

Talking Points for HFAC Hearing on Anti-Semitism in Europe

GENERAL

Outline the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe. Anti-Semitism has always been present in Europe, with levels often rising in correlation to events taking place in the Middle East. Although European countries were generally already witnessing a rise in anti-Semitism prior to Hamas's heinous October 7 attack, the current surge of the last two months has been exponential. European Jews are living in fear as their neighbors espouse anti-Semitic rhetoric and indiscriminately retaliate against Jews everywhere in connection to developments in Israel. Many individuals have inexplicably chosen to lash out against Jews in Europe, shamelessly assaulting and threatening them, and targeting their homes, places of worship, and businesses.

In the wake of the attacks, critics of the Israeli government have particularly played into an anti-Semitic trope comparing Israel and Jews with Nazis, which has roots in the belief that, despite being victims of genocide themselves, Jews are so morally deficient that they cannot recognize when they are committing a genocide against others. Individuals across Europe have waved Nazi flags during protests, depicted Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu with a Hitler mustache, and compared Zionism to Nazism. In Germany, individuals have called on the government to stop appeasing its "German guilt" regarding the Holocaust, claiming that the German government is catering to Jews by supporting Israel given its own history. These undue comparisons demonstrate the degree to which European governments are not doing enough to combat Holocaust distortion and protect the memory of the Holocaust.

These increasing attacks on Jews are troubling, particularly because many Jews have reported feeling like they need to fundamentally change their lifestyle and conceal their Judaism out of concern for their safety and security. This includes removing mezuzot from their doorposts, removing their kippot or other Jewish symbols, or refraining from speaking Hebrew in public. The Berlin Jewish Community's monthly publication, *Judisches Berlin*, has [decided](#) to conceal the full names of bar and bat mitzvahs for their safety. There also appears to be a surge in European Jews who are considering making Aliyah, or moving to Israel. The Israeli Aliyah and Integration Minister has [reported](#) a 149% surge in the number of French Jews considering moving to Israel due to the rise in anti-Semitism. Additionally, governments have been forced to contribute further resources to the physical protection of Jewish communities due to risks of attack.



COUNTRY-SPECIFIC CONTEXTS

France: The Ministry of the Interior [reported](#) that between October 7 and November 14, there has been over 1,500 anti-Semitic incidents. For example, authorities [arrested](#) a high school student for making anti-Semitic death threats to another student at a school near Grenoble. Another individual was [arrested](#) for running a knife along the fencing surrounding a synagogue in Strasbourg. In Paris, a Jewish apartment displaying a mezuzah was [doused](#) in gasoline and set on fire. In another case, a Jewish woman in Lyon was [stabbed](#) outside of her home with a mezuzah. In Paris, Jewish apartments were [marked](#) with Jewish stars.

Germany: The Department for Research and Information on Anti-Semitism (RIAS) has [reported](#) a 320% rise in anti-Semitic incidents in Germany since October 7. For example, immediately following the attacks on October 7, individuals in Berlin passed out treats on the streets in celebration. Also in Berlin, a synagogue was [firebombed](#) with Molotov cocktails. Across the country, individuals have vandalized various Holocaust memorials. At a synagogue event in Mainz commemorating Kristallnacht, a man [set off](#) a firecracker and screamed to intimidate attendees.

United Kingdom: Community Security Trust (CST), a charity group that protects British Jews, recorded 1,747 anti-Semitic incidents across the UK between October 7 and November 29.

The impact on British Jews since the October 7th Hamas attacks has been devastating. The hate crime statistics are staggering.

More than 1,747 incidents recorded in UK including targeting of schools between October 7th and November 29th.

The Community Security Trust (CST) said it had recorded the highest 28-day total since it started counting in 1984.

The Guardian reports that “since 7 October... the figures include 47 assaults, with other incidents including the targeting of children and schools.

In the same period last year there were 160 anti-Semitic incidents, meaning there had been a 537% increase, according to CST data.

The level of incidents triggered by the current crisis is higher than at other times when Israel has been involved in military action. Incidents reported to the CST include highly offensive remarks about Jewish people, covering schools, colleges and even a Holocaust library.



