



Addressing the Scourge of Anti-Semitism in Europe

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Chairman Kean, Ranking Member Keating, distinguished committee Members, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the potential terrorist implications of the sharp rise in antisemitism in Europe.¹

Last week I visited Israel and saw firsthand the horrific results of the massacre Hamas carried out targeting Israeli communities on October 7. I bore witness to the remnants of Kfar Aza and the atrocities Hamas executed there. I was already familiar with the grotesque violence Hamas committed, but I felt the need to see it for myself. It was sickening. No wonder some Hamas officials have tried to distance themselves from the group's barbarity.² Israeli forces have since taken the fight to Hamas in the Gaza Strip, vowing to dismantle the Hamas governance project and deny the group the ability to carry out such attacks targeting Israel in the future.

Hamas, for its part, has vowed to "repeat the October 7 attack, time and again, until Israel is annihilated."³ In retrospect, it is clear that Hamas never prioritized attending to the needs of Palestinians in Gaza but rather leveraged control of the territory as part of a long game aimed at destroying Israel.⁴ This war, which Israel did not start and did not want, was the war Hamas always wanted.⁵ What Hamas could not have anticipated is that even after carrying out such a brutal attack the group would enjoy vocal support in pockets of antisemitic protests around the world.

There can be no doubt that the Hamas governance and terrorist infrastructure project in Gaza must be dismantled. Embedded within densely populated communities, and using civilians as human shields, Hamas actively seeks to put Palestinians in harm's way in an effort to frustrate Israeli military progress, with the callous goal of increasing harm to Palestinians in an effort to engender public support for Hamas and the Palestinian cause. As Hamas leader Haniyeh said in the days after Israel began its retaliatory attacks on Gaza that have resulted in thousands of deaths, "[w]e are the ones who need this [Palestinian] blood, so it awakens within us the revolutionary spirit, so it awakens within us resolve, so it awakens within us the spirit of challenge, and [pushes us] to move forward."⁶

As Israel fights to secure the release of Israeli citizens taken hostage and to dismantle Hamas terrorist capabilities in Gaza, the images of the October 7 massacre have been replaced on news channels and our smartphone screens by images of the war in Gaza. Hamas started this war, and Israel must finish it while doing all it can to minimize civilian casualties; however, it should be noted that wars are always

¹ The author thanks Washington Institute research assistant Delaney Soliday for her help preparing this written testimony.

² Matthew Levitt and Delaney Soliday, "Putting the Hamas Massacre, and Hamas Denials, in Context," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 25, 2023, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/putting-hamas-massacre-and-hamas-denials-context>.

³ "Hamas Official Ghazi Hamad: We Will Repeat the October 7 Attack, Time and Again, Until Israel is Annihilated," Special Dispatch No. 10923, MEMRI, November 1, 2023, <https://www.memri.org/reports/hamas-official-ghazi-hamad-we-will-repeat-october-7-attack-time-and-again-until-israel>

⁴ Devorah Margolin and Matthew Levitt, "The Road to October 7: Hamas' Long Game, Clarified," *CTC Sentinel*, October/November 2023, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/road-october-7-hamas-long-game-clarified>.

⁵ Matthew Levitt, "The War Hamas Always Wanted," *Foreign Affairs*, October 11, 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/israel/war-hamas-always-wanted>.

⁶ "Hamas Leader Ismail Haniyeh: We Need The Blood Of Women, Children, And The Elderly Of Gaza – So It Awakens Our Revolutionary Spirit," Special Dispatch No. 10911, MEMRI, October 27, 2023, <https://www.memri.org/reports/hamas-leader-ismail-haniyeh-we-need-blood-women-children-and-elderly-gaza-%E2%80%93-so-it-awakens>.

terrible and in this case, one party to the war goes to great lengths not to protect civilians, but to expose them to violence. Hamas embeds itself within the civilian population – in and under hospitals, mosques, and schools – and uses civilians as human shields.

