



# **Strategies in Facing Antisemitism: An Educational Resource Guide**

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## Foreword

This resource guide has been produced to honor the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Simon Wiesenthal, the noted Holocaust survivor, Nazi hunter, champion against antisemitism and human rights advocate who died at the age of ninety-six in September 2005. Its contents are partially based upon the book, *Antisemitism: The Generic Hatred –Essays in Memory of Simon Wiesenthal*. That volume, published under the auspices of UNESCO, the Simon Wiesenthal Center and the Verbe et Lumiere foundation in France, received the National Jewish Book Award in 2007.

Simon Wiesenthal survived the Nazi extermination camps during the Holocaust, and devoted his life to fighting antisemitism and bigotry as well as speaking out for tolerance and human dignity. Yet, throughout his long and sometimes lonely struggle, he always remained optimistic, believing that young people will bring about positive change. The responsibility for nurturing that faith was one that he took very seriously. In his last book, he stated, “We, the survivors have an obligation not only to the dead but also to future generations...” We bear the collective responsibility to uphold the exemplary legacy of Holocaust survivors.

Our two institutions are jointly committed to preserving and nurturing the moral values that provide the foundation for a democratic society. In this spirit, we share the goal to combat antisemitism as well as to provide educators with pedagogical materials on how the battle can and should be waged. It is our hope that this resource guide, including a new lesson plan developed by the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem, will become a useful tool for teachers that can be implemented in their respective classrooms.

Avner Shalev, Chairman

Rabbi Marvin Hier, Dean and Founder

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*Antisemitism, the Generic Hatred: Essays in Memory of Simon Wiesenthal* was originally published under the auspices of UNESCO. We are grateful to Koichiro Matsuura, UNESCO's Director-General for his continuing interest and commitment, and to Dr. Graciela Samuels of UNESCO who facilitated this project. We also would like to recognize the Verbe et Lumiere Foundation which helped make the original volume possible.

The guide consists of material from the book, and both institutions, augmented by additional material from the OSCE/ODIHR, which was added through the assistance of our colleague Norbert Hinterleitner of ODIHR. We are grateful to Ambassador Janez Lenarcic for generously allowing the use of this material. We would also like to express our appreciation to the Academic Advisor of the Task Force for International Cooperation of Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, Professor Dina Porat, for her expert advice.

Finally, we would like to express our thanks to Professor Irwin Cotler, Dr. Gert Weisskirchen, who is also the Special Representative to the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on Antisemitism Issues, and Günther Jekeli for allowing us to include their contributions in this resource guide.

# Biography of Simon Wiesenthal (1908-2005)

By Mark Weitzman\*

Born on December 31, 1908, in Buczacz, Galicia (in the Polish Ukraine), Simon Wiesenthal was raised in a typical *shtetl* (small Jewish town) environment. The family moved to Lwow, Vienna, and finally back to Buczacz. Wiesenthal continued his education in Prague, where he was trained as an architect. Leaving school in 1932, Wiesenthal returned to Lwow, where he married Cyla Muller in 1936 and, due to antisemitism, only received the formal degree of architectural engineer in 1939. In the wake of the nonaggression pact between the Nazis and the communists in 1939, the Russians took over Lwow, and Wiesenthal was no longer allowed to practice his profession.

On June 28, 1941, the Nazis occupied Lwow, and Wiesenthal and his family were swept up in the Nazi occupation. Wiesenthal went through a series of concentration camps, including Gross-Rosen, Janowska, Buchenwald, and finally Mauthausen, in Austria, from which the U.S. Army liberated him on May 5, 1945. Shortly thereafter he was reunited with his wife, who was the only other member of their extended families to survive, and in 1946 their only child, a daughter, was born.