Dave Rich, the director of policy at the CST, said: “The milestone of 1,000 antisemitic incidents since 7 October is a shocking indictment of the level of anti-Jewish hatred happening right now in our country. It is even more appalling when you remember that this wave of antisemitism began as a reaction to a terror attack on Israel that caused the largest loss of Jewish life since the Holocaust.”

The CST suspects the figures are an underestimate and do not include other incidents, including “possible hostile reconnaissance at Jewish locations”.

Most of the incidents were in person, totaling 702, and the remainder online.

In London, 578 anti-Semitic incidents were reported; 188 in Greater Manchester; 37 in West Yorkshire; 31 in Hertfordshire; 18 in the West Midlands; and 17 across Scotland.

More than 60 incidents affected schools and schoolchildren. Other incidents include the ripping down of posters calling for the release of those snatched by Hamas from Israel.

The Metropolitan police had 657 reports of anti-Semitic incidents from 1 October to 1 November this year, compared with 49 incidents in the same period last year.”

A few examples; on October 9, vandals threw a gas canister through the glass doors of a Kosher restaurant in London, where the surrounding street was spray painted with graffiti. In another incident, perpetrators threw red paint on two Jewish schools in London. Also in London, in the Stamford Hill neighborhood, perpetrators threatened to stab a man perceived to be Orthodox Jewish. Jewish university chaplains across the country reported being targeted, threatened, and intimidated.

All this, as British authorities have allowed wave after wave of pro-Hamas protests and the police have been slow to make significant number of arrests.

Italy: In a November 28 speech during the Jerusalem Emergency Summit on Global Anti-Semitism, the National Coordinator for Anti-Semitism Giuseppe Pecoraro [said](#) “Before October 7, there was no real antisemitic phenomenon in Italy. But after October 7, everything changed.” For example, a music school in Mirandola was [vandalized](#) with swastikas and phrases praising Hamas. At a demonstration in Bologna, protesters [held](#) up a sign that said, “you will see Hitler in hell.” Officials found graffiti [calling](#) for the death of Jews at a night club in Milan. Translated from Italian, the graffiti read, “Jews to death, rats we are coming to get you in your sewers” and “Nazi Jews you will pay.” In Genoa, a man [threatened](#) a Rabbi with a screwdriver, shouting at him, “go away, you dirty Zionist...” Also in Milan, a mezuzah was [torn](#) off a Jew’s apartment and replaced with a knife stuck into the doorframe.



Spain: Jews in Spain reported a terrifying rise in anti-Semitism in Spain as thousands attend pro-Palestinian rallies.

Police in Madrid have stepped up their presence outside synagogues and other centres of Jewish life, seeking to protect the estimated 12,000-15,000 Jews living in the capital, after an increase in anti-Semitism across Spain since October 7th

A synagogue in Barcelona cancelled weeks of upcoming events. “We’re scared, particularly for our sons and daughters,” a Jewish resident of Barcelona told El Periodico. “Antisemitism is in the air.”

The Jewish Chronicle reported that Maxo Benalal, secretary general of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Spain (FCJE), said the rise in anti-Semitism across Spain was “truly terrifying”.

Pro-Palestinian protests took place in Madrid, Barcelona, and Pamplona. In Madrid, 10,000 people took part, with leaders of left-wing parties Podemos and Más in attendance.

They demanded the Spanish government “stop showing complicity” with Israel.

Meanwhile, Spain confirmed the murder by Hamas of Maya Villalobi Sinvany, a 19-year-old Spanish-Israeli citizen.

The October 7th shock to Spanish Jewry comes amidst a backdrop of growing anti-Semitism:

A recent Poll taken by the European Union Agency for Human Rights shows respondents from

1. Jews are more loyal to Israel than to [this country/to the countries they live in] 56%
2. Jews have too much power in the business world 45%
3. Jews have too much power in international financial markets 42%
4. Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust 40%
5. Jews don't care what happens to anyone but their own kind 29%
6. Jews have too much control over global affairs 28%
7. Jews have too much control over the United States government 27%
8. Jews think they are better than other people 24%
9. Jews have too much control over the global media 23%
10. Jews are responsible for most of the world's wars 9%
11. People hate Jews because of the way Jews behave 23%

Last week of April 2023.

