

## Module 2: Antisemitism

# CLIO

Challenging Hostile Views and Fostering Civic Competences

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## THE CLIO PROJECT

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Clio is a project for the prevention and coping with right-wing extremism at vocational schools. Teachers and headmasters should be enabled to recognize and understand the corresponding positions among their students and to stand up for democratic values without fear. For this purpose, interdisciplinary experts from Austria, Poland, Croatia and Germany are developing various materials for vocational school teachers in close cooperation with the target group, such as an app, a blended learning training and a podcast. The main focus of this project is to build synergetic networks with other stakeholders in the individual countries in order to strengthen the schools and provide them with knowledge and professionally created material.



## 1. OVERVIEW

*In this module you will learn...*

- ... basic definitions of antisemitism*
- ... what different forms of antisemitism exist*
- ... how you can recognise them*
- ... how antisemitism relates to right-wing extremism and*
- ... why antisemitism is a danger for democracy.*

### Self-assessment questions

Answer the following questions for yourself:

- How do you perceive Jews? Would you primarily say Jews are a religion, ethnic group or a race?
- Do you know any famous Jews, both from history and daily life?
- Was it Hitler and the Nazis who first brought anti-Judaism and antisemitism to life?
- How can we help people to develop faith without prejudice?

Following the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE, Jews settled throughout Europe. For nearly two millennia, Christians and Jews lived together, worked alongside and shared the same geographical space and cultural environment. During this time, Jewish communities experienced both good and bad times. However, it was not until the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the prejudices towards Jews started to cause a mass destruction<sup>1</sup> known as the Holocaust, which took place in the epicentre of “civilized” Christian Europe. In light of that, we should pay more attention to how it all began.

## 2. HISTORY AND DEFINITIONS: WHAT DOES ANTISEMITISM MEAN?

### The problem of definition:

Antisemitism is a problematic term, which was first invented in the 1870s by the German journalist and racist ideologue Wilhelm Marr to describe the “non-confessional” hatred of Jews and Judaism which he promoted himself. The movement started in Germany, but soon started to spread to neighbouring Austria, Hungary, France and Russia. This was a reaction to the emancipation of the Jews and their entry into non-Jewish society. The term was new at the time, as its promoters opposed Jews not on religious grounds anymore, but more by the claimed social, economic, political or “racial” considerations.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Robert S. Wistrich, “Antisemitism”, *How Was It Possible? A Holocaust Reader* (2015)

<sup>2</sup> Robert S. Wistrich, “Antisemitism”, *How Was It Possible? A Holocaust Reader* (2015), p.6

The term itself derives from the differentiation of languages with “Aryan”<sup>3</sup> and “Semitic” roots, which lead to a false assumption that there are corresponding racial groups. Under this rubric, Jews became “Semites”, thus, paving the way for Marr’s usage. The apparently more scientific term *Antisemitism* caught on and eventually became a way of speaking about all forms of hostility directed at Jews throughout history.<sup>4</sup>

Why did this term catch on so easily? In late 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe many intellectuals regarded religious hostility as something medieval and backward, so there was a need to establish a new paradigm for anti-Jewishness, which would sound more “scientific”. After all, by virtue of their emancipation, Jews had become equal citizens in societies which had formally abandoned discrimination based on religious differences. By coining and using this more “scientific” term, antisemites hoped to delegitimise Jewish equality, ultimately expecting to reinstate the Jews to their earlier pre-emancipated and marginalised status.<sup>5</sup>

So, what is antisemitism then? According to French Jewish scholar Jules Isaac, in his book *The Teaching of Contempt*, antisemitism refers to “anti-Jewish prejudice, to feelings of suspicion, contempt, hostility and hatred towards Jews, both those who follow the religion of Israel and those who are merely of Jewish parentage. It ranges from quiet contempt to bullying, persecution and racist violence directed against Jewish people. It goes beyond normal political conflict, beyond even normal hostilities and prejudices that arise between peoples.”<sup>6</sup>

It is important to mention that different countries and institutions use different definitions, therefore it is difficult to compare numbers of antisemitic incidents or violence. There are attempts from the EU (European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia; International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) and the Fundamental Rights Agency to establish a universal definition in order to gather internationally comparable statistics. However, the attempts have not been successful so far.