## Career

Wiesenthal began his postwar career by aiding the U.S. war crimes investigators in the immediate aftermath of liberation. In May 1945 he submitted his first extensive list of Nazi perpetrators to the U.S. authorities, and joined their team as an investigator and translator. The onset of the cold war between the Western countries and the Soviet Union caused the United States and the other Western Allies to turn away from the pursuit and judgment of Nazis, by either ignoring them or using them as either scientific or intelligence assets. (This was true of the Soviet Union and other Communist bloc countries as well.) By 1947 the U.S. Army had begun to abandon the effort, but using files that had been collected by the army, Wiesenthal opened the first Jewish Historical Documentation Center in Linz. He maintained this center until 1954, when he closed it down due to the lack of interest and support, sending most of his files to Yad Vashem, Israel's center for Holocaust study and commemoration. For the next few years Wiesenthal worked as a journalist and with refugee agencies.

The trial of Adolf Eichmann in Israel in 1961 brought both Wiesenthal and the pursuit of Nazis back into the limelight. While many people have claimed full credit for the capture, Wiesenthal's contribution of persistent tracking and important information greatly helped the Israeli operation.

As a result of this renewed interest, Wiesenthal decided to move to Vienna and to reopen his Documentation Center there. Continuing to work independently, he became famous as the world's leading Nazi-hunter. Over the next decades he investigated and helped bring to justice over one thousand Nazi war criminals. Some of the more prominent cases included Franz Stangl, the commandant of Sobibor and Treblinka, Franz Murer, commandant of the Vilna ghetto, Karl Silberbauer, the policeman who arrested Anne Frank, Hermine Braunsteiner Ryan, the former Majdanek guard who was located in the United States, thus publicizing the presence of Nazi war criminals in the United States and Eduard Roschmann, second in command of the Riga ghetto.

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\* Adapted from Dinah Shelton (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes against Humanity* (New York: Macmillan, 2005), p. 1163.

From the early stages of his postwar career, Wiesenthal spoke up for various groups, not only Jews. In the 1950s he began to speak about the fate of the Roma and Sinti under the Nazis and has continued to draw attention to their persecution in Europe. He also spoke out on behalf of other threatened groups such as the Cambodians under Pol Pot and the Kurds. He championed the Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov, and helped draw the world's attention to the fate of Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved Jews during the Holocaust and vanished after being arrested by the Soviets in 1945.

### **Prolific Author**

Wiesenthal was a prolific author over the years. Among his most significant works were *The Murderers Among Us* (1967), which interweaves chapters describing Wiesenthal's life and beliefs with those describing his pursuit of specific Nazis; *The Sunflower* (1970, 1998), which is a symposium on forgiveness with responses from major thinkers; *Everyday Remembrance Day* (1987), a calendar of antisemitism throughout Jewish history; and a last volume of memoirs, *Justice Not Vengeance* (1989). His other books include *Sails of Hope*, which deals with the theory of Christopher Columbus' supposed Jewish ancestry, as well as other works related to the Holocaust. In 1989 *The Murderers Among Us* was made into a major television film starring Ben Kingsley. Johanna Heer and Werner Schmiedel's acclaimed documentary about Wiesenthal, *The Art of Remembrance*, appeared in 1997. Wiesenthal has been the subject of many books, particularly the biography by Hella Pick, *Simon Wiesenthal: A Life in Search of Justice* (1996) and Alan Levy's *The Wiesenthal File* (1993).

### **Wiesenthal's Legacy**

Over the course of his long career Wiesenthal received many honors, including the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal (1980) and Presidential Medal of Freedom (2000), French Legion of Honor (1986), Great Medal of Merit (Germany, 1985), Erasmus Prize (Amsterdam, 1992), and he was named an honorary citizen of Vienna in 1995. In 2004 Wiesenthal was awarded an honorary knighthood (KBE) by Queen Elizabeth of England.

