

Congressional Testimony

Global Efforts for Countering Anti-Semitism

Sharon Nazarian, Ph.D.
Senior Vice President for International Affairs
ADL (Anti-Defamation League)

United States Commission on
International Religious Freedom

Russell Senate Office Building
Room 325

Washington, D.C.
January 8, 2020
1:30 pm



Working to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all since 1913

Introduction:

Since 1913, the mission of ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) has been to “stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.” For decades, ADL has fought against anti-Semitism and bigotry by exposing extremist groups and individuals who spread hate and incite violence. Today, ADL is the foremost non-governmental authority on anti-Semitism, extremism, hate groups, and hate crimes.

ADL combats anti-Semitism both at home and abroad. The recent series of anti-Semitic incidents in the New York and New Jersey area last month, most notably the fatal shootings in Jersey City and the stabbings in Monsey, provide a horrifying reminder that we have plenty of work to do on this issue here at home. In its [2018 audit of anti-Semitic incidents](#), ADL recorded 1,879 anti-Semitic incidents in the United States, including the deadliest attack on Jews in the history of the U.S.: The massacre of 11 Jewish worshippers, and an additional two more injured, at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh by a white supremacist in October. The Pittsburgh attack was one of 39 reported physical assaults on Jewish individuals in 2018, a 105% increase over 2017. And a fatal attack took place in Poway too, exactly six months after the Pittsburgh attack. This is in addition to the vast array of other anti-Semitic incidents or crimes in the United States tracked by ADL and the FBI.

I have personal experience in understanding the fear and isolation that extremists can inflict on those whom they target and demonize. When I was a child, I fled with my parents and siblings and extended family from the bigoted tyranny of Khomeini’s regime in Iran. My family had lived and thrived in Iran for generations. We were citizens of the country, belonged to a community, institutions and businesses, until it was made clear that a new regime holding extremist and bigoted values and prejudices felt we had no place there. Today, the Jewish community of Iran is near extinction after a 2,500 year rich history because all Jews know that there is no future in Iran for their children.

ADL’s International Affairs Division, which I lead, pursues ADL’s mission around the globe: fighting anti-Semitism, bigotry and prejudice, promoting the security of Jewish communities worldwide, and working for a safe and democratic State of Israel. The International Affairs staff, based in the U.S., Israel, and Germany, works with partners around the world using programs and resources on anti-Semitism, hate crimes, cyber hate, and anti-bias education. It also works to counter the delegitimization of Israel. ADL places a special emphasis on Europe, Latin America and Israel and the Middle East but advocates for all Jewish communities around the world facing anti-Semitism.

International Religious Freedom:

The global anti-Semitism crisis is a core concern for international religious freedom.

In failing societies, Jews are often the proverbial canary in the coal mine. During times of upheaval, Jews are a convenient scapegoat for extremists and demagogues because of perennial anti-Semitic conspiracy theories that imagine evil Jewish puppet masters behind all of society's ills. Such animus against Jews rarely ends there either, since it frequently presages a broader downturn in pluralism and rising violence against not just Jews but other ethnic and religious minorities as well.

Throughout history, anti-Semitism has cleansed entire societies of their adherents to Judaism when rulers have expelled Jewish communities based on bigoted ideas about Judaism or Jewish life. Pogroms and the Holocaust serve as a chilling reminder that hatred against Jewish people can manifest in even more violent forms as well.

Today, anti-Semitic incidents often take the form of attacks against Jewish religious or communal institutions, including arson, vandalism, or attacks against Jewish people during prayer. In many countries around the world today Jewish communal leaders advise their community members not to display outward signs of their Jewish religion or identity, such as kippot, for fear of violent attacks by anti-Semites in public. In many countries, synagogues must be surrounded by armed guards, and attacks against Jewish houses of worship force many Jews to feel frightened of attending religious services or to disconnect from their faith community entirely.

Bans on kosher animal slaughter or on ritual circumcision also have a major impact on freedom of religion in national or subnational jurisdictions where they are pursued. Such bans make it impossible for observant Jewish communities to remain in such countries. Likewise, prohibitions of this sort have a destructive impact on observant Muslim communities as well.