Interestingly, the term antisemitism was never directed against “Semites” as such. The term “Semitic” derives from the Bible. It was named after Shem, one of three of Noah’s sons, and designated a group of languages including Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic, Babylonian, Assyrian and Ethiopic. Thus, it is evident that the term did not refer to a racial or ethnic group. Similarly, the contrasting term “Aryan” or “Indo-European” originally referred to the Indian branch of the Indo-European languages. Strictly speaking, “Aryans” were people speaking Sanskrit and related languages. Indians and Iranians were also regarded as “Aryans”, but Germans and North Europeans were certainly not and as most of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century European Jews did not speak Hebrew at all, could they be described as Semites?<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The Indo-Iranian languages or Aryan languages are the largest branch of the [, with more than 1.5 billion speakers, stretching from Europe \(Romani\), Turkey \(Kurdish and Zaza–Gorani\) to the Caucasus \(Ossetian\) and all the way to Sri Lanka \(Sinhala\) and the Maldives \(Maldivian\).](#)

<sup>4</sup> Carol Rittner and John K. Roth, “What is antisemitism?”, *The Holocaust and the Christian World* (2000), p.34

<sup>5</sup> Wistrich, p. 6

<sup>6</sup> Rittner/Roth, p. 34.

<sup>7</sup> Wistrich, p. 6.

Nevertheless, this pseudo-scientific nonsense became respectable even among European intellectual elites. As a result, for the last hundred and fifty years, the illogical term antisemitism, which never meant hatred of “Semites”, for example Arabs, but the hatred of Jews exclusively, became accepted in general usage. It started to denote all forms of hostility toward Jews and Judaism, with Judaism usually denoting not only the monotheistic religion of the Jewish people, but also the Jewish people collectively.<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, we will use the term antisemitism and this spelling in the module as most historians also use this spelling.

## History of antisemitism

The term antisemitism does not take into consideration the fact that Jews have often been welcomed by the surrounding society, and also tends to forget that Jewish participation in cultural, social, economic, academic and political life has been a remarkable success story in many European countries. However, a backlash to Jewish integration did not first appear in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany. It could already be witnessed in first century Alexandria and Rome, in medieval Spain, although this had nothing to do with the theory of antisemitism.<sup>9</sup>

## So, how did it all start then?

Back in the Hellenistic era, a Jewish Diaspora<sup>10</sup> started to emerge as distinct group as they were the only monotheistic religion in the pagan world. They also refused to intermingle with the Gentiles<sup>11</sup> because of their own dietary laws, Sabbath observance and prohibition of intermarriage. Thus, the Jewish Diaspora claimed spiritual supremacy over the polytheistic majority. In light of that, these characteristic provoked hostility or resentment in the ancient Greek and Latin literature. We can refer to this as pre-Christian antisemitism. Pagan anti-Jewishness is important because it later provided fertile soil for its Christian successors. It also reminds us that there was a significant form of hostility towards the Jews in Antiquity, which preceded the birth of Christianity. Many early Christians simply absorbed this Jew-hatred as a consequence of their pagan upbringing. Nevertheless, it was the Christian world that further deepened the negation of Judaism. Indeed, no other religion has made the accusations that Jews were literally the “murderers” of God.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, no other religion has so consistently labelled the Jews as a universal, cosmic quality of evil and depicted them as children of the Devil, followers of Anti-Christ. In the middle Ages, theories of Jews aiming to destroy Christianity by poisoning wells, massacring Christian children or spreading the plague were common. Similar beliefs spread among Christians up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Wistrich, p. 6.-7.

<sup>9</sup> Wistrich, p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Diaspora, (Greek: “Dispersion”) Hebrew Galut (Exile), the dispersion of Jews among the Gentiles after the Babylonian Exile or the aggregate of Jews or Jewish communities scattered “in exile” outside Palestine or present-day Israel; <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Diaspora-Judaism> March 2021.

<sup>11</sup> the term usually used by Jews to describe non-Jews.

<sup>12</sup> Wistrich, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Wistrich, p. 8.



Even in countries like medieval Spain, where large numbers of Jews converted to Christianity, the descendants of the converts were regarded with hostility and suspicion, leading to the Inquisition (1478-1834) and the “purity of blood” statutes which paved the way for modern antisemitism. Not even the rise of humanism during the Renaissance<sup>14</sup> and Reformation in 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe could successfully diminish the impact of the medieval image of the Jew. A reformer like Erasmus never dreamed of applying his humanist teachings to the acceptance of the Jews. Similarly, Martin Luther reiterated all medieval myths about Jews, making his Protestant followers even more suspicious of Jews than the Catholics at the time.<sup>15</sup>

The most evident forms of early antisemitism were the expulsions of entire Jewish populations from certain European countries. The years when the expulsions took place are as follows: England in 1290, France in 1306, Hungary in 1349, Spain in 1492, Portugal in 1497, and Germany in different times in the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Expulsion usually followed when Jews were no longer useful to rulers or when hatred toward them became overwhelming. Between the 15<sup>th</sup> century and 1722, Jews were not allowed in Russia. The Ottoman Empire and Polish Galicia were two of the countries where Jews were allowed in after the expulsions. Interestingly from today’s perspective, the Ottoman Empire, which was founded in early 14<sup>th</sup> century, was Muslim and accepted Jews.<sup>16</sup>