Wiesenthal's accomplishments include being the inspiration of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, which in 2004 had close to a half-million members worldwide, and is one of the leading Jewish human rights organizations in the world. For the first two decades after the Holocaust, his was essentially the only voice that kept the memory of that period alive for the public, particularly in Europe, and especially in the countries where National Socialism and the Holocaust originated. For the survivors and for many Jews who were born after the war he became the symbol of a new Jewish resolve to no longer be passive, overcoming the guilt associated with the claim that Jews were led "like sheep to the slaughter." His resolve to avoid revenge and to focus on bringing Nazi war criminals to justice served as an affirmation of the legal process and earned him international respect. Wiesenthal's persistent efforts, against determined opposition, eventually helped lead to the creation of Nazi hunting units in various countries including the United States, and also helped to normalize the concept of governmental action against war criminals. War crimes tribunals, such as those dealing with the genocides of Bosnia and Rwanda, might not have occurred had Wiesenthal not kept the pursuit of Nazi war criminals on the world's agenda for so long. By fighting to keep the memories of the victims alive and to bring justice to their killers, however delayed, he managed to help change the world's reaction to genocide and war crimes.

Simon Wiesenthal died on September 20, 2005, at the age of 96, and was buried in Israel.

## Short Overview of Antisemitism\*

The term antisemitism was first coined in the late 1870s, and since then it has come to be used with reference to all types of Jew-hatred, both historical and modern. The word itself comes from the idea that Hebrew belongs to the Semitic language family, and thus Jews must be "Semites." Many other languages also belong to the Semitic language family, such as Arabic and Ethiopic, and by the same token other groups of people could also be called "Semites." However, there is no such thing as "semitism," and no other groups have been included in the hatred and prejudice denoted by antisemitism. The word itself is a good example of how, during the late nineteenth century, Jew haters contended that their hatred had its basis in scholarly and scientific ideas.

Hatred of Jews and Judaism is not a modern phenomenon – it goes all the way back to ancient times. From its very beginnings the Jewish people have had to contend with anti-Jewish expressions. Turning to the Bible itself, Jewish thinkers have found in the conflict between Esau and Jacob, Pharaoh's or Haman's planned genocides, or even Amalek's attack in the desert, that the archetypes of antisemitism are rooted in the depths of Jewish memory.

In the ancient world there existed a pattern of successful proselytization, which would indicate an openness or even sympathy to Judaism, alongside legends and folklore, suspicion and fear.

Whatever one chooses to conclude about the definition of ancient anti-Judaism, there is no question that the birth of Christianity changed the situation dramatically. Many experts find the roots of modern antisemitism to be firmly imbedded in aspects of Christian theology. For Christianity, originating as it did within Judaism, the issue involved both the separation and creation of an identity distinct from Judaism. It also posed the question of how Jews, who accepted the Bible as the authoritative voice of God, did not accept the Messiah and religion that was for Christians, foretold in those scriptures. This meant that either the Christian reading of the Bible was false, or else that the Jews consciously and willfully denied the truth of the sacred text.

Traditional antisemitism is in many ways based upon religious discrimination against Jews by Christians. Christian doctrine was ingrained with the idea that Jews were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus, and thus deserve punishment (this is known as the Deicide, or killing of god, Myth). Building upon that hatred of Jews was the Supersession Myth, which claimed that Christianity had replaced Judaism, as the Jews had failed in their role as the chosen people of God – and thus deserved to be punished, specifically by the Christian world. Over the centuries various stereotypes about Jews came into being. Individual Jews were not judged based on their personal achievements or merits, but rather were seen on the whole as greedy, devilish, standoffish, lazy, money-grubbing, and over-sexed.

This basic pattern would continue to dominate European Jewish history for hundreds of years, well into the medieval period. The stereotype of the Jew as the financial manipulator was not the only new antisemitic image that developed in this period. The first recorded case of an allegation of ritual murder, the charge that Jews tortured and murdered Christian children, was in 1144, in Norwich, England. This charge claimed that Jews used the blood of Christian

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\* Based on the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, prepared by Yad Vashem, Facts On File and the Jerusalem Publishing House, edited by Dr. Robert Rozett and Dr. Shmuel Spector and an article by Mark Weitzman.

children on Passover for ritual purposes (e.g., in the making of unleavened bread eaten on Passover, or for drinking instead of wine). At around the same time the allegation of host desecration originated. This canard claimed that Jews manipulated Christians who owed them money into giving the host or wafer (used in Mass) to the Jewish people, who then used it to mutilate and torture the body of Jesus as they had done at the time of the Crucifixion. (The Catholic belief in transubstantiation, which holds that sacramental elements of the wafer and wine change into the literal body of Christ, made that charge particularly damning.) These images would become staples of antisemitic stereotyping and would prove to be both deadly and long-lived, lasting into the twenty-first century.

