy theories, conceived in many political and religious groups, always thrive in times of world crisis, certainly one of such a global destructive nature as the world is facing now.

Problems facing the monitoring agencies

Before delving into the analysis of numbers and data, let us pinpoint a number of problems facing monitoring agencies, and shed light on the difficulties of understanding antisemitism nowadays.

- First, the tendency we have described and warned against in the recent years has been formally recognized as **a shift of the phenomenon of antisemitism from the fringes of society to the mainstream. This shift is evident in many Western societies and especially in their social media.**¹³ **The return of traditional, classic antisemitic stereotypes as well as the intensification of anti-Israeli and Islamist antisemitism, have contributed to the growing role of antisemitism in the mainstream public discourse.** As a result, the monitoring of incidents, primarily on social media, has become more difficult, and demands a far wider effort and greater sensitivity.

- Second, the underreporting of antisemitic incidents in some countries has been and still remains a serious problem. According to major FRA (Fundamental Rights Agency) surveys most incidents that occur in the E.U. countries, (even up to 75%), remain unreported, and thus do not appear in any statistics or chronology, not even in police or community records.¹⁴ Moreover, the problem of categorization aggravates the difficulty of monitoring, since not all antisemitic cases that are recorded are registered as such. **It should be emphasized that in the Western and Western oriented world, where there are well-established monitoring agencies of antisemitic manifestations, governmental and non-governmental, detailed reporting is a common practice, whereas in some other countries the actual reported cases are far from reflecting the real situation, and in others monitoring is sometimes hardly or non-existent, or not open for research.**

- Third, the still unresolved problem of unidentified perpetrators. Numerous such cases exacerbate the difficulties of the monitoring efforts, let alone the need to apprehend the offenders, bring them to trial and thus increase deterrence. Desecrators of cemeteries and monuments, people who try to set synagogues on fire or beat Jews on the streets, those who spread their hostility via social media under the cover of anonymity, all act in a "hit and escape" method and aggravate the frustration of their victims. **The fact that the majority of perpetrators are not identified and**

¹³ <https://www.dw.com/de/steinmeier-verurteilt-wachsenden-antisemitismus-in-deutschland/a-47842707>; <https://www.srf.ch/news/international/juden-in-deutschland-antisemitismus-in-der-mitte-der-gesellschaft-wird-spuerbarer> ; <https://www.asf-ev.de/infothek/themen/begegnung-mit-dem-judentum/antisemitismus-in-der-mitte-der-gesellschaft/>.

¹⁴ https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-fundamental-rights-report-2019_en.pdf;
https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-antisemitism-overview-2008-2018_en.pdf.

apprehended goes hand in hand with the underreporting in some countries – reporting and filing complaints on such offenses seem pointless. Still, in recent years, local polices have been making increasing efforts to install camera systems where needed, and to better surveil potential perpetrators.

Fourth, **despite the adoption of the 2016 IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism by more than 20 countries and by many institutes and organizations, it is still not put to use widely as a means to identify antisemitic incidents and define them as such.**¹⁵

Fifth, many years of monitoring antisemitism have resulted in cooperation, and in data and opinion exchange among the various agencies and institutes, Jews and non-Jews alike. However, this has still not led to the establishment of common criteria, agreed by all monitoring agencies. **Each community or agency has its own criteria**, and makes its own decisions about sorting out the data related to the number of cases. Therefore, differences may occur between the numbers that reach us from diverse sources, and those that we present (see above the Kantor Center methodology).