Anti-Semitism is also a powerful driver of terrorism. When al-Qaeda killed thousands of Americans on 9/11, it did so in part based on its twisted ideas about power and Jewish people in America. When Hamas, Hezbollah, or the Iranian regime target civilians in Israel – or Jewish people elsewhere in the world – they do so as movements driven by a fundamental hatred of Jews and mainstream Judaism.

Tracking Anti-Semitic Incidents and Attitudes:

In order for Jews to be able to exercise their religious freedom, they must feel free to identify publicly as Jews and to attend Jewish events. Two factors in particular impact on their sense of security to do so: the number and nature of anti-Semitic incidents and the level of animosity towards Jews in the general public. We have data to attest to the worrying state of both.

The three largest Jewish communities in Europe are in France (450,000), the UK (300,000), and Germany (200,000). The latest data from France shows a 76% increase in anti-Semitic incidents in the first half of 2019, compared to the same period in 2018.¹ In the UK, anti-Semitic incidents are at their all-time highest rate, with 892 incidents in the first half of 2019, a 10% increase of the same period in 2018.² In Germany, data collection is not as developed, but just in Berlin, on average, there are two anti-Semitic incidents per day.³

The European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) polled Jewish communities across Europe, covering about 95% of the Jews in Europe, to learn about their experiences with anti-Semitism, first in 2012, then again in 2018.⁴ The 2018 report paints a portrait of fear in Europe's Jewish communities, and a disturbing deterioration compared to the 2012 survey. It concludes that "Anti-Semitism pervades everyday life," and "Anti-Semitic harassment is so common it is normalized." Some of the key findings were:

- Those who have experienced anti-Semitic harassment increased by a third over the past 6 years.
- Attitudes about anti-Semitism in Germany, the UK, and Sweden show some of the most significant changes. The percentage of Jews who consider anti-Semitism to be a "very big" or "fairly big" problem increased in Germany from 62% to 85%, in the UK from 48% to 75%, and in Sweden from 60% to 82%.
- 28% experienced some form of harassment for being Jewish in the past 12 months; 2% were physically attacked during that same period.
- Half of Europe's Jews worry about being targets of verbal assaults, and 40% fear being physically attacked.
- 9 out of 10 considered anti-Semitism online to be a problem in their country.
- A third of Jews have avoided Jewish events at least occasionally because of safety fears.

¹ Ilanit Chernick, "Former Le Figaro Editor: Anti-Zionism is Antisemitism - Antisemitism in France up 76% according to French Jewish Leaders," *Jerusalem Post*, November 18, 2019. (<https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Former-Le-Figaro-editor-anti-Zionism-is-antisemitism-608120>)

² Community Security Trust, *Antisemitic Incidents Report, January - June 2019*, August 1, 2019. (https://cst.org.uk/data/file/3/d/IR_Jan-Jun_2019.1564410415.pdf)

³ Agency for Research and Information on Anti-Semitism (RIAS), *Antisemitische Vorfälle: Januar bis Juni 2019*, September 26, 2019. (https://report-antisemitism.de/documents/2019-09-26_rias-be_Annual_Antisemitische-Vorfaelle-Halbjahr-2019.pdf)

⁴ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Experiences and perceptions of Antisemitism: Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU*, December 2018. (<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/2nd-survey-discrimination-hate-crime-against-jews>)

- A quarter of Jews have been exposed to Holocaust denial.
- 38% have considered emigrating in the past five years over safety fears, up from 27% six years ago.

The report says anti-Semitic abuse has become so common that most victims do not bother reporting the incidents. It found that 79% of the respondents who said they had experienced anti-Semitic harassment in the prior five years chose not to report the most serious incident that they experienced to the police or to any other organization.

We also have data on anti-Semitic attitudes amongst the general population in countries where major Jewish communities exist. ADL's Global 100 Index Survey measures anti-Semitic attitudes around the world using a core 11-question index that has served as a benchmark for previous ADL polling around the world, starting in the U.S. in 1964. In November, we released the findings of our latest iteration of the poll, a survey of more than 9,000 adults in 18 countries, in Eastern and Western Europe, Canada, South Africa, Argentina and Brazil.⁵ We found that anti-Semitic attitudes remain pervasive. In the 12 EU countries surveyed, plus Ukraine and Russia, the poll found that one in four respondents agreed with a majority of the 11 stereotypes tested.