The so-called emancipation of Jews started after the French Revolution in 1789 and it was the first time in history that Jews were referred to as individual human beings. However, there was still an assumption that once oppression was removed, their distinctive group identity would disappear. Even the wholly secularised antisemites like Voltaire, Bruno Bauer, Richard Wagner and Eugen Dühring assumed that Christianity was a superior religion to Judaism. The Nazis later just took over all the negative anti-Jewish stereotypes in Christianity, but they removed the escape clause (that a Jew is saved if he converts) by racialisation. There was no longer any way in which even fully assimilated or baptised Jews could flee from the death sentence. Hitler and Nazism grew out of a Christian European culture, although it does not mean that the Holocaust was programmed in the logic of Christianity.<sup>17</sup>

In a nutshell, as Raul Hilberg pointed in his book, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, “the Nazi destruction process didn’t come out of a void; it was the culmination of a cyclical trend... The missionaries of Christianity said in effect: You have no right to live among us as Jews. The secular rulers who followed proclaimed: You have no right to live among us. The Nazis at last decreed: You have no right to live.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> the period covering the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>15</sup> Wistrich, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> Carrie Supple, *From Prejudice to Genocide: Learning about the Holocaust (1993)*, p. 20.

<sup>17</sup> Wistrich, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Rittner/Roth, p. 36.

### 3. FORMS OF ANTISEMITISM: WHAT DOES ANTISEMITISM LOOK LIKE IN OUR DAILY LIVES?

After the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945, many people thought antisemitism was dead and buried, but they were wrong. It went into a downtrend but in the several last decades it has witnessed a revival. Once again Jews are singled out by international terrorists, Jewish retirement homes and schools are defaced, synagogues and cemeteries desecrated. Revisionist historians hold “scholarly” meetings; publish books and online articles in which they deny the Holocaust ever happened. In addition, radical right-wing political organisations contend that economic woes are the fault of rich and powerful Jews who control money markets, banks, newspapers, radio and television. The paradox is that such kind of antisemitism appears even in the post-Holocaust societies where only a small number of Jews survived, for instance in Poland, Austria, or Romania.<sup>19</sup>

Since 1965 antisemitism has no longer been part of Christian teaching, although many people seem to be ignorant of that fact. It was the Second Vatican Council and the declaration *Nostra Aetate* (1965) which changed the position of mainstream Christian Churches in respect to Jews. This refers both to the Catholic and Protestant Church, which had seriously begun to critique their negative preaching and teaching about Jews and Judaism.<sup>20</sup>

This might lead to an assumption that the present-day antisemitism in Europe is not really powerful. Christian Churches do not support it, nor do most of official state institutions or educational systems. However, antisemitism has not lost its power, nor did it end with the Holocaust. Its legacy of hostility and prejudice against Jewish people is still a reality across the globe, especially given the increase in both the number of attacks and the nature of the violence used (i.e. from vandalism to terrorists attacks).

We should stress here that antisemitism also encompasses forms other than vandalism, violence and terrorism. It also includes the discrimination and unwillingness to accept one’s responsibility for his or her role in the Holocaust. An example of this can be seen in present-day Poland with the issue of the property restitution law. About 3.3 million Jews lived in Poland before World War Two, and about 90 percent of them were murdered in the Holocaust. Many of the homes and businesses Jews left behind either became the property of the state or were taken over by ethnic Poles. Nowadays, Poland is the only post-communist EU country not to have passed a property restitution law. The official Polish position is that Jews were citizens of pre-war Poland, and their heirs can fight property claims in the Polish courts like everyone else. However, many of these cases are very difficult to litigate and have stalled. Furthermore, Jewish groups want some form of restitution for the property of millions of Jews who died with no heirs because their whole families were wiped out. Polish law does not recognise such a community right, as people who die with no heirs lose their property to the state. This topic has been a burden for Polish politics for years, but governments have always dodged the issue. In 2020, when

<sup>19</sup> Rittner/Roth, p. 34.

<sup>20</sup> Rittner/Roth, p. 36.

the issue rose again, the Polish president Andrzej Duda stated that he would never sign a bill which would “treat the inheritance of people from one ethnic group more favourably than from others”.<sup>21</sup>

That problem aside, the evidence of rising antisemitism in Europe has become impossible to ignore. The European Union’s Fundamental Rights Agency conducted a survey in December 2018, which found 89% of Jews living in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the UK feel antisemitism has increased in their country over the past decade, while 85% believed it to be a serious problem. Almost half worried about being insulted or harassed in public because they are Jewish, and more than a third feared being physically attacked.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, UNESCO states that antisemitism is not only restricted to extremist circles and it is often not the pretext of the Israel-Palestine conflict, with Palestinians often portrayed as the victims of Israeli power. Antisemitism increasingly becomes mainstream, particularly online. Therefore, contemporary antisemitism often takes tacit and coded forms, making it a complex phenomenon that mutates over time. UNESCO also gives four key elements to illustrate the universality of contemporary antisemitism.<sup>23</sup>