2019 – data and numbers

Despite the obstacles described above, following are the findings we have managed to collect from a variety of sources worldwide:

The 18% increase in the number of major violent cases perpetrated in 2019 in comparison to 2018, stands for 456 cases (compared to 387 in 2018). This is a sharp rise, especially in view of the considerable decline in such cases during the years 2015-2017. At least 169 persons (37 percent of the major violent cases), were physically attacked, mostly in the public space - on streets, at schools, near Jewish sites, and some close to or even in their homes – a relatively new phenomenon, already noted in 2018 in France.¹⁶

At least 53 synagogues (12%) and 28 community centers and schools (6%) were attacked. These are protected institutions but unprotected sites suffered more attacks: 77 cemeteries and memorial sites (17%) were desecrated and 129 private properties were vandalized (28%). A large variety of means was used against these targets: fire weapons, mainly in the 15 shooting cases (3%); 21 cases of arson (5%), and 47 cases of cold weapon incidents (10%). The most frequent categories are threats – some of them life endangering – 131 cases (29%), and vandalism in all forms - 242 cases (54%, slightly more than half of the total).

It should be emphasized that the increase is reflected not only in the total of 456 major incidents, but almost in all their parameters: the number of persons attacked was higher in 2019 by almost 30 (a rise of 22%), life-endangering threats by 40 (a rise of 47%!), and 25 more private properties were damaged (a rise of 24%).¹⁷

¹⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/Submissions/JBI-Annex1.pdf>.

¹⁶ <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2019/11/french-jews-fleeing-country/>.

¹⁷ See attached graphs, compiled by Dr. Haim Fireberg of the Kantor Center.

We would like to emphasize, as we did in previous reports, that major violent events are generally reported and recorded as presented here, whereas minor violence incidents - threats and harassments, face-to-face abuses, insults, accusations, shaming or graffiti, are underreported in some countries, and cannot be counted even where detailed reporting is available. On the other hand, a number of newly introduced technological tools have begun operating in the attempt to monitor incidents on social media, in which verbal and visual abuse is rampant. The Antisemitism Cyber Monitoring System (ACMS) developed and operated by the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs in Jerusalem, has spotted in 2019 several million antisemitic posts, written by about a quarter of a million users, in four languages.¹⁸

The role of surveys in promoting awareness

The monitoring of antisemitism relies not only on data collection and reports. Well-conducted surveys are a major tool for raising awareness to the phenomenon and evaluating the situation. In the course of 2018, especially towards its end, tens of thousands of Jews and non-Jews were addressed and expressed their perceptions. A smaller number of major surveys was conducted in 2019 and the beginning of 2020. We will refer to a few major ones, while taking into consideration the limitations of such surveys.

On a general note, **Europe is facing an overall rise in racism and xenophobia. The Council of Europe has sounded the alarm over growing racism and violence against minorities and NGOs in Europe, fed by ultra-nationalism, antisemitism, and anti-Muslim hate.** The alarm was motivated by the 2019 annual report issued by the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). The report, released on February 27 (2020), found that forms of racism and violence are targeted not only against those deemed “different,” but against NGOs that are working for the “others” as well. “Europe is facing a shocking reality: antisemitic, anti-Muslim and other racist hate crimes are increasing at an alarming rate,” warned Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe. “We must stop the dissemination of toxic rhetoric from racist extremists which strikes at the very heart of our democracies.”

According to the report, growing antisemitism is due mainly to widespread rhetoric “by neo-Nazis and political extremists,” but ECRI also observed that this same rhetoric is also used as propaganda by some religious extremists, such as Islamists, and have led in the last ten years to dramatic events in some of the countries.¹⁹

In France where antisemitism continues spiraling, a new survey conducted by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) Paris came up with the following findings:

¹⁸ <http://antisemitism.mda.gov.il/en/projects/antisemitism-cyber-monitoring-system/>.

¹⁹ <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/23103/council-of-europe-launches-alarm-on-growth-in-racist-crimes>.

- **Nearly three-quarters, 73% of the general French public and 72% percent of the Jews, consider antisemitism a problem that affects all French society.**
- 47% of the general population and 67% of the Jewish respondents concede that the level of antisemitism in France is high, compared to 27% and 22% respectively who say it is low.
- 53% of the general population agree that antisemitism has been increasing compared to 18% who thought that it has been decreasing. Among Jews 77% say it has increased and only 12% that it has decreased.