The Hamas attacks and the war that followed have sparked protests around the world. Most of these people are protesting the war and casualties in Gaza, but some protest Israel’s right to exist or laud Hamas and the October 7 attacks. An alarming number have crossed from protesting Israeli actions to targeting Jews in general. In the weeks since October 7th, countries around the world have seen a staggering rise in antisemitic incidents, ranging from the use of hate speech to threats and intimidation to the use of violence against Jewish or Israeli targets. In the United Kingdom, the Community Security Trust reported a 546 percent increase in antisemitic incidents in the period between October 7 and November 22, 2023 as compared to that same period of time in 2022.⁷ Germany’s Federal Association of Departments for Research and Information on Antisemitism recorded a total of 994 antisemitic incidents in the first 34 days of the war – resulting in an average of 29 incidents per day compared to the 2022 average of seven incidents per day.⁸ France has recorded 1,518 antisemitic incidents since October 7, resulting in 571 arrests – a staggering number when compared with the country’s 2022 aggregate incident count of 436.⁹

According to information from a dataset maintained by my colleague, Dr. Aaron Zelin at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 58 antisemitic and Islamophobic violent incidents and threats resulting in legal or police action took place around the world since October 7, including 13 in Europe. In Germany, for example, a Berlin synagogue was firebombed,¹⁰ there was an attempted ramming of a pro-Israel demonstration,¹¹ as well as the attempted arson of a synagogue in Erfurt.¹² As a result of this rise in antisemitism, Israel’s National Security Council recently issued and upgraded travel warnings for over a dozen countries– including the United Kingdom, France, and Germany – warning Israeli citizens to “take additional precautions” while traveling in those countries.¹³

⁷ “Antisemitic incidents – 22 November update,” *Community Support Trust Blog*, November 22, 2023, <https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2023/11/22/antisemitic-incidents-22-november-update>.

⁸ “Antisemitic reactions to October 7,” *Bundesverband der Recherche und Informationsstellen*, November 27, 2023, <https://report-antisemitism.de/en/bundesverband-rias/>.

⁹ “Anti-semitic acts in France rise to 1,500 since October 7,” *Le Monde*, November 14, 2023, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/11/14/anti-semitic-acts-in-france-rise-to-1-500-since-october-7_6253987_4.html.

¹⁰ “Berlin synagogue firebombed, with antisemitism spiking as Gaza war rages,” *Times of Israel*, October 18, 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/berlin-synagogue-firebombed-with-antisemitism-spiking-as-gaza-war-rages/>.

¹¹ “German police arrest Islamist suspected of planning truck attack on pro-Israel rally,” *Times of Israel*, October 24, 2023, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/german-police-arrest-islamist-suspected-of-planning-truck-attack-on-pro-israel-rally/.

¹² “Libyan arrested after fire attack on synagogue,” *Aussiedlerbote*, November 12, 2023, <https://aussiedlerbote.de/en/libyan-arrested-after-fire-attack-on-synagogue/>.

¹³ “Israel issues severe travel warnings to dozens of countries amid rising antisemitism,” *Times of Israel*, December 4, 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-issues-severe-travel-warnings-to-dozens-of-countries-amid-rising-antisemitism/>.

Rise in the use of hate speech & symbols, threats & intimidation, and violence

More than an increase in the overall prevalence of antisemitism, individuals, entities, and groups have used October 7 to galvanize their messages of hate, often resorting to the use of hate speech and symbols, threats and intimidation, and violence. A number of protesters have displayed overtly pro-Hamas or antisemitic symbolism at pro-Palestine protests. Two men are wanted by British police after sporting green Hamas headbands at a November 11 protest in London;¹⁴ Metropolitan Police detained four individuals caught distributing “literature featuring a swastika inside a Star of David” at London’s National March for Palestine on November 5;¹⁵ and two women were photographed wearing photographs of paragliders taped to the backs of their jackets a week after Hamas’s October 7 attack.¹⁶ On October 15, German police broke up a pro-Hamas celebration led by Samidoun,¹⁷ a front organization for the U.S. and E.U.-designated terrorist group the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which was banned from operating in the country less than a month later.¹⁸ The use of hate speech and antisemitic imagery not only perpetuates the virulent hatred that fueled Hamas’s attack on Israel but can and does result in acts of real-world violence against Israeli and Jewish targets.