First, contemporary antisemitism poses a threat to all countries, given its global reach. This is reflected in the Anti-Defamation League (2014), a global survey that examined attitudes towards Jews and anti-Jewish stereotypes in 101 countries. The survey found that over 1.09 billion people worldwide have antisemitic attitudes. In addition, data from the ‘longitudinal tolerance index’ conducted by the Consultative Commission on Human Rights (2017) revealed that – in France – ‘black people and Jews’ at 78% experience the highest levels of intolerance among minority groups.<sup>24</sup>

Second, antisemitism becomes a global security issue, given the nature of the violence used in attacks, with violent extremists targeting and killing Jewish people from Mumbai to Toulouse, Halle, Brussels, Paris, Pittsburgh and Copenhagen.

Third, contemporary antisemitism is a serious human rights issue, which is not limited to the Jewish people, individually or collectively. Antisemitism is often treated as an isolated issue, implying that it is a problem for Jewish communities alone, when in fact antisemitism does not require the presence of a Jewish community to proliferate. Like all forms of ideologies of inequality, antisemitism has a profound impact on the society as a whole, undermining democratic values and human rights.

Fourth, contemporary antisemitism is a growing online issue that has no boundaries, thus it is able to increase its scope and reach. Social media, online forums, blogs, comment sections and messenger apps provide platforms for antisemitic discourse to spread freely and anonymously. These mechanisms, and lacking effective counter action, leave space for like-minded peers (enclosed in so-called “filter bubbles” and “echo chambers”) to encourage and reinforce their harmful messages, providing

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.politico.eu/article/poland-presidential-election-anti-semitism/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/06/04/alarming-rise-anti-semitism-europe>

<sup>23</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/news/addressing-contemporary-antisemitism-global-issue> (11/07/2019)

<sup>24</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/news/addressing-contemporary-antisemitism-global-issue>

a fertile ground for radicalisation and lowering the threshold to engage in offline violence.<sup>25</sup> (See Module 7)

An example of such offline violence is the Halle synagogue shooting, which occurred on 9 October 2019 in Halle, Saxony-Anhalt, Germany, and continued in the nearby Landsberg. The attacker was a right-wing extremist who tried to break into the synagogue on the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur to kill the people present and live-stream the act simultaneously on the Internet. He fatally shot two people nearby and later injured two others.<sup>26</sup>

In Germany in 2018, antisemitic crimes, which include hate speech, rose by 20%, according to government data. According to the same data, there were 62 violent antisemitic attacks, compared to 37 in 2017. If we put all antisemitic crimes into consideration, as they are listed in the PMK category (politically motivated crime), the figures are even higher. In 2017, 1,504 antisemitic crimes were reported, in 2018 there were 1,799, and 2,032 cases in 2019.

Similarly, The Austrian Jewish religious community (Israelitische Kultusgemeinde) and the Forum against Antisemitism (Forum gegen Antisemitismus) publish a yearly report on antisemitic incidents in Austria. For the year 2019, they reported 550 antisemitic incidents, containing 18 threats, 6 physical attacks, 78 damage to property (e.g. vandalism), 239 offending conduct and 209 publications or mass mailings. The report tries to categorise the motivation behind the incidents and concludes that 268 incidents stem from a right-wing ideology<sup>27</sup>.

In the UK, the Community Security Trust, a nongovernmental organisation recorded 1,652 antisemitic incidents in 2018, including 123 involving violence. Other European countries are no exception. Since hate crimes are generally underreported in the EU, the real figures on antisemitism are likely to be much higher in these and other EU states. Therefore, European governments need to take immediate measures to prevent racist and antisemitic violence, including investigating, arresting, and prosecuting perpetrators of such violence. Governments should also tackle prejudice and stereotypes through public debate and education.<sup>28</sup>

## 4. HOW DOES ANTISEMITISM RELATE TO RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM

Several case studies of violent extremists, representing far-right and jihadist movements respectively, demonstrate that antisemitism can be an integral part of extremists' progression through the radicalisation process and in justifying terrorist attacks. At times, antisemitism can serve as a gateway issue for individuals into further radicalisation to violent extremism. Non-violent and violent iterations of

<sup>25</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/news/addressing-contemporary-antisemitism-global-issue> (11/07/2019)

<sup>26</sup> Oltermann, Philip. *"'Rampage situation' as two killed in shooting in German city of Halle". The Guardian*, 09/10/2019.