The extent of antisemitic attacks on France's Jewish community, the largest in Europe, is alarming: 70% of French Jews say they have been victims of at least one antisemitic incident in their lifetime; 64% have suffered antisemitic verbal abuse at least once, and 23% have been targets of physical violence on at least one occasion, among which 10% claiming they were attacked several times.²⁰

Another alarming trend is the increasing perception of insecurity among Jews in Europe. The 2019 FRA survey "Young Jewish Europeans: perceptions and experiences of antisemitism"²¹ shows that **41% of Jews aged 16-34 have considered emigrating from Europe because of antisemitism over the last 5 years.**

Likewise, 42% of Jews aged 35-59 and 25% over 60 have considered emigration. Of the first group (16-34 age), 67% contemplate emigrating to Israel, 21% to another country outside of Europe, and only 11% consider remaining in a European country. Similar results also typify the second group aged 35-59, where 64% consider emigrating to Israel, 25% to a country outside of Europe and only 11% consider remaining in Europe. The last group, aged 60 plus, is even more prone to emigrate to Israel (80%).

Antisemitism is the main factor pushing for emigration, a decision which might be enhanced by the perception that governments' responses to antisemitism are overwhelmingly inadequate. 75% of the groups aged 16-34 and 35-59 consider that the state's measures to counter antisemitism are ineffective (roughly half of them are sure that the policies are ineffective and the other half consider such measures "probably" ineffective). In 2018, 70% of the respondents considered governments' measures to combat antisemitism ineffective. In both surveys, people were asked about their perception over the last five years. The changes, in just one year, show a concerning trend of diminishing trust in governmental responses to antisemitism.

Germany and the United States – significant changes and developments

Germany

²⁰ <https://www.ajc.org/news/ajc-paris-survey-french-jews-non-jews-agree-on-scope-of-antisemitism>.

²¹ https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-young-jewish-europeans_en.pdf.

Overall antisemitic manifestations rose during 2019 and in the beginning of 2020 in most of the countries and in most of its forms.²² Yet in terms of recent changes and developments regarding antisemitism, Germany and the United States deserve closer attention.

The shooting at the Halle synagogue door on October 9, the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, was aimed at perpetrating a massacre on the Jews congregated there to pray and has become a landmark of antisemitic activity in Germany. It embodies all the present problems. The killer was apparently no lunatic or “lone wolf.”

He acted, according to his own words written in English as member of a large, international community of antisemites, neo-Nazis and extreme right-wingers. This community includes supporters of the Alternative for Germany - AfD, the right-wing extremist party that, due to its electoral success, has for the first time since its establishment in April 2013, just 7 years earlier, changed the German political landscape. AfD politicians played down and underrated the Halle events and their perpetrator. German intelligence Investigations revealed the attempts of right-wing activists, whose numbers have grown rapidly, to profit from their contacts with the army and the police, even for terrorist goals. **A preliminary police report registered 1839 antisemitic incidents nationwide – 5 cases a day!! - the highest since 2001, mostly perpetrated by neo-Nazis and extreme right-wingers.**²³ Still, this report has been heavily criticized, mainly because it did not emphasize the role of radical Muslims in everyday harassments, so that **there is still a lot of research and monitoring work to be done to assess that role in the perpetration of antisemitic acts as well.**

Surveys have shown that the knowledge about the Holocaust is diminishing in Germany. High school students, and 40% of Germans between the ages 18 to 40 know little or have even never heard about it; between a quarter to a third of the Germans surveyed held antisemitic beliefs and stereotypes; and Israel-related antisemitism, mainly originating from Muslim students and staff, is already becoming normalized among school students and teachers. Young teachers cannot cope; WWII keeps slipping away from the memory of the post-war third generation; family biographies play a smaller role; and children from immigrant families adopt different historical narratives.²⁴

In his speech at Yad Vashem on the occasion of the fifth World Holocaust Forum on January 23, 2020, the German president, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, overshadowed many other statements and moved his listeners with his own: “I wish I could say that Germans have learnt from History, but I can't say that when hatred and agitation are spreading, I can't say that when Jewish children are spat on in the schoolyard.” A few

²² See attached summaries of events according to countries.