A synagogue in the Catalan capital run by the Chabad movement was defaced with pro-Palestinian graffiti on Wednesday. The slogan “Because you kill in Palestine” was sprayed in large black letters on the sidewalk at the entrance to the synagogue. Earlier in the month, Barcelona’s historic Maimonides Synagogue was vandalized with the slogans “Free Palestine from the River to the Sea” and “Solidarity with the Palestinian People” painted in large red



letters on the synagogue's outer wall. No word of criticism was forthcoming from the city's leadership.

June 8, 2023

The Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain (FCJE) strongly condemned and characterized as anti-Semitic the president of the Seville Socialist party for labeling a conservative political opponent as a "Nazi Jew."

Sept. 8, 2023

Spain's Language authority still has negative definition for the word "Jew." the Dictionary of the Spanish Language's entry for the word "Jew," the fifth definition listed translates to a "greedy or usurious" person. The entry for the word "judiada" — has two definitions: first, "a dirty trick or an action that is detrimental to someone," and second, "a crowd or group of Jews." The dictionary makes a point of saying that the term originated with antisemitic intent.

The Netherlands: Anti-Semitic incidents have spiked over 800% in the Netherlands since October 7. This shocking statistic only reflects anti-Semitic acts reported to the Center for Information and Documentation on Israel (CIDI), not all incidents filed to police departments and other anti-discrimination bureaus. According to CIDI researcher and policy advisor Hans Wallage, it's not only the numbers that have grown — the range of attacks on Jews has increased as well. ... "It is very worrying that Jews in the Netherlands are held responsible for conflicts taking place in the Middle East," ... "It seems as if Israel is being used to beat Jews," Wallage reflected.

"There are a lot of schools — elementary, high schools, universities — having way more incidents that I didn't see before the 7th of October... 40 % of Dutch school teachers report witnessing at least one anti-Semitic incident in the past year.

" In one school, a Jewish boy was threatened with a knife and hit on the head with a bottle while classmates called him "kankerjood," a Dutch slur meaning "cancer Jew." Another boy was told that his classmates would throw him off a bridge and drown him because he was Jewish. Recurring reports describe students being accosted for wearing Star of David necklaces, being shown the Hitler salute and being told that Hitler "didn't finish his job." The researcher continued, "It is very worrying that Jews in the Netherlands are held responsible for conflicts taking place in the Middle East," read the CIDI report released on Tuesday. "It seems as if Israel is being used to beat Jews."

A University of Utrecht report surveyed on-line anti-Semitism, more than 200,000 messages were found to be anti-Semitic. The percentages were highest on Telegram (36.6 percent), YouTube (24.5 percent) and Twitter (12.6 percent).

A poll commissioned by the Claims Conference in N.Y. found the following about knowledge about the Nazi Holocaust:

Holocaust Denial and Distortion

The number of Dutch adults who believe the Holocaust is a myth was higher than any country previously surveyed; 12% of all respondents believe the Holocaust is a myth or the number of Jews killed has been greatly exaggerated, while 9% are unsure. These numbers are higher among Dutch Millennials and Gen Z, where nearly one-quarter (23%) believe the Holocaust is a myth or the number of Jews killed has been greatly exaggerated, while 12% are unsure.

Misperceptions About Holocaust Death Toll

More than half of all respondents (54% of all respondents and 59% of Millennial and Gen Z) do not know that six million Jews were murdered, and 29% believe that two million or fewer Jews were killed during the Holocaust. Alarming, this number grew to 37% of Millennials and Gen Z who believe that two million or fewer Jews were murdered during the Holocaust.

Neo-Nazism and Antisemitism

22% of Millennials and Gen Z feel it is acceptable for an individual to support neo-Nazi views and 13% are unsure. 12% of all Dutch respondents feel it is acceptable and 11% are unsure.