The combination of legal restriction, deadly suspicion, (e.g., the plague of the Black Death [1347-1350] which blamed Jews for poisoning the wells in Europe and caused anti-Jewish mob violence that resulted in thousands of deaths), demonization (e.g., the portrait of the *Judensau* — of Jews being suckled by a sow which became one of the most common caricatures in Medieval art), taken together created a situation where Jews were no longer welcome in Christian society, and consequently were forced into exile.

The Catholic re-conquest of Spain resulted in the exile of the Jews in 1492 along with the rise of the Inquisition. The Inquisition had no authority to pursue unconverted Jews, only to root out heretics within Christianity. It was the Spanish who introduced the concept of “blood”, thus making even conversion an insufficient shield for Jews.

The founding period of Islam began with Mohammad and continued until Islam had firmly established itself. The Koran, which dates from this period, records the initial Jewish opposition to Mohammed, and his triumph over the Jews of Medina. However, Mohammed also recognized a kinship with Jewish people, and accepted them as a “people of the book.” This created a fundamental ambivalence in the view of the Jew, who on one hand were the descendants of Abraham and on the other were distorters of the Bible. While the Koran contains many anti-Jewish statements, the most famous of which is the comparison of Jews to pigs and apes, an early *hadith* has Mohammed saying, “He who harms a member of the protected nation — I shall be his prosecutor on the Day of Judgment.”

In practice this ambivalence became reflected in the dual applications of tribute and tolerance. Once Jews agreed to pay tribute, thus acknowledging their humiliation and subjection, they were granted the status of “dhimmi.” In return they were extended the right of religious freedom, some forms of civil and political rights, and were able to benefit from some of the economic successes of the later Islamic world.

However, as Islam lost power, Christians, particularly Europeans, began exerting religious and economic interest. While the blood libel was an early precursor, European Christian’s antisemitic writings, particularly from the French, entered the Moslem world, along with ritual murder accusations, in the nineteenth century. All that was missing was racial antisemitism, which, for obvious reasons, never became popular in the Islamic world (although, in World War II, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin Al Hussein joined the Nazi cause). Today, however, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism includes usage of all the stock stereotypes of antisemitism and anti-Zionism, along with a general anti-Western and antiseccular ideology to fuel its fanaticism.

The nineteenth century gave the world the Enlightenment — a philosophical movement that based its ideas on reason rather than traditional, religious dogma, and was accompanied by social, humanitarian, and political progress. However, antisemitism did not disappear during the Enlightenment, it just changed forms. Jews were awarded equal rights and were



emancipated in many European countries, yet many people expressed Jew-hatred in their questioning of whether Jews could ever be truly loyal to the newly emerging nation states. In addition, people who did not approve of the modernization and political changes being made accused the Jews of being behind the changes.

During the 1870s the new political antisemitism was joined by “racial” antisemitism. Misusing the new ideas on evolution posited by the English naturalist Charles Darwin — who himself was not an antisemite — Jew haters began saying that Jews were an inferior “race” on the evolutionary scale. Since their problem was physical, or genetic, it could never be changed, despite assimilation. Included in this new form of antisemitism was the idea that Jews were responsible for the world’s troubles because of their race.

In Germany, this type of thinking found expression in a political, nationalist ideology called the *voelkisch* movement. This group’s representatives opposed the industrialization and secularism that accompany modernization, believing that these trends would destroy traditional German culture. They blamed Jews for undermining the Germans’ traditional way of life, and stated that German Jews were not really part of the German people. At the end of the nineteenth century many antisemitic political parties sprung up in Germany, which were further revitalized after Germany’s loss in World War I.