²³ [https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/antisemitische-kriminalitaet-hoechststand-bei-straftaten-von-;](https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/antisemitische-kriminalitaet-hoechststand-bei-straftaten-von-;https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-young-jewish-europeans_en.pdf)
https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-young-jewish-europeans_en.pdf.

²⁴ [https://refubium.fu-](https://refubium.fu-berlin.de/bitstream/handle/fub188/22444/Naegel_Kahle_University_teaching_about_the_Holocaust_in_Germany.pdf?sequence=7&isAllowed=y)

[berlin.de/bitstream/handle/fub188/22444/Naegel_Kahle_University_teaching_about_the_Holocaust_in_Germany.pdf?sequence=7&isAllowed=y](https://refubium.fu-berlin.de/bitstream/handle/fub188/22444/Naegel_Kahle_University_teaching_about_the_Holocaust_in_Germany.pdf?sequence=7&isAllowed=y).

days later, **the German minister of foreign affairs, Heiko Maas, expressed fear that Jews might flee due to the rise in antisemitism and violence in his country.**²⁵

Though German high echelons, in the presidency, government and Bundestag, let alone the Chancellery, assume historical responsibility for the fate of the Jewish people, and show their constant commitment to struggling against antisemitism, and although German legislation is one of the best in Europe and BDS activities are widely rejected, the situation in Germany, 75 years after the liberation of Auschwitz, seems gloomy and painful to watch.

The United States

The Jewish communities in the U.S. are adjusting to a situation they have never known before: increasing antisemitic manifestations, violence, shooting sprees and numerous casualties.

In April, in an attack on the Poway synagogue in California, a member of the congregation was killed and three others wounded; in December, a shooting at a kosher supermarket in Jersey City ended up with four casualties, including a police officer; five were wounded in a Hanukkah party at the rabbi of Monsey's home. The ADL registered 780 cases of anti-Semitic incidents in its report for the first six months of 2019, which equal the number of cases during the whole year of 2018. The New York police department announced that half of the hate crimes during January-September 2019 were targeted against Jews.²⁶ The perpetrators are no longer just members of the White Supremacist groups. A new phenomenon has been emerging: assaults by African-American individuals who act on the spur of the moment or are inspired by certain groups within the Black Hebrew Israelites and within the Nation of Islam led by Louis Farrakhan, previously known for his virulent antisemitic views.

Anti-Zionism expressed in antisemitic terms was rampant among left wing activists as well, especially in reaction to the warm relations between the Israeli and American administrations, depicted as Israeli-Jewish deliberate attempts to dominate and manipulate American policies and leaders.

US Campuses. The situation on American campuses has been a major issue in 2019, much like in previous years. This is an issue of utmost importance, because it affects the future American and international leadership raised and educated on these campuses. Youngsters of all the religions and sectors of American society, as well as overseas students, shape their opinions and political inclinations on these campuses. **The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains the main issue on campuses. They trigger the dissemination of antisemitism by BDS groups and other mainly left-wing activists,**

²⁵ <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article205353291/Aussenminister-Maas-Damit-es-nicht-zum-massiven-Wegzug-von-Juden-aus-Deutschland-kommt.html>.