Antisemitic activity has also occurred across Europe outside of protests and demonstrations. For example, the morning of October 31, more than 200 blue Stars of David were found spray painted across Paris and its surrounding suburbs.¹⁹ That incident was subsequently tied to a pro-Russia destabilization campaign, in a sign that rogue regimes are taking advantage of tensions surrounding the Hamas war to try to sow discord within democratic societies.²⁰ Ilkka Salmi, the European Union Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, recently noted his concerns that the Gaza crisis is producing tensions in Europe which could lead to polarization “which could then, in turn, have an impact of terrorism and the overall security situation.”²¹

¹⁴ Mark Townsend, Tobi Thomas, Rajeev Syal, and Toby Helm, “Hundreds of thousands rally for Gaza in London as police arrest far-right protesters,” *The Guardian*, November 11, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/11/hundreds-of-thousands-rally-for-gaza-in-london-as-police-arrest-far-right-protesters>.

¹⁵ Sylvia Hui, “Tens of thousands march in London calling for a permanent cease-fire in Gaza,” *Associated Press*, November 25, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/london-israel-palestinians-protests-70dbc6345ce40c5311f9bd2b943328d2>.

¹⁶ Lydia Patrick, “Police appeal to find women at pro-Palestine march who wore paraglider pictures after Hamas massacre,” *The Independent*, October 15, 2023, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/palestine-protests-paraglider-israel-hamas-b2429995.html>.

¹⁷ “German police broke up pro-Hamas celebrations,” *Arab News*, October 8, 2023, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2387606/world>.

¹⁸ “Germany bans pro-Hamas activity, dissolves group that celebrated attack on Israel,” *Times of Israel*, November 2, 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/germany-bans-pro-hamas-activity-dissolves-group-that-celebrated-attack-on-israel/>.

¹⁹ Aurelien Breeden, “France links conversation in Russian to Star of David graffiti,” *New York Times*, November 8, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/08/world/europe/star-david-graffiti-france.html>.

²⁰ Nicolas Camut and Laura Kayali, “Stars of David tags in Paris linked to pro-Russia interference: reports,” *Politico*, November 8, 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/stars-of-david-painted-in-paris-part-of-russian-interference-reports/>.

²¹ Paul Cruickshank, “A View from the Foxhole: Ilkka Salmi, EU Counterterrorism Coordinator,” *CTC Sentinel*, October/November 2023, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/a-view-from-the-ct-foxhole-ilkka-salmi-eu-counter-terrorism-coordinator/>.

To cite just a few other cases: The Jewish Cultural Centre in Ljubljana, Slovenia – home to a Holocaust museum and synagogue – was vandalized with a black swastika on November 16.²² Antisemitism in Europe also escalates beyond the use of derogatory speech and antisemitic symbols to include more serious threats and use of outright violence. Italian rabbi Haim Fabrizio Cipriani was threatened on November 27 by a homeless man wielding a screwdriver who shouted, “Go away, you dirty Zionist f**k,” potentially in response to his wearing a kippah on the streets of Genoa, Italy.²³ The Italian NGO Osservatorio Antisemitismo reported on November 13 that a mezuzah was stolen from the doorpost of a Jewish person’s apartment in Milan and a knife left in its place.²⁴ The use of hate symbols, threats, and violence often overlap; for example, a swastika was found spray painted on a Jewish woman’s door after she was stabbed by a man in Lyon on November 3.²⁵

‘Days of rage’ and violent protests

Some protestors have adopted radical pro-Palestinian symbols and slogans, including “from the river to the sea,” a phrase that by definition calls for the eradication of the state of Israel, not the creation of a Palestinian state living in peace with Israel.²⁶ Protesters at a London demonstration on November 11 chanted, “There is only one solution – intifada, revolution!” as they called for an “intifada from London to Gaza.”²⁷ Demonstrators in Washington, D.C. on November 4 insisted that Palestinians should resist Israel “by any means necessary,” a phrase which condones the use of terrorism, and brandished signs depicting common antisemitic tropes such as, “History repeats itself. Israel = Nazis.”²⁸

In the days following October 7, a number of Hamas and other terrorist leaders called for protests across the world. Khaled Meshaal, a senior Hamas official currently residing in Qatar, stated, “[We must] head to the squares and streets of the Arab and Islamic world on Friday [October 13],” adding that “you all know your responsibility.”²⁹ This call for a global ‘day of rage’ sparked widespread fear

²² “Jewish centre in Lubljana defaced with swastika,” *The Slovenia Times*, November 16, 2023, <https://sloveniatimes.com/39990/jewish-centre-in-ljubljana-defaced-with-swastika>.