<sup>27</sup> Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien: Antisemitische Vorfälle 2019. (2020)

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/06/04/alarming-rise-anti-semitism-europe>

the same extremist milieus often share antisemitic views as central elements of their belief system, and thus antisemitism constitutes a linkage between activist and violent extremist segments of the same movement.<sup>29</sup>

It was proven that antisemitism is foundational to multiple violent extremist movements in the United States, where counter-extremism practitioners and scholars consider incorporating antisemitism as a diagnostic factor for extremist radicalisation. While there is no single profile of a US-American extremist, antisemitism has long been widespread among US-American extremist movements. In addition, antisemitic beliefs often serve as a key entry point for individuals to radicalise, join extremist groups, and progress into violent mobilisation.<sup>30</sup>

Before we continue, it is important to stress that antisemitism is also adopted by a range of Western far-left activists. Recently, the common left-wing antisemitic ideas are the tropes of Jewish bankers who supposedly create an unfair and rigged economic system which targets the poor and disadvantaged. In October 2020, an independent investigation by the UK's Equalities and Human Rights Commission found that there were "unlawful acts of harassment and discrimination within the UK Labour Party for which the Labour Party is responsible,". And that there existed "a culture within the Party which, at best, did not do enough to prevent antisemitism and, at worst, could be seen to accept it."<sup>31</sup>

It is significant that European manifestations of antisemitism have deeply influenced views of Jews in the Muslim world and in particular amongst Islamists. Examples of antisemitism in Islamist discourse are not in short supply, and have been documented in detail. In general, however, what we see from Islamist groups is a view of Jews, which combines Islamic scriptural antisemitism with European conspiratorial and racist antisemitism. Indeed, the latter is arguably the bigger influence of the two. While many of the ideas were indeed supplanted in the Muslim world prior to the 1930s, the German scholar Matthias Kuntzel details a mutual antisemitic belief shared by both fascist parties in Europe and Islamist parties in the Middle East.<sup>32</sup>

So, is it possible to speak of a single profile of a violent right-wing extremist then? The answer is no, due to various pathways to extremism, life experiences, and ideological backgrounds that make up the radicalisation process. However, it is evident that antisemitism helps to dehumanise possible targets of violence, a process which is often seen as a key component of mass violence against a specific group. The American National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Department of Homeland Security (DOJ) annually release a guide for law enforcement that contains "mobilization indicators" — signs that an individual who is *already radicalised* is about to conduct an attack. This document notes that "dehumanizing people who are not in the identity group (e.g. non-believers,

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<sup>29</sup> Meleagrou-Hitchens et al., *Antisemitism as an Underlying Precursor to Violent Extremism in American Far-Right and Islamist Contexts*. 2020.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Equalities and Human Rights Commission (UK), "Investigation into antisemitism in the Labour Party." 2020.

<sup>32</sup> Kuntzel, Matthias, *Jihad and Jew-hatred: Islamism, Nazism and the Roots of 9/11*. Telos Press Publishing, 2007.

followers of other religions or ideologies...)” is construed as a “long-term” indicator of violent extremist mobilisation, although it does not mean that an individual would necessarily mobilise to use violence.<sup>33</sup>

Without a doubt, the current prominent extremist movements, both on the far-right and in the Islamist current, will ebb, flow, and wane, and will likely face competition from new types of extremist movements. Throughout the history, antisemitism has formed the foundation of different extremist movements, and its appeal continues to attract individual extremists even when the movements they support lose popularity. Therefore, antisemitic narratives are likely to retain their importance in the future, and continue to inspire violence among their supporters.<sup>34</sup>

Right-wing extremism is based on the concept that there are different groups (“races”, “cultures”, etc.) that have different “value” or position in a hierarchical world. This hierarchy is a “natural given”, can, and should not be altered. Antisemitism is therefore one form of structuring this hierarchy: Non-Jews are higher up this hierarchy than Jews. As an ideology of inequality, Antisemitism is therefore in many cases an immanent part of right-wing extremist movements.

## 5. WHY IS ANTISEMITISM DANGEROUS FOR DEMOCRACIES?

According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Mr. Ahmed Shaheed, antisemitism poses “a threat to all societies if left unaddressed” and is thus “toxic to democracy”. While speaking at the UN headquarters in New York in 2019, Shaheed warned that the countries have to invest more in education to avoid such dangers in future.<sup>35</sup>

Shaheed’s findings reported the growth of antisemitism, both amongst groups associated with the political right and left. He stated that he was alarmed by the growing antisemitism among white supremacists, including neo-Nazis and members of radical Islamist groups, in slogans, images, stereotypes and conspiracy theories which incite and justify hostility, discrimination and violence against Jews. In addition, he expressed his worries regarding the increasing antisemitism emanating from sources in the political left and about discriminatory State practices towards Jews. Antisemitic incidents are being reported internationally - including violence, discrimination and expressions of hostility - and the problem is being boosted by the Internet, with online antisemitism hate speech prevalent.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> National Counterterrorism Center, “*Homegrown Violent Extremist Mobilization Indicators.*” 2019. [https://www.dni.gov/files/NCTC/documents/news\\_documents/NCTC-FBI-DHS-HVE-Mobilization-Indicators-Booklet-2019.pdf](https://www.dni.gov/files/NCTC/documents/news_documents/NCTC-FBI-DHS-HVE-Mobilization-Indicators-Booklet-2019.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> Meleagrou-Hitchens et al., *Antisemitism as an Underlying Precursor to Violent Extremism in American Far-Right and Islamist Contexts.* 2020.