²⁶ ADL release, October 18, 2019, <https://www.adl.org/blog/one-year-after-the-tree-of-life-attack-american-jews-face-significant-threats>.

disguised as a legitimate criticism of Israeli policies. The most recent survey of AMCHA, the organization monitoring and fighting antisemitism on campuses, registered in 2019 some 300 incidents of harassment, vandalism and assault targeting Jewish students in more than 100 campuses. 60% of them were of Israeli-related antisemitic nature. The increase in the number of academic BDS-fueled incidents, is much higher than the number of incidents of discrimination, denigration and suppression of expression against Jewish students in 2018.²⁷

The BDS efforts on campuses, that include targeting the Working Definition of Antisemitism and related questions of Jewish identity, were summarized by the AMCHA director, Tammi Rossman-Benjamin, as follows: "In recent years, disputes surrounding the definition of antisemitism and related issues have dramatically increased and even taken center stage on some campuses. Specifically, the question of whether anti-Zionism is a form of antisemitism and should be treated as such, as well as the related questions of whether Zionism is an implicit part of Jewish identity and who gets to define antisemitism or represent Jewishness, have been discussed and debated with increasing frequency in the campus square, the student senate and conferences halls, often with negative consequences for many Jewish students."²⁸

The BDS movement

During 2019, **BDS activities may not have increased in number, but the BDS movement has certainly gained more prominence on social media and in the public discourse.** A number of factors have contributed to magnify public discourse on the boycott of Israel. First, major boycott campaigns against events taking place in Israel, such as the 2019 Eurovision music contest, and the support of international celebrities for the BDS cause, such as Roger Waters, were instrumental in reaching a wider audience worldwide. Secondly, legal activity against the BDS has intensified, especially in the U.S., both in terms of legislation introduced to counter anti-Israel boycotts and in terms of lawsuits questioning the alleged infringement on free speech. Such initiatives triggered a broader debate that also involved political activists, such as Congresswomen Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib, who were pivotal in publicizing the anti-Israel cause. Finally, Israel's measures to counter BDS activists and supporters made the news when Israel decided to discontinue the visa permit of Omar Shakir, Human Rights Watch director of the Israel-Palestine Desk, for his support of anti-Israel boycotts.

Significant anti-BDS initiatives were advanced by various actors. In Germany, not only student organizations and local authorities have adopted anti-BDS resolutions, but also administrations of cultural events have countered BDS activists. Also worthy of attention is the "Arab Council for Regional Integration" initiative, which was launched by numerous actors from the Arab world, advancing overtures to Israel, stressing the

²⁷ <https://amchainitiative.org/reports>.

²⁸ Tammi Rossman- Benjamin, "A Survey of Antisemitic Activity and Trends on U.S. Campuses in 2019 and the Efforts to Address it," sent to the Kantor center on March 28, 2020, pp.3-4.

importance of cooperation and condemning the political use of the Arab-Israel conflict.²⁹

Online Antisemitism

The phenomenon of **online antisemitism proves to be increasingly dangerous**. The numbers of online antisemitic incidents grow higher and higher each year. This increase also reflects an intensified monitoring of social media and hate speech expressed in digital platforms. It should be noted that what happens online has major consequences in real life. **The perpetrators of the antisemitic attacks in Halle and in Poway were active in disseminating antisemitic propaganda online, through an international network of likeminded extreme right activists**. Likewise, the perpetrators of other racist crimes, such as in the Christchurch, New Zealand, mosque shooting in March 2019, were active in spreading online hate speech. Moreover, online media outlets are increasingly becoming the major source of information especially for the younger generations, with major consequences on their views of the world. Therefore, one can say that **“what happens on the internet does not stay on the internet”** and the networks that propagate hate speech, whatever ideology inspires them, can have a direct impact on the life of groups targeted by various forms of hatred.

Achievements in combating Antisemitism

Several days after the Halle shooting, in mid-October 2019, **Ahmed Shaheed, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, presented a report to the U.N. General Assembly entitled “Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance,” focusing on antisemitism**. “I am alarmed,” he summarized, “by the growing use of antisemitic tropes by white supremacists, including neo-Nazis and members of radical Islamist groups, in slogans, images, stereotypes, and conspiracy theories to incite and justify hostility, discrimination, and violence against Jews.” He expressed concern, or even alarm about what all societies are experiencing due to the increase of antisemitism worldwide. Jew-hatred, he warned, “is toxic to democracy if left unaddressed.”³⁰ **The Kantor Center research was extensively quoted in this report**, which was presented to the U.N. General Assembly by the Special Rapporteur, who spoke for the first time in such clear-cut terms, pinpointing the perpetrators from all sides, and warning against the consequences.