In France, antisemitism peaked in the 1890s during the Alfred Dreyfus Affair, in which this Jewish army officer was falsely accused of treason by Jew haters. In Russia, throughout the reign of the Czars, antisemitism was official government policy. Jewish movement was restricted to certain areas, and pogroms were exacerbated by the ruling class. Many Jews took part in the October Revolution, and this gave antisemites throughout Europe another excuse to blame Jews — because Jews were now associated with the hated Communists. Only after the February Revolution in 1917 were Jews granted equal rights.

The Nazi Party, which was created in 1919 and came to national power in Germany in 1933, was a political movement that was based on racist antisemitism. Although the Nazis targeted a number of groups, they discriminated against the Jewish people from the very beginning of their regime, first by instituting racial laws that separated Jews from the rest of the society, and later by exterminating members of the “inferior” race. In the countries that collaborated with or were occupied by the Nazis, the local manifestations of antisemitism — whether traditional, political, or racial — helped determine the Jews’ fate. Even in the countries that opposed Hitler and the Nazis, antisemitism still existed to some degree, and some experts believe that those antisemitic attitudes inhibited those nations from doing more to rescue Jews from the clutches of the Nazis.

During the Holocaust all the strands of past anti-Semitism merged, producing a system geared to the total, planned annihilation of the Jewish people in Europe (and in other countries projected to fall under Nazi rule). Jews were dehumanized (by being described as *unttermenschen* — subhuman), demonized, and condemned theologically. They were accused of being economic manipulators, both capitalist and communist. They were depicted as sexual corrupters, polluting racial bloodlines, as well as being traitors to Germany, responsible for the German defeat in World War I.

The art of the Nazi period reflected these themes. Jewish art and artists were banned, as Jews either “corrupted” or produced “degenerate” art. Nazi views of Jews referred back to traditional antisemitic caricatures. Newspapers like *Der Steurmer*, children’s books like *The Poison Mushroom*, adult books and movies like *The Eternal Jew*, all portrayed Jews as obscene sexual corrupters, corpulently gross financial manipulators or ritual murderers. Sometimes the

images were updated from the medieval originals, other times the originals and the new images were featured in the same source to demonstrate the unbridled historical claim of Jewish depravity. For every single antisemitic description in print, an equivalent caricature could be found in image. Kiosks in German cities were often decorated with these images, the worst of which came from Julius Streicher's semi-pornographic newspaper and publishing house, both named *Der Sturmer*.

After World War II, when the West realized what had happened in Europe, antisemitism was de-legitimized. Many churches admitted their huge mistake in cultivating traditional Christian antisemitism (Pope John Paul II termed antisemitism a sin). Science rejected Nazi pseudo-racial theories, and some governments no longer allowed the enactment of antisemitic policies. However, antisemitism was revitalized in the Soviet Union just a few years after the war's end, when Joseph Stalin became paranoid about his country's Jews and began persecuting them.

In addition, over the years, antisemites (especially radical Muslims who opposed the existence of the State of Israel) began camouflaging their Jew-hatred in "anti-Zionism." This effort culminated in 1975 when the United Nations passed a resolution stating that "Zionism is racism." This resolution was finally repealed in 1994. Holocaust denial and Neo-Nazism are other ways of expressing antisemitism in the modern world, in that they seek to absolve Nazism of its crimes or to glorify Nazism and Jew-hatred as it existed in the past.

Throughout Europe traditional extreme nationalist ideologies are making a comeback, and segments of the population are attempting to bring back aspects of traditional xenophobia, including antisemitism.

Tensions in the Middle East continue to spark antisemitism. As antisemitism became less acceptable in respectable circles, anti-Zionism has become the cloak for hostilities toward Jews. Unlike legitimate criticism of the State of Israel (as with any other nation), this hostility manifests itself by use of double standards, comparison with Nazi Germany and other forms of extreme discourse. Thus, current anti-Zionism frequently is the new expression of antisemitism and can be found on both the right and left.

