

# Preface

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76 years have passed since the end of World War II and the horrors of the Holocaust in Europe. Despite the ongoing commitment of most European leaders to preserve the memory of the Holocaust and to fight antisemitism, we have experienced a rise in antisemitism recently in a number of locations in Europe. Once again, Jews in certain cities and neighborhoods are feeling insecure and increasingly threatened as individuals and as communities.

History teaches us that antisemitism is a threat not only to Jewish communities but also to society as a whole and to the countries themselves. The fact that antisemitism is flourishing is an indicator of society's moral deficiency, and it heralds the coming of even further degeneration. Just like the response to the pandemic that humanity has recently experienced, antisemitism also calls for a strong and immediate response.

Therefore, it is incumbent on the political and civil leadership to mobilize, to join forces, and to take action to stop expressions of antisemitism.

The current study is the outcome of a joint project between the Jewish Agency and the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS).

The Jewish Agency is the largest Jewish organization in the world that focuses on encouraging Aliyah and bringing *Olim* (immigrants) to the State of Israel; on connecting Jewish communities to one another and to Israel; and in strengthening the resilience of Israeli society. Within this framework, the Jewish Agency is also active in reinforcing the security of Jewish communities and in fighting antisemitism.

The INSS is an independent and apolitical Israeli research institute, which is involved in a number of areas that are key to Israel's national security. In recent years, it has also been concerned with Israel's relationship with Jewish communities around the world and in issues that are part of that relationship, from the perspective of national security.

The core of the research is an attempt to shed light on the phenomenon of antisemitism within the political discourse of five Western European countries: Germany, France, Britain, Spain, and Ireland. This is done by analyzing recent expressions of antisemitism on social media by public officials in the political domain of those countries.

**The research shows that antisemitism also exists in countries that emphasize the protection of minorities, as well as the fight against racism in general and antisemitism in particular.**

Antisemitism exists both on the right and the left. Although it is not a new phenomenon, it has new and worrisome features; some traverse the various countries and others are specific to a particular country. The research emphasizes the need to continuously monitor the developments and trends in antisemitism, both those that are shared and those that are specific.

Antisemitism does not emerge and spread in a vacuum. It generally raises its ugly head when a society's atmosphere has been poisoned and in places experiencing a social, economic, or political crisis. From this perspective, we are undoubtedly living in an explosive and dangerous period. The current spirit of the times in Europe (and elsewhere in the world) is characterized by an atmosphere of growing political and public polarization as well as a process of social radicalization, alongside the weakening of the conceptual-political center and sometimes also the undermining of various state establishments and of the existing order. In parallel, and as part of the dominance of the digital domain, the role of social media and new media is growing, and they are refashioning the way in which people perceive reality and form their opinions and positions. Alongside the benefits and advantages of social media, it also contributes to a dangerous mix of facts, beliefs, opinions, and lies and constitutes fertile ground for the spread of a discourse of hate and incitement of various types. The result of all this is, partly, the penetration of anti-Jewish and antisemitic ideas from the social margins into both the mainstream and the public domain. Furthermore, antisemitism and the efforts to stop it often serve as a political weapon against one's opponents, as shown in this research. The "politicization" of antisemitism makes it difficult to maintain and strengthen the consensus around the fight against antisemitism and demonstrates the growing division

of opinion surrounding some of its components, primarily the anti-Israeli discourse on the left and the rewriting of history on the right.

It is in this complex reality, more than ever before, that elected officials and public opinion leaders of all types have an even greater responsibility to lead the struggle against hate and extremism, which constitute one of the biggest threats to modern society. Besides the leadership and setting a personal example, the struggle against antisemitism and hate requires greater public awareness of the threat that they represent; many partners need to be recruited in this struggle; education needs to be harnessed as the most important tool in this battle in the long term; and in parallel, restrictions and barriers should be set up to prevent the spread of the disease, including the imposition of a public, political, and legal price on elements that are responsible for antisemitic incitement.

The current research is another small step in this long and important battle. We hope you find it useful.

General (ret.) Amos Yadlin  
Former head of the Institute  
for National Security Studies

Isaac Herzog  
Chairman of the Executive,  
Jewish Agency for Israel