²³ “Italian rabbi faces death threats in antisemitic assault on street in Genoa,” *Times of Israel*, November 28, 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/italian-rabbi-faces-death-threats-in-antisemitic-assault-on-street-in-Genoa/>.

²⁴ “Rubata la mezuzah,” *Osservatorio Antisemitismo*, November 13, 2023, <https://www.osservatorioantisemitismo.it/episodi-di-antisemitismo-in-italia/milano-vandalismo-e-minacce/>.

²⁵ Shril Sitbon, “Jewish woman stabbed in France, swastika daubed on door; police suspect antisemitic motive,” *Haaretz*, November 4, 2023, <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/2023-11-04/ty-article/french-police-hunt-suspect-in-stabbing-of-jewish-woman/0000018b-9bbd-d8a6-a38b-dffed3a0000>.

²⁶ Karoun Demirjian and Liam Stack, “In Congress and on Campuses, ‘From the River to the Sea’ Inflames Debate,” *New York Times*, November 12, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/09/us/politics/river-to-the-sea-israel-gaza-palestinians.html>.

²⁷ James Beal and Charlie Parker, “Inside the pro-Palestinian groups calling for a violent end to Israel,” *The Times*, November 11, 2023, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/inside-pro-palestinian-groups-calling-violent-end-israel-pslssqnhd>.

²⁸ “At Anti-Israel March in D.C., Explicit Expressions of Support for Terror and Antisemitism,” Anti-Defamation League, November 4, 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/anti-israel-march-dc-explicit-expressions-support-terror-and-antisemitism>.

²⁹ “Former Hamas chief calls for protests, neighbors to join war against Israel,” *Reuters*, October 11, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/former-hamas-chief-calls-protests-neighbours-join-war-against-israel-2023-10-11/>.

across the world, particularly in Jewish communities. A number of Jewish day schools in the United States closed their doors and children of Israeli diplomats were warned not to attend public schools for their own safety.³⁰ Security concerns were echoed across Europe in the immediate aftermath of October 7 as a number of schools across London canceled classes on Meshaal’s scheduled ‘day of rage,’³¹ France banned pro-Palestine protests in response to a rise in antisemitic incidents,³² and Jewish homes were graffitied with Stars of David in Berlin.³³ Authorities are concerned that stoking people’s emotions can lead to acts of terrorism. In the words of one European counterterrorism official, “I am very concerned about acts of terrorism against Jewish targets in Europe perpetrated by individuals or groups who sympathize with Hezbollah or Hamas or who are inspired by them but have no direct connection with them.”³⁴

The weeks since the October 7 attacks have also seen an organized effort by violent extremist and terrorist organizations to foment violence and inspire terrorist attacks around the world.

Jihadist and right-wing extremist calls for violence post-October 7

Meshaal’s vocal support for October 7 and calls for mobilization were also echoed by other terrorist groups. For example, in late November, al Qaeda’s media arm, al-Sahab, published an article calling on people in the Arab world and in the West to carry out widespread civil disobedience in an effort to topple governments and “liberate Palestine.” The author called on Muslims to show strength, overthrow regional leaders, and punish the Western “Zio-crusaders” by “every means possible.”³⁵ A statement released by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) three weeks after Hamas’s assault on Israel went a step farther than calling for widespread protests; the group stated, “We call on our Muslim brethren everywhere, in the West and the East, in Muslim and non-Muslim lands, to kill every Jew, American, and British citizen...”³⁶ AQAP leader Sheikh Khalid Omar Batarfi described October

³⁰ Haley Cohen, Gabby Deutch, and Marc Rod, “Jewish institutions on edge after Hamas call for worldwide ‘Day of Rage,’” *Jewish Insider*, October 13, 2023, <https://jewishinsider.com/2023/10/hamas-day-of-rage-jewish-schools-synagogues-u-s/>.

³¹ Louisa Clarence-Smith and Will Bolton, “Jewish schools in London shut amid Hamas call for day of jihad,” *The Telegraph*, October 13, 2023, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/10/13/jewish-schools-shut-london-security-hamas-day-of-jihad/>.

³² Angela Charlton and Jeffrey Schaeffer, “France has banned pro-Palestinian protests and vowed to protect Jews from resurgent antisemitism,” *Associated Press*, October 12, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/france-israel-palestinians-war-protests-banned-5626bafec480b32226dcb97d0c92a553>.