Today, the fight against antisemitism is led by international organizations. Through programs of coalition building, political and social action, education, research, publicity and remembrance, these institutions attempt to confront racism in general and antisemitism in particular. The focus on the history of antisemitism, including the building of museums and memorials commemorating the Holocaust, is tied into the oft-repeated maxim of George Santanyana, "Those who ignore the past are condemned to repeat it."

# The New Antisemitism: An Assault on Human Rights

By Irwin Cotler

## Introduction: Antisemitism Old and New — Definition and Distinction

What we are witnessing today is a new, sophisticated, virulent, globalizing and even lethal anti-Jewishness, reminiscent of the atmospherics of the 1930s, and without parallel or precedent since the end of the Second World War. This new anti-Jewishness almost requires a new vocabulary to define it as discrimination against, denial of, or assault upon, the right of Israel and the Jewish people to live as an equal member of the family of nations.

This is not to suggest that Israel is somehow above the law, or that Israel is not to be held accountable for any violations of law. On the contrary – Israel is accountable for any violations of international law or human rights like any other state; and the Jewish people are not entitled to any privileged protection or preference because of the particularity of Jewish suffering.

Second, I am not referring to critiques, even serious critiques, of Israeli policy or Zionist ideology, however distasteful or offensive some of these critiques might sometimes be. But the converse is also true. Antisemitic critiques cannot mask themselves under the exculpatory disclaimer that “If I criticize Israel, they will say I am antisemitic”. In the words of *New York Times* commentator Thomas Friedman: “Criticizing Israel is not antisemitic, and saying so is vile. But singling out Israel for opprobrium and international sanctions — out of all proportion to any other party in the Middle East — is antisemitic, and not saying so is dishonest.”

## 1. The New Anti-Jewishness: Indices of Identification

The term “genocidal antisemitism” refers to the “direct and public incitement” to genocide, in this case to the destruction of Israel and the killing of Jews wherever they may be.

It has three manifestations. The first is the state-sanctioned or state-orchestrated genocidal antisemitism of UN member states. This intent is dramatized by the parading in the streets of Teheran of a Shihab-3 missile draped in the emblem of “Wipe Israel off the Map”, while demonizing both the State of Israel as a “cancerous tumor” and the Jewish people as “evil incarnate”, the whole inspired by an eschatological religious fanaticism that sees the “Death of Israel”.

A second manifestation of this genocidal antisemitism is in the covenants and charters, platforms and policies of such terrorist movements and militias as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah and Al-Qaeda, which not only call for the destruction of Israel and the killing of Jews wherever they may be, but also for the perpetration of acts of terror in furtherance of that objective.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah has not only spoken of Israel’s “disappearance”, but has also remarked that “If all the Jews were gathered in Israel it would be easier to kill them all at the same time”. In a lesser known, but no less defamatory and incendiary expression, Nasrallah has said that, “If we searched the entire world for a person more cowardly, despicable, weak and feeble in psyche, mind, ideology and religion, we would not find anyone like the Jew. Notice, I do not say the Israeli”. Shiite scholar Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, author of the book, *Hezbollah: Politics and Religion*, says this statement “provides moral justification and ideological justification for dehumanizing the Jews”. In this view, she went on, “the Israeli Jew becomes a legitimate target for extermination and it also legitimizes attacks on non-Israeli Jews”.

The third manifestation of this genocidal antisemitism is in the religious *fatwas* or execution writs, where these genocidal calls are held out as religious obligations — and where Jews and Judaism are characterized as the perfidious enemy of radical Islam.

Israel emerges here not only as the collective Jew among the nations, but as the Salman Rushdie among the nations. Yet there is a difference: when Iran issued a *fatwa* against this distinguished writer, the entire European community and others sought to impose sanctions against Iran. But with respect to Israel and Jews, we have *fatwas* not only from Iran, but *fatwas* issued by radical clerics throughout the Muslim and Arab world. Ironically, rather than the European community threatening sanctions against those who issue *fatwas* against an entire state and people, we see Israel threatened by sanctions for their response to the anti-Jewish terror mandated by such *fatwas*.