Some of the most disturbing findings involve stereotypes about Jews that relate to political attitudes and perceptions of Jewish power and loyalty. In seven Western European countries – Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, and Spain – more than 40 percent of respondents believe that Jews are more loyal to the State of Israel than to their own country. In the Central and Eastern European countries surveyed, the most common stereotype is that Jews have too much power in the business world. The numbers are astonishing: Ukraine 72 percent, Hungary 71 percent, Poland 56 percent, and Russia 50 percent. Combining the trope about Jews and money with the notion of illegitimate Jewish power is classical anti-Semitism.

Since 1985, ADL's work has also included a dedicated team combating cyberhate and online harassment, reporting on trends, sharing intelligence with law enforcement, and helping more than 20,000 individuals face down threats. As part of this work, ADL has worked in close partnership with industry urging them to adopt best practices for addressing cyberhate. These have been guiding brand-name Internet and media companies for years.

In Argentina, for example, anti-Semitic incidents frequently occur online, where conspiracies of Jewish control and power are propagated at very high rates.⁶ Yet online hatred rarely stays

⁵ ADL, *Global 100: 2019 Survey Update*, November 21, 2019. (<https://global100.adl.org/about/2019>)

⁶ Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA), *Informe Sobre Antisemitismo en la Argentina 2018*, October 2019. (<http://www.daia.org.ar/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/informe2018-web.pdf>); Ilanit Chernick, "Argentina Sees 107% Spike in Anti-Semitism," *Jerusalem Post*, October 3, 2019. (<https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Argentina-sees-107-percent-spike-in-antisemitism-603445>)

online. For example, a rabbi was physically attacked walking home from services in Rosario, Argentina in May in what was considered an anti-Semitic attack,⁷ and cases of Nazi references and lack of understanding of the Holocaust often creep into the schools in Buenos Aires and elsewhere in Argentina.

Responding to Incidents:

Anti-Semitic incidents affect the sense of security of Jewish communities. But so do the responses to those incidents. For example, the solidarity march we supported in New York this past Sunday sent a powerful signal that recent attacks in such places as Monsey, Jersey City, and Brooklyn are condemned by people of good conscience across a broad spectrum of communities.

Just a few weeks ago, in eastern France, a Jewish cemetery suffered a major vandalism attack. Over 100 graves were spray-painted with swastikas and other graffiti. The reaction of the French government was swift. The very next week, Minister of the Interior Christophe Castaner announced the creation of a new national hate crime office to coordinate with police forces to ensure – in his words – that “perpetrators of these vile acts are brought to justice.”⁸

Unfortunately, law enforcement are not always responsive to Jewish security concerns, and the consequences can be devastating. This past Yom Kippur, the Jewish community in Halle, Germany, had asked for police protection during services on this High Holiday. The local police did not respond,⁹ so they weren’t there when a white supremacist opened fire on the synagogue. Only following that attack did the German Federal Ministry of Interior gather all state-level Ministries of Interior to develop and announce a 10-point plan against extremism, including securing all major Jewish facilities.¹⁰

We have also seen heartening responses from outside of government. In the UK, many non-Jewish political and civil society leaders have spoken out forcefully against anti-Semitism in the Labour Party. Just as the local Muslim community in Pittsburgh rallied to support their Jewish neighbors after the shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue, so did the Muslim community in

⁷ “Officials alarmed by anti-Semitic assaults in Argentina,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, June 12, 2019. (<https://www.jta.org/2019/06/12/global/officials-alarmed-by-anti-semitic-assaults-in-argentina>)

⁸ “France Pledges Hate Crime Office after Jewish Cemetery Desecrated,” *France24*, December 4, 2019. (<https://www.france24.com/en/20191204-france-pledges-hate-crime-office-after-jewish-cemetery-desecrated>)

⁹ Luisa Beck and Rick Noack, “Synagogue Attacker Hoped to Inspire Further Anti-Semitic Attacks, German Authorities Say,” *Washington Post*, October 10, 2019. (https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/after-deadly-attack-outside-halle-synagogue-jewish-community-worries-about-safety-in-germany/2019/10/10/434b2ce8-eae5-11e9-a329-7378fbfa1b63_story.html)

¹⁰ “German Officials Present Plan to Combat Anti-Semitic Violence, Far-Right Extremism,” *Deutsche Welle*, October 18, 2019. (<https://www.dw.com/en/german-officials-present-plan-to-combat-anti-semitic-violence-far-right-extremism/a-50893395>)

Denmark after the shooting at the Copenhagen synagogue.¹¹ Members of the Danish Muslim community, many of them young adults, came together to form a symbolic protective ring around the synagogue.