³³ Sam Sokol, “Antisemitic incidents increase in Europe, Israeli Embassy in Berlin says: ‘Reminiscent of Third Reich,’” *Haaretz*, October 15, 2023, <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/2023-10-15/ty-article/.premium/antisemitism-increases-in-europe-israeli-embassy-in-berlin-reminiscent-of-third-reich/0000018b-32b9-d450-a3af-7bbdfa520000>.

³⁴ Paul Cruickshank, “A View from the Foxhole: Ilkka Salmi, EU Counterterrorism Coordinator,” *CTC Sentinel*, October/November 2023, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/a-view-from-the-ct-foxhole-ilkka-salmi-eu-counter-terrorism-coordinator/>.

³⁵ “Al-Qaeda writer urges mass ‘civil disobedience’ in support of Gaza,” *BBC Monitoring*, November 29, 2023, <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/c204szzz>.

³⁶ “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula leader Batarfi approves the ‘inspiring’ Hamas attack, encourages killing of ‘Jews, Americans, and British’ citizens, claims 9/11 attacks are the ‘best example’ to deter U.S.,” *Middle East Media Research Institute*, October 30, 2023, <https://www.memri.org/jttm/al-qaeda-arabian-peninsula-leader-batarfi-approves-inspiring-hamas-attack-encourages-killing>.

7 as an event that would “inspire the current generation as well as many to follow.”³⁷ In the two weeks following Hamas’s attack on Israel, al-Qaeda and Islamic State affiliates around the globe issued a series of statements calling for their followers to conduct terrorist attacks on Israeli, U.S., and Jewish targets.³⁸

Counterterrorism officials have taken notice. In his opening statement before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs on October 31, FBI Director Wray discussed this threat, noting that the Islamic State has specifically called for “its followers to attack Jewish communities in the United States and Europe.”³⁹ A senior Israeli National Security Council official confirmed this claim, stating that international jihadi groups like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, as well as Iran and its network of proxies, have already made a number of attempts to “harm Israeli destinations and Jews around the world.”⁴⁰

Islamist groups are by far not the only terrorist organizations to take advantage of October 7 to advocate for violence, hatred, and racism. Far-right neo-Nazi groups began creating antisemitic propaganda within hours of Hamas’s incursion into Israel, drawing positive comparisons between Hamas and the Nazis and even creating a hybrid Palestinian-Nazi flag.⁴¹ Accelerationists have been using October 7 to radicalize and recruit new members who believe that Jews are an existential threat to white people.⁴² A security analysis conducted by the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution found that October 7 galvanized a wide variety of extremist groups based in Germany from the far-left Samidoun (tied to the Palestinian Marxist terrorist group PFLP) to the far-right Der Dritte Weg (The Third Path), as groups from both ends of the ideological spectrum took to social media to spread disinformation and advocate for violent action.⁴³ Director Wray noted in his December 5 testimony that the FBI is “working around the clock” to counter potential threats by the “rogues’

³⁷ “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula leader Batarfi approves the ‘inspiring’ Hamas attack, encourages killing of ‘Jews, Americans, and British’ citizens, claims 9/11 attacks are the ‘best example’ to deter U.S.,” *Middle East Media Research Institute*, October 30, 2023, <https://www.memri.org/jtm/al-qaeda-arabian-peninsula-leader-batarfi-approves-inspiring-hamas-attack-encourages-killing>.

³⁸ Jason Burke, “Al-Qaida and IS call on followers to strike Israeli, US and Jewish targets,” *The Guardian*, October 22, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/22/al-qaida-and-is-call-on-followers-to-strike-israeli-us-and-jewish-targets>.

³⁹ Christopher Wray, “Director Wray’s Opening Statement to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs,” United States Senate, October 31, 2023, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/speeches/director-wrays-opening-statement-to-the-senate-committee-on-homeland-security-and-governmental-affairs>.

⁴⁰ Lahav Harkov, “Israelis warned against travel abroad, with rising terror threats,” *Jewish Insider*, December 4, 2023, <https://jewishinsider.com/2023/12/israelis-travel-abroad-terror-threats-alert-level/>.