Overall, Israel is the only state in the world today — and the Jews the only people in the world today — that is constantly threatened by governmental, religious and terrorist bodies seeking their total destruction.

## **2. Political Antisemitism**

If genocidal antisemitism is a public call for or incitement to the destruction of Israel, political antisemitism is the denial of Israel's right to exist to begin with, or the denial of the Jewish people's right to self-determination, if not their very denial as a people. There are four manifestations of this phenomenon.

The first is the discrimination against, or denial of, the Jewish people's right to self-determination, the only right enshrined in both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and a right accorded to all other peoples. The Jewish people, then, is singled out and discriminated against with respect to its right to self-determination, which, as Martin Luther King, Jr. put it, "Is the denial to the Jews of the same right, the right to self-determination, that we accord to African nations and all other peoples of the globe. In short, it is antisemitism". This new antisemitism, sometimes coded as "anti-Zionism", is an assault on the religious, cultural, national and juridical sensibility of the Jewish people.

The second feature of political antisemitism is the denial of, the legitimacy, and existence, of the State of Israel. Classical antisemitism was anchored in discrimination against the Jewish religion, whereas the new anti-Jewishness is anchored in discrimination against Jews as a people and a nation. In each instance, then, the essence of antisemitism is the same — an assault upon whatever is the core of Jewish self-definition at any given moment in time, be it the Jewish religion at the time of classical antisemitism, or the State of Israel as the national expression of the Jewish people today.

A third variant is the denial of any historical connection between the Jewish people and the State of Israel, a form of Middle East historical revisionism or "memory cleansing" that seeks to extinguish or erase the Jewish people's relationship to Israel. Under this revisionist and exclusionary narrative, Jews are said to have no connection or claim to an historical Arab and Muslim land called Palestine. They have no historical link or claim to Jerusalem, nor any historical link or claim to the Temple Mount, nor even a claim to be a people. Jews are, as it were, erased from history.

This leads to the fourth variant of political antisemitism. I am referring here to the "demonizing" of Israel — the attribution to Israel of all the evils of the world, the portrayal of

Israel as the enemy of all that is good, and the repository of all that is evil. This is the contemporary analogue to the medieval indictment of the Jew as the “poisoner of the wells”. In other words, in a world in which human rights has emerged as the new secular religion of our time, the portrayal of Israel as the metaphor for a human rights violator is an indictment of Israel as the “new anti-Christ” – “poisoning international wells” with no right to exist.

### **3. Ideological Antisemitism**

If the first two indicators – genocidal antisemitism and political antisemitism – are overt, public and clearly demonstrable, ideological antisemitism is a much more sophisticated and arguably more pernicious expression of the new antisemitism.

Ideological antisemitism finds expression not in any genocidal incitement against Jews and Israel, or overt racist denial of the Jewish people and Israel’s right to exist; rather, ideological antisemitism disguises itself as part of the struggle against racism. Moreover, it marches under the banner of anti-racism, and under the protective cover of the United Nations and the international struggle against racism.

The first manifestation of this ideological antisemitism was its institutional and juridical anchorage in the 1975 “Zionism is racism” resolution at the United Nations, a resolution that, as United States Senator Daniel Moynihan said, gave the abomination of antisemitism the appearance of international legal sanction. However, we have gone beyond the notion of Zionism as racism, notwithstanding the fact that there was a formal repeal of this resolution at the United Nations in the 1990s. “Zionism as racism” is alive and well in the international arena, particularly in the campus cultures in North America and Europe, as the recent British All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism reported. But there are two additional manifestations of this ideological antisemitism that bear appreciation.