Too often there is indifference to anti-Semitism, but the forceful responses by governments and civil society are important factors in reassuring Jews.

How Anti-Israel Bigotry Affects Jewish Communities:

In countries with Jewish communities, we often see the issue of anti-Semitism occurring through the prism of Israel. For example, it would be impossible to fully understand the UK Labour Party's descent into being institutionally anti-Semitic under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership without understanding the kneejerk anti-Israel orientation of Corbyn and his inner circle.

European Jewish university students have told ADL that they face both anti-Semitism and severe anti-Israel bias. Through a new partnership with the European Union of Jewish Students, ADL will provide significant training on how best to respond. ADL's "Words To Action" training has many years of proven success with Jewish students in the United States, and has been field tested with European Jewish students over the last year. ADL and EUJS are looking to expand their joint capacity to bring this valuable "Words To Action" training to students across Europe.

Educating law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges about anti-Semitism is a prerequisite for proper enforcement of hate crime laws, when the incidents have an anti-Semitic aspect. Too often we have seen egregious cases, such as a German judge ruling that a Molotov cocktail attack against a synagogue was an anti-Israel protest. ADL has tremendous experience in educating U.S. law enforcement officials, and educated Austrian law enforcement for over a decade to better understand and react to anti-Semitism and other biases.

In Latin America, anti-Zionist views often cross the line into anti-Semitism when Jewish communities are unfairly blamed for the conflict with the Palestinians. For example, in Chile Jews routinely experience hostility and intimidation on college campuses and in the public sphere from BDS advocates.

The most severe manifestation in Latin America of anti-Israel radicalism targeting Jews was of course when two terrorist attacks in the 1990s struck the Israeli Embassy and the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires. These attacks were masterminded by Iran and perpetrated by Hezbollah, and the culprits have yet to be held accountable in a court of law.

¹¹ "Danish Muslims Get OK to Form Peace Ring Around Copenhagen Synagogue," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, March 10, 2015. (<https://www.jta.org/2015/03/10/global/danish-muslims-to-form-peace-ring-around-copenhagen-synagogue-2>)

And in Iran itself, the vastly diminished Jewish community that remains is forced to denounce Israel in the harshest of terms, parroting the regime's demonization of "the Zionist entity" simply to allow for their own survival. The regime's anti-Semitism is certainly exacerbated by hatred toward the Jewish state, but perhaps its most obvious manifestation has nothing to do with the State of Israel at all: namely, Tehran's grotesque fixation on promoting Holocaust denial.

How ADL Supports Jewish Communities Abroad:

ADL seeks to protect Jewish communities all over the world.

Ensuring the security, stability and indeed, the very existence of the Jewish national homeland is an essential part of protecting the Jewish people and their ability to fulfill their traditions freely and openly. After all, Israel is the physical home to almost half of the world's Jewish population.

Europe is home to 1.4 million Jews in 38 countries. ADL works with large and small communities, from France (450,000) to Finland (1,000), to address issues that confront their ability to live openly and freely as Jews. ADL's advocacy in Europe focuses foremost on the physical security of Jewish communities. In coordination with the local communities, we call on governments to ensure that adequate attention and resources are devoted to security, that potential threats are addressed, and any perpetrators of attacks on Jewish communities are prosecuted to the full extent of the law. ADL's expertise in extremism is increasingly being shared with European interlocutors. We are training senior European law enforcement and counter-terrorism officials, and we are conducting joint research with leading European extremism experts.

When anti-Semitic statements in Europe are made prominently, pervasively, or by public officials, ADL condemns the hateful remarks and calls on leaders and opinion-makers to join with us. Since 2016, ADL has trained European Jewish students to respond to anti-Semitic comments and anti-Israel bias with techniques that we have honed through decades of work with American Jewish students. ADL has provided input on cyberhate to European policymakers and works with Jewish communities to address cyberhate, helping them to respond to incidents and intervening with tech companies on their behalf.