⁴¹ Dr. Liram Koblenz-Stenzler, Uri Klempner, and Kate Chavez, “Countering Hate in the Digital Age: Analyzing Far-Right Extremist Responses to the Israel-Hamas War,” *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism*, October 2023, https://ict.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Koblenz-Stenzler-Klempner-Chavez_Countering-Hate-in-the-Digital-Age_2023_10_22-2.pdf.

⁴² Katherine Keneally and Zoe Manzi, “Hate united: Neo-Nazi accelerationist support for Hamas,” *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, November 13, 2023, https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/hate-united-neo-nazi-accelerationist-support-for-hamas/.

⁴³ Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Auswirkungen des Terrorangriffs der Hamas gegen Israel auf die Sicherheitslage in Deutschland,” November 29, 2023, <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/DE/2023/presseinformation-2023-8-nahost.html>.

gallery” of terrorist organizations calling for attacks against American interests.⁴⁴ Based on my own conversations with counterterrorism officials, it is clear his counterparts in Europe are doing much the same.

Inspired plots and lone actor terrorism

The most pressing security challenge in the West to emerge from October 7 and the resulting war is the threat of inspired plots and lone actor terrorism. Testifying before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, FBI Director Wray noted that, “...the actions of Hamas and its allies will serve as an inspiration, the likes of which we haven’t seen since ISIS launched its so-called caliphate years ago.”⁴⁵ Director Wray later stated in a hearing before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary that, “Our [the FBI’s] top concern stems from lone offenders inspired by – or reacting to – the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict, as they pose the most likely threat to Americans, especially Jewish, Muslim, and Arab-American communities in the United States.”⁴⁶ This concern is echoed by European security officials, as well. EU Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson warned, “With the war between Israel and Hamas, and the polarization it causes in our [European] society, with the upcoming holiday season, there is a huge risk of terrorist attacks in the European Union.”⁴⁷

There have already been several lone actor terrorist plots in Europe since October 7. On October 24, Belgian police arrested a 23-year-old suspect who claimed he wanted to “die like a martyr by explosion” after his entire family was killed in Gaza.⁴⁸ Another man was arrested in Germany the same day in an unrelated case for allegedly plotting to ram a pro-Israel demonstration in Essen after joining the Islamic State in 2013 and serving five years in a German prison.⁴⁹

And while many people associate the tactic of inspiring lone actors or small groups to carry out acts of terrorism with Sunni jihadist groups like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, Iran and its proxies have actively created online networks aimed at inspiring Shia jihadist attacks as well.

⁴⁴ Rebecca Beitsch, “FBI chief: ‘We’re working around the clock’ to disrupt potential attacks inspired by Hamas,” *The Hill*, December 5, 2023, <https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/4343187-fbi-chief-were-working-around-the-clock-to-disrupt-potential-attacks-inspired-by-hamas/>.

⁴⁵ Christopher Wray, “Director Wray’s Opening Statement to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs,” Federal Bureau of Investigation, October 31, 2023, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/speeches/director-wrays-opening-statement-to-the-senate-committee-on-homeland-security-and-governmental-affairs>.

⁴⁶ Christopher Wray, “Statement of Christopher A. Wray, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Before the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, at a Hearing Entitled ‘Oversight of the Federal Bureau of Investigation,’” United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary, December 5, 2023, https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2023-12-05_-_testimony_-_wray.pdf.

⁴⁷ “Senior EU official warns of huge security risk in Europe over Christmas as Israel-Hamas war rages,” *Associated Press*, December 5, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/eu-france-terrorism-attacks-christmas-europe-israel-hamas-c2761686b801086ba51970fc70960510>.

⁴⁸ Carmen Schelkens, “Politie pakt Palestijn op die met aanslag dreigde,” *Het Laatste Nieuws*, October 25, 2023, <https://www.hln.be/brussel/politie-pakt-palestijn-op-die-met-aanslag-dreigde~a9a8c999/?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.vice.com%2F>.

⁴⁹ “Man arrested in Germany on suspicion of planning to ram pro-Israel event with truck,” *Times of Israel*, October 24, 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/man-arrested-in-germany-on-suspicion-of-planning-to-ram-pro-israel-event-with-truck/>.