<sup>35</sup> Source: United Nations, 2019 (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/10/1049591>)

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.



In his report, Mr. Shaheed described antisemitism as the “canary in the coalmine of global hatred”, which presents serious challenges to the elimination of all forms of intolerance, hatred and discrimination based on religion or belief. In addition, antisemitism poses risks to all minorities, not only Jews. The Special Rapporteur described the Holocaust as a graphic example of how religious and racial hatred can lead to genocide and the destruction of entire societies.<sup>37</sup>

In order to counter the problem, Mr. Shaheed urged countries to invest in education and training, at all levels, to enable a better understanding of antisemitism. Shaheed insisted on the importance of engaging with the younger generation, in order to ensure that they reject all ideologies of inequality. He pointed out that a global coalition is needed to speak out against such ideologies. According to Shaheed’s findings, only a collective rejection of antisemitism and other ideologies of hatred can create inclusive democratic societies that uphold human rights and security for all.<sup>38</sup>

The Special Rapporteur called for antisemitism to be placed within a wider human rights framework, in which citizens are empowered with the requisite critical thinking, empathy and literacy to withstand and reject extremist ideologies, including antisemitic propaganda. Mr. Shaheed also adds that states must make incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence based on religion or belief illegal, and ensure that these laws are enforced. In addition, civil society can also play a vital role in combatting ideologies of inequality by establishing inter-faith networks aimed at advancing social cohesion.<sup>39</sup>

In conclusion, it is not only Jews who are targeted for discrimination and hate crime across the globe. However, this group’s experience with antisemitism can help others recognise the pattern of ideologies of inequality in order to stand up against their devastating effects. These effects undoubtedly pose a threat, not only to the groups being discriminated against, but also to democratic values in general.

## 6. EXERCISES YOU CAN USE WHEN TEACHING ABOUT ANTISEMITISM

**Starter activity** – Brainstorming and having a discussion based on the following questions: *What is an idea? Can an idea itself be good or evil? Can an idea change the world?*

- Leading students to the question: *What was the main idea that started the Holocaust?* (It is expected that they would be able to recall their knowledge from history, such as portraying Jews as an inferior race in Hitler's Germany and Nazi-occupied countries. This is where the term antisemitism should be introduced and explained.)

### Exercise 1: The role of propaganda

Examining the relationship between Christians and Jews through the ages and explaining how the traditional opposition evolved into the ideology of antisemitism, which defined Jews as an inferior racial

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

group. It is possible to include dozens of posters from different countries and historic periods, on which Jews were portrayed mockingly. They are widely available in Yad Vashem's online database.

Here are some examples:



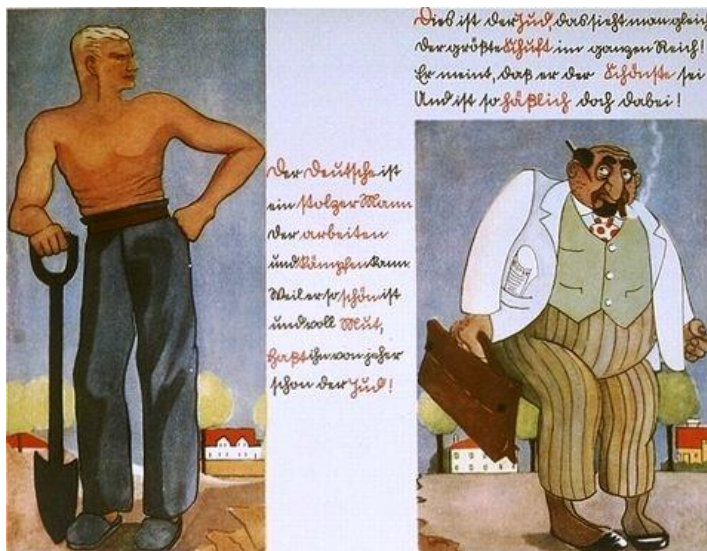
Germany, 1936, a caricature from a children's book<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> from Yad Vashem's online database





An antisemitic poster from Poland, saying “Jew is a villain. He’s your enemy”.<sup>41</sup>



A poster from pre-war Germany, showing an “Aryan” German and a mockingly portrayed Jew.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> from Yad Vashem's online database

<sup>42</sup> from [www.holocaustresearchproject.org](https://www.holocaustresearchproject.org)

## Analysing the stages of antisemitism in Nazi Germany

Stage 1: propaganda

Stage 2: humiliation (expulsion from schools and institutions, wearing a yellow star, etc.)