National Responsibility and Acknowledgement

When asked whether they support or oppose recent efforts by Dutch public figures to acknowledge and apologize for the Netherlands' failure to protect Jews during the Holocaust, only 44% of Dutch Millennials and Gen Z support and half (50%) of all Dutch respondents, support.

Finally, the anti-Israel chant, "From the river to the sea Palestine will be free" which calls for the end of the state of Israel, became officially protected under Dutch law, three weeks after October 7th--striking a blow at the Jewish community who see it as a genocidal and anti-Semitic chant.

Belgium: Poll conducted by EU Agency for Fundamental Right in Belgium; 780 Jews took part about: their feelings for safety in Belgium. Among the findings:

*86 % of the respondents in Belgium consider anti-Semitism to be a very big or a fairly big problem in their country.

*85 % of the respondents in Belgium feel that anti-Semitism has increased over the past 5 years.



Most survey respondents in Belgium say they are regularly exposed to negative statements about Jews. A large majority of respondents in Belgium (83 %) identify the internet as the most common forum for negative statements. The most frequent comment made by non-Jewish people in Belgium is according to the respondents the statement: Israelis behave “like Nazis” towards the Palestinians (64 %)

*Nearly one third of the respondents have considered emigrating (42 %) in the past five years because they did not feel safe as a Jew in Belgium

*A majority of respondents (72 %) believe that the Belgian government’s efforts to combat anti-Semitism are not effective.

The President of the Coordination Center of Jewish Organisations in Belgium (CCOJB), Yves Oschinsky, writes, “Belgium is a laboratory which perhaps sets out the terms of a possible future for Jews in the diaspora: choosing between emigrating to Israel, a country without anti-Semitism, but at war, or remaining in countries at peace, but increasingly more hostile to Jews.”

There have been 231 reports of anti-Semitic incidents solely in Flanders since October 7, 2023, five cases of physical, and 100 reports of verbal aggression. “There has also been an increase in provocative behavior, such as shouting political slogans at children. And of course, there is a huge amount of antisemitism online, from people finding threats in their mailbox to hateful comments on social media.”

Examples:

November 24, 2023-- 85 graves were vandalized in the Jewish section of the cemetery in Marcinelle, part of the municipality of Charleroi. The vandals stole some Stars of David from the tombs. No non-Jewish graves were vandalized, and no writings or graffiti were left behind in the non-Jewish section.

Additional statement about role of United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). I currently serve as USCIRF’s Chair.

What is USCIRF’s Role in Monitoring and Reporting on Anti-Semitism?

As an independent, bipartisan federal agency, USCIRF offers a unique resource to Congress. USCIRF’s mandate is to assess religious freedom violations and progress abroad and to make policy recommendations to the president, secretary of state, and Congress on how U.S. foreign policy can more effectively promote this fundamental freedom.

USCIRF has significant concerns about religious freedom conditions abroad, including violations of freedom of religion or belief perpetrated or tolerated by governments and entities not covered in its Annual Report. However, given its current funding level of only \$3.5 million, USCIRF can only focus on select countries and topics, generally those countries with the worst



religious freedom conditions. For example, USCIRF's 2023 Annual Report included 28 countries and highlighted topics such as anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim hatred, blasphemy laws, anti-conversion laws, and transnational repression.

With that background, my response to the question is absolutely USCIRF should be doing more in monitoring and reporting on anti-Semitism. The Senate confirmed Deborah E. Lipstadt, in March 2022, as Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism and elevated the position's rank to ambassador level for the first time, sending a strong message to the world that the U.S. government is committed to combatting anti-Semitism. However, much greater focus is required. The egregious nature of attacks, level of incitement, and other violations being committed by foreign governments and nonstate actors against Jews are more than one office within the State Department can handle.

It is a moral imperative that the U.S. government unflinchingly confront anti-Semitism without reservations and hold perpetrators accountable. With additional funding and permanent authorization, USCIRF would be better positioned to help ensure that both promoting religious freedom abroad for all and combating anti-Semitism are high priorities within U.S. foreign policy.