Similarly, we support Jewish communities in Latin America when they face anti-Semitism. We monitor issues facing Latin American Jewry and add our voice when needed. We develop student trainings that are translated and culturally adapted to local Jewish youth, and we stand up against campaigns that advance delegitimization of Israel or intimidate Latin American Jews. We

also partner with regional organizations to convene leaders to fight anti-Semitism in innovative ways.

In the Middle East and beyond, we monitor egregious cases of systematic anti-Semitic incitement, particularly in cases that are enabled or even propagated by the state. For instance, ADL issued a report last year and an op-ed this year on the subject of ongoing anti-Semitic incitement and other forms of bigotry in Saudi Arabia's state-published school textbooks for children.¹² We exposed similar incitement in Qatari state textbooks this spring¹³ and from a state television program about Israel and Jewish people that is broadcast by Egyptian state television.¹⁴

On the other hand, it is still important to mention that recently we have also seen some positive signs of openness in the region, with some changes in elite attitudes towards Jews.

Policy Recommendations:

The time for action is now. Here are some proactive steps that USCIRF can urge governments around the world to take in order to step up the fight against anti-Semitism inside their jurisdictions.

What Governments Around the World Can Do To Combat Anti-Semitism:

- Provide robust political leadership to reassure targeted communities and to discredit, reject and marginalize anti-Semitism by speaking out against manifestations of anti-Semitism and other forms of scapegoating across the political spectrum.
- Utilize the IHRA (the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) working definition of anti-Semitism to provide educational guidance for law enforcement, teachers, and community leaders. A broad, inclusive definition should include current manifestations of anti-Semitism, allow for protected political expression on Israel and Zionism, but draw the line before such expression becomes intentional, unlawful, discriminatory intimidation and harassment.

¹² David Andrew Weinberg, *Teaching Hate and Violence: Problematic Passages from Saudi State Textbooks for the 2018-19 School Year*, ADL International Affairs, November 2018. (<https://www.adl.org/media/12180/download>); David Andrew Weinberg, "Saudi Arabia's Children are Learning from Anti-Semitic Textbooks," *The Forward*, November 4, 2019. (<https://forward.com/opinion/434169/saudi-arabias-children-are-learning-from-anti-semitic-textbooks/>)

¹³ David Andrew Weinberg, "Qatari Government Promotes Textbook Teaching that Jews Seek World Domination," *ADL Blog*, February 7, 2019. (<https://www.adl.org/blog/qatari-government-promotes-textbook-teaching-that-jews-seek-world-domination>)

¹⁴ David Andrew Weinberg, "Anti-Semitic Show Does Not Belong on Egyptian State Television," *ADL Blog*, August 29, 2019. (<https://www.adl.org/blog/anti-semitic-show-does-not-belong-on-egyptian-state-television>)

- Promote detailed and comprehensive public reporting on anti-Semitic incidents and all other forms of hate violence and discrimination. All governments that are members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, for example, should ensure that they better fulfill their obligations to report to the OSCE detailed data on hate crimes in their territory, including furnishing detailed data about the number and nature of anti-Semitic hate crimes committed in their country in the most recent reporting year.
- Ensure that governments have specific senior officials tasked with combating anti-Semitism and to do the same for all forms of hate.
- Mandate hate crime prevention and response training into law enforcement education.
- Work closely with local Jewish communities to address issues of concern, including security matters and the freedom to practice their religion openly and without legal restrictions.
- Ensure that school curricula include education about the Holocaust, modern-day anti-Semitism, and inclusive anti-bias training.
- Vigorously combat violent extremist groups that perpetrate attacks on Jews or other communities, regardless of whether such extremist groups hail from radical segments of the right wing, the left wing, or other religious or ethnic communities.
- Ensure that social media and other technology companies adopt and rigorously enforce robust terms of service against cyberhate, including the particular forms in which anti-Semitic slanders and conspiracy theories manifest.
- Adopt legislation to better combat cyber harassment, cyberstalking, doxing, and swatting.
- Proactively monitor public discourse – including official media outlets – for anti-Semitic incitement and speak out to discourage such content in the future.