In a report discussing the emergence of lone Shia actors in the United States, the National Counterterrorism Center described the occurrence of a “catalyzing event” as a risk factor for an increase in lone actor terrorist attacks.⁵⁰ October 7 certainly qualifies as such an event, resulting in a staggering increase in antisemitism around the globe and inspiring terrorist groups to mobilize their followers toward violence. In fact, a senior Israeli National Security Council official told reporters that “many terrorist attacks on Jewish and Israeli targets around the world” have already been thwarted since October 7.⁵¹

In June 2023, I co-authored a Washington Institute study with Moustafa Ayad, Executive Director for Africa, the Middle East and Asia at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, that dug into Iranian efforts to inspire Shia homegrown violent extremist attacks.⁵² We documented the existence of a digital ecosystem nurtured by the Iranian government, comprising the work of numerous state-run media outlets and Middle East militias (published in many languages) that have long circumvented efforts to moderate their content, openly attack regime opponents, and seed Tehran-approved tropes across a range of platforms. One such “volunteer-run” network has managed twenty websites supportive of Iran, its proxies, its clerical leadership, and Iran-linked clerics in Pakistan, and is building archives, news sites, and chat forums. Ten of the sites are currently functional and accessible, while the other ten are inaccessible or defunct. One of its most prominent websites outlines its “beliefs” via a thirteen-point statement in the “About Us” section. One of the points reads: “We strongly and categorically oppose, condemn, and are enemies of every brand of ‘Islam’ that is promoted and spread by the United States of America and the United Kingdom.” The site has 238 pages of digital posters asserting, among other things, that the United States and Britain have “cultivated terrorism” and that Europe helped “nurture” Islamic State foreign fighters. The site also includes several professionally edited videos about Qasem Soleimani.⁵³ The resulting echo chambers, spanning digital platforms, champion martyrdom as noble and theologically sanctioned and could potentially precipitate real-world harm—especially in the wake of the October 7 attack and the war that followed.

Conclusion

Recent events have led counterterrorism analysts to assess the potential for the October 7 Hamas attacks and the war that followed to usher in a new wave of international terrorist threats to the West.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ National Counterterrorism Center, “Envisioning the Emergence of Shia HVE Plotters in the US,” Office of the Director of National Intelligence, October 16, 2018, <https://publicintelligence.net/nctc-shia-extremist-emergence/>.

⁵¹ Lahav Harkov, “Israelis warned against travel abroad, with rising terror threats,” *Jewish Insider*, December 4, 2023, <https://jewishinsider.com/2023/12/israelis-travel-abroad-terror-threats-alert-level/>.

⁵² Moustafa Ayad and Matthew Levitt, “Is Iran Looking to Inspire Shia Homegrown Violent Extremist Attacks?” The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 2023, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/6510>.

⁵³ Moustafa Ayad and Matthew Levitt, “Is Iran Looking to Inspire Shia Homegrown Violent Extremist Attacks?” The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 2023, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/6510>.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Tore Hamming, “The Beginning of a New Wave? The Hamas-Israel War and the Terror Threat in the West,” *CTC Sentinel*, October/November 2023, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-beginning-of-a-new-wave-the-hamas-israel-war-and-the-terror-threat-in-the-west/>.

In the words of EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator Ilkka Salmi, “what has happened in Israel [on October 7] will have an impact on the security situation also in Europe. We have to stay vigilant.”⁵⁵ This is especially true given the staggering spike in antisemitism in Europe and around the world, as Mr. Salmi goes on to note: “I also think that there is a possibility that pro-Palestinian demonstrations, notably unauthorized ones, could give rise to violence against real or perceived supporters of Israel, including Jewish citizens and their institutions. E.U. Member State governments should do all they can to protect European Jews from such violence.”⁵⁶

The good news is that European officials acknowledge the intersection of antisemitism and terrorism in Europe. The bad news is that Europe – and the world – faces a significant threat from both antisemitic and terrorist activities in the weeks and months to come.

⁵⁵ Paul Cruickshank, “A View from the Foxhole: Ilkka Salmi, EU Counterterrorism Coordinator,” *CTC Sentinel*, October/November 2023, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/a-view-from-the-ct-foxhole-ilkka-salmi-eu-counter-terrorism-coordinator/>.

⁵⁶ Paul Cruickshank, “A View from the Foxhole: Ilkka Salmi, EU Counterterrorism Coordinator,” *CTC Sentinel*, October/November 2023, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/a-view-from-the-ct-foxhole-ilkka-salmi-eu-counter-terrorism-coordinator/>.