Stage 3: annihilation (the final consequence)

**Discussion** – the role of propaganda in antisemitism, with reflection on the Holocaust. Asking: *Are there any groups in society that are nowadays often presented negatively or mockingly?*

## Exercise 2: Analysing antisemitism in Canonical Law throughout history and the corresponding Nazi measures from 1930s and 1940s<sup>43</sup>

Canonical Law	Nazi measure
Prohibition of intermarriage and of sexual intercourse between Christians and Jews, Synod of Elvira, year 306	Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour, September 15, 1935
Jews not allowed to employ Christian servants or possess Christian slaves, 3rd Synod of Orléans, 538	Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour, September 15, 1935
Jews not permitted to show themselves in the streets during Passion Week, 3rd Synod of Orléans, 538	Decree authorising local authorities to bar Jews from the streets on certain days (i.e. Nazi holidays), December 3, 1938
Burning of the Talmud and other books, 12th Synod of Toledo, 681	Book burnings in Nazi Germany
Jews not permitted to be plaintiffs, or witnesses against Christians in the Courts, 3rd Lateran Council, 1179, Canon 26	Proposal by the Party Chancellery that Jews not be permitted to institute civil suits, September 9, 1942
Jews not permitted to withhold inheritance from descendants who had accepted Christianity, 3rd Lateran Council, 1179, Canon 26	Decree empowering the Justice Ministry to void wills offending the “sound judgement of the people”, July 31, 1938
The marking of Jewish clothes with a badge, 4th Lateran Council, 1215, Canon 68 (copied from the legislation by Caliph Omar II [634-644], who	Decree of September 1, 1941 – the Yellow Star

<sup>43</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of European Jewry*. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985

had decreed that Christians wear blue belts and Jews yellow belts)	
Construction of new synagogues prohibited, Council of Oxford, 1222	Destruction of synagogues in entire Reich, November 10, 1938
Compulsory ghettos, Synod of Breslau, 1267	Order by Heydrich, September 21, 1939
Christians not permitted to sell or rent real estate to Jews, Synod of Ofen, 1279	Decree providing for compulsory sale of Jewish real estate, December 3, 1938
Adoption by a Christian of the Jewish religion or return by a baptised Jew to the Jewish religion defined as a heresy, Synod of Mainz, 1310	Adoption of the Jewish religion by a Christian places him in jeopardy of being treated as a Jew, June 26, 1942.
Jews not permitted to obtain academic degrees, Council of Basel, 1434, Sessio XIX	Law against Overcrowding of German Schools and Universities, April 25, 1933

### Exercise 3: Matching the antisemitic excerpts with their author

- The aim is to point out how old and rooted antisemitism is in the Western culture.

Examples:

- *"They know only one thing, to satisfy their stomachs, to get drunk, to kill. The synagogue is worse than a brothel ... It is the den of scoundrels and the repair of wild beasts ... the temple of demons devoted to idolatrous cults ... the cavern of devils ... a criminal assembly of Jews ... a place of meetings for the assassins of Christ ... the refuge of devils."* (Saint John Chrysostom [349-407])<sup>44</sup>
- *"You are of the father, the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and did not stand in the truth, because the truth is not in him. Whenever he speaks the lie, he speaks of his own voice, because he is a liar and the father of it."* (the Bible, John 8:44)
- *"The Jews are an ignorant and barbarous people, who have long united the most sordid avarice with the most detestable superstition and the most invincible hatred for every people by whom they are tolerated and enriched."* (Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary, 1764)
- *"Therefore the blind Jews are truly stupid fools ... Now just behold these miserable, blind, and senseless people ... their blindness and arrogance are as solid as an iron mountain."* (Martin Luther, The Jews and Their Lies, 1543)
- *"With satanic joy in his face, the black-haired Jewish youth lurks in wait for the unsuspecting girl whom he defiles with his blood, thus stealing her from her people. With every means he tries to destroy the racial foundations of the people he has set out to subjugate ... It was and it is Jews who bring the*

<sup>44</sup> quoted in Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *Why the Jews?: The Reason for Antisemitism*, p. 94.

*Negroes into the Rhineland, always with the same secret thought and clear aim of ruining the hated white race by the necessarily resulting bastardization, throwing it down from its cultural and political height, and himself rising to be its master.” (Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, 1928) <sup>45</sup>*

• *“We are fighting an enemy that is different from us. Not open, but hiding; not straightforward but crafty; not honest but base; not national but international; does not believe in working but speculates with money; does not have its own homeland but feels it owns the whole world.” (Viktor Orbán, the Prime Minister of Hungary, 2018)<sup>46</sup>*

## Exercise 4: Class discussion

- Analysing contradictions of the common prejudices against Jews from the period between two world wars:

- 1) Blaming Jews for their wish to create new world order, sometimes portraying them as capitalists and sometimes as communists
- 2) Jews are an inferior race vs. Jews will take over the world

## General tips for teaching about antisemitism

- It is better to focus on a smaller number of materials and do them thoroughly in class. The aim is not to share everything the teacher knows, but rather to make the students think about the dangers of antisemitism and similar ideologies in the modern world
- Do not teach about Jews only as victims, the faceless mass on their way to the gas chambers. It is important to include personal, individual stories which should also cover the period before and after the Holocaust.
- It is important to teach without creating stereotypes. Therefore, a historical frame is essential while teaching historical facts.
- Studying antisemitism does not say anything about Jews, only about antisemites. This is applicable to other cases of ideologies of inequality as well.