The European Commission Coordinator on Combating Antisemitism, Katharina von Schnurbein, called attention to major surveys conducted by her office, such as the Eurobarometer, which reflected the magnitude of the problem – every second European considers antisemitism as a problem. **Following the survey and the unanimous declaration of all E.U. member states to act against antisemitism and for the security of the Jewish communities, a working group was established to support**

²⁹ See Giovanni Quer’s article on the BDS movement herein.

³⁰ Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, *Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance*, September 20, 2019, accessed March 17, 2020, at <https://undocs.org/A/74/358>.

the member states in implementing this declaration. ³¹ Special envoys on antisemitism, appointed in 14 out of the 16 states (*Länder*) in Germany, work in coordination with Felix Klein, the Federal Commissioner for Jewish Life.³²

The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism has been adopted by more than 20 countries, and by a host of institutes, such as the European Union, the State Department, the Church of England, and the French parliament. It has become a sort of a yardstick for standing against discrimination, a test of values promoting the rights of minorities. **The German and Austrian parliaments defined the BDS as a movement that uses antisemitic tactics, and reached a resolution according to which “the pattern of argument and methods of the BDS movement are anti-Semitic.”** Boris Johnson announced, following his election as prime minister, that he would forbid any bans, alluding to the BDS attempts to ban Israel.³³

A Code of Conduct against illegal hate speech expressions on the web was signed in 2019 with nine internet servers, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and others, who are obliged to scan the material identified as such and to remove it within 24 hours. According to von Schnurbein, 72 percent of such material is already being taken off. The 2019 draft of a French law, inspired by a 2018 German law, stipulates heavy fines on violators if the 24-hour obligation is not respected, and calls for the establishment of a monitoring agency. In a ground-breaking decision, the European Union Court of Justice has enabled states to require a Facebook branch located in a certain country to take off materials in countries beyond its borders.³⁴

The World Holocaust Forum, initiated and supported by Dr. Moshe Kantor, President of the European Jewish Congress, held its fifth meeting on January 23, 2020 in Yad Vashem, under the Auspices of President Reuven Rivlin. It was a tremendous success, with heads of 52 states, declaring a commitment to "Remembering the Holocaust, Fighting Antisemitism"

These are all achievements of the highest importance, yet the question remains when and to what an extent their impact will be felt.

In conclusion, we would like to pose a cardinal question: will 2020 continue the trend observed in 2019 of violence and abusive language against Jews, or that of growing awareness and finding solutions? **Will the Coronavirus crisis result in more accusations of the lowest kind against the Jewish people and its state, or will the**

³¹ A summary of "European Union Activities in Combating Antisemitism in 2019," sent by Katharina von Schnurbein to the Kantor Center on March 20, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/aid_development_cooperation_fundamental_rights/news_and_blogs_related_to_aid_and_fundamental_rights/documents/programme_working_group_on_antisemitism.pdf.

³² <https://www.dw.com/de/antisemitismusbeauftragter-strategien-im-kampf-gegen-judenhass-n%C3%B6tig/a-51229952>.

³³ <https://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/news/german-antisemitism-envoy-felix-klein-warns-against-spread-of-antisemitic-coronavirus-conspiracy-theories-3-4-2020>.

³⁴ See Talia Naamat and Giovanni Quer, "Combating Online Hate-Speech - Recent Developments and Policy Recommendations, on the TAU Kantor Center site.

understanding prevail that the fate of all mankind is intertwined, and that there is no way out of it but in cooperation and mutual support?