<sup>45</sup> [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org) - Extracts From Mein Kampf by Adolf Hitler

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-speech-hungarys-orban-attacks-enemy-who-speculates-with-money/>

## Conclusion – Why is it important to teach about antisemitism?

As stated by UNESCO, unchallenged antisemitic rhetoric encourages people to believe that prejudice, discrimination and even attacks on particular groups of people are acceptable. Therefore, a concentrated and collaborative global response is needed. Education can play a vital role in the prevention of antisemitism: it can foster tolerance and dialogue as well as build resilience among young people towards ideologies of inequality, including antisemitism, which undermine human rights, and equip them to recognise and reject antisemitic or other group-based forms of intolerance and discrimination. Ultimately, addressing antisemitism is both an immediate security imperative and a long-term investment to promote human rights and global citizenship.<sup>47</sup>

## 7. WHERE TO TURN TO? NGOS & NETWORKS THAT CAN HELP YOU LEARN MORE

### The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

[www.ushmm.org/antisemitism](http://www.ushmm.org/antisemitism)

Special section on antisemitism and Holocaust denial (lesson plans, videos and tools)

### Yad Vashem, the world Holocaust Remembrance Center

[www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org)

Special section on education and e-learning, huge photo database

### Jewish Virtual Library

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/anti-semitism>

Special section on antisemitism

### Centropa

[www.centropa.org](http://www.centropa.org)

Section on Education contains lots of teaching materials and lesson plans

### OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe)

<https://www.osce.org/odihr/120546>

### Austria:

- **Mauthausenkomitee Österreich**

<https://www.mkoe.at/>

Contains publications, teaching materials, information about KZ Mauthausen and remembrance, youth projects, projects with witnesses (Zeitzeugen) etc. Possibility to report antisemitic incidents.

<sup>47</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/news/addressing-contemporary-antisemitism-global-issue>

- **Forum gegen Antisemitismus**

<https://www.fga-wien.at/>

Possibility to report antisemitic incidents. Institution that reports and documents about antisemitism in Austria, in close cooperation to other institutions and the Jewish community in Austria.

- **Isrealitische Kultusgemeinde Wien**

[www.ikg-wien.at](http://www.ikg-wien.at)

- **Isrealitische Kultusgemeinde Graz**

<https://www.juedischegemeinde-graz.at/>

- **Isrealitische Kultusgemeinde Salzburg**

[www.ikg-salzburg.at](http://www.ikg-salzburg.at)

- **Isrealitische Kultusgemeinde Linz**

[www.ikg-linz.at](http://www.ikg-linz.at)

- **Isrealitische Kultusgemeinde Innsbruck (für Tirol und Vorarlberg)**

[www.ikg-innsbruck.at](http://www.ikg-innsbruck.at)

## Poland:

- **Polin Muzeum Historii Polskich Żydów**

<https://www.polin.pl/pl>

- **Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau**

<http://www.auschwitz.org/>

- **Żydowski Instytut Historyczny**

<https://jhi.pl/>

- **Stowarzyszenie Żydowski Instytut Historyczny**

<https://szih.org.pl/>

## Germany:

- **Stop Antisemitismus**

<https://www.stopantisemitismus.de/>

- **Jüdisches Forum für Demokratie und gegen Antisemitismus e. V. (JFDA)**

<https://jfda.de/>

- **Anne Frank Zentrum**

<https://www.annefrank.de>

- **Kompetenznetzwerk Antisemitismus**

<https://kompetenznetzwerk-antisemitismus.de/>

- **KZ-Gedenkstätte Dachau**

<https://www.kz-gedenkstaette-dachau.de/>

- **KZ-Gedenkstätte Flossenbürg**

<https://www.gedenkstaette-flossenbuerg.de/de>



- **BildungsBausteine e. V.**  
<http://www.bildungsbausteine.org/home/>
- **RIAS Recherche- und Informationsstelle Antisemitismus**  
<https://report-antisemitism.de/#/home>

## Croatia:

- **Židovska općina Zagreb/ Jewish community Zagreb** <http://www.zoz.hr/home.php?content=naslovna>
- **Bet Israel Jewish community of Croatia**  
<https://www.bet-israel.com/>

## 7. LITERATURE

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