The second manifestation is the indictment of Israel as an apartheid state. This involves more than the indictment of Israel as an apartheid state; it also involves, as evidenced by the events at the 2001 UN World Conference against Racism in Durban, the call for the dismantling of Israel as an apartheid state. This indictment is not limited to talk about divestment – it is about the actual dismantling of Israel based upon the notion of apartheid as a crime against humanity.

The third manifestation of ideological antisemitism is the “nazification” of Israel. Israel is delegitimized and demonised, by the ascription to it of the two most scurrilous indictments of twentieth-century racism Nazism and apartheid, and so becomes the embodiment of all evil.

These very labels of Zionism and Israel as “racist, apartheid and Nazi” are enough to supply the criminal indictment. The convergence of these three labels – this “triple racism” – now warrants the dismantling of Israel as a moral obligation. This characterization is also used to justify terrorist “resistance” to this Nazi apartheid state as legitimate, if not mandatory.

### **4. “Legalized Antisemitism”: Discriminatory Treatment in the International Arena**

Legalized antisemitism aims to mask itself under the banner of human rights, to invoke the authority of international law, and to operate under the protective cover of the United Nations, the lynchpin of international human rights law.

For instance, the World Conference against Racism in Durban turned into a conference of racism against Israel and the Jewish people. A conference intended to commemorate the dismantling of South Africa as an apartheid state resonated with the call for the dismantling of

Israel as an apartheid state. A conference dedicated to the promotion of human rights as the new secular religion of our time increasingly singled out Israel as the meta-human rights violator of our day. A conference that was to speak in the name of humanity ended up as a metaphor for hate and inhumanity.

The second example of this Orwellian anti-Jewishness marching under the banner of human rights took place annually for over thirty-five years at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The UN has emerged as the lynchpin of international human rights law, exerting an enormous influence on the large class of UN civil servants; on governments and Members of Parliament around the world; on the critical mass of people who are exposed to, and influenced by, UN human rights decision-making internationally; on students and scholars all over the world who learn the “jurisprudence” of the UN Commission on Human Rights as part of their learning and part of their intellectual experience; and on the media who report it, and civil society, which is influenced by it.

Approximately thirty percent of all the resolutions passed at the UN Commission on Human Rights over the past thirty-five years were indictments of Israel. Among the resolutions adopted, as in the 2002 session which convened at the zenith of anti-Jewish terror, were resolutions that indicted Israel for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Although Israel has annually been the target of some five indictments, no other state has been the object of more than one resolution or indictment, while the major human rights violators – Iran, China, Sudan – enjoy exculpatory immunity.

In the anti-terrorism debate that took place at the UN in the immediate aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Arab states and their supporters opposed any attempt to classify “resistance” as terrorism, thereby appropriating the Durban rhetoric of the delegitimization of Israel, on the one hand, and the legitimization of terrorism as “resistance” against Israel, on the other. In a not-so-subtle reference to Israel, the UN Commission on Human Rights even passed a resolution in 2002 justifying the use of “resistance by all available means” in instances of colonialism, foreign occupation and the like, which has been taken to validate anti-Jewish terror against Israeli civilians.

Accordingly, it was a hopeful sign when a reform panel of eminent persons appointed by the Secretary-General referred to the Commission’s “eroding credibility and professionalism”, going on to note that “the Commission on Human Rights suffers from a legitimacy deficit that casts doubts on the overall reputation of the United Nations”. The Commission was replaced in June 2006 by the newly created UN Human Rights Council, heralded as “the dawn of a new era”. As stated by UN Watch Executive Director Hillel Neuer in 2006, “The Council [...] devoted one hundred percent of its country-specific resolutions, two special sessions, one fact-finding mission, and a “high level commission of inquiry” to one single purpose: the demonization of Israel.”

A third case study of this “legalized” antisemitism is even more compelling. For fifty-two years after its adoption in 1949, the contracting parties of the Geneva Convention never met – notwithstanding the genocide in Cambodia, the ethnic cleansing and genocide in the Balkans, the unspeakable and preventable genocide in Rwanda, and the killing fields in Sudan and Sierra Leone. The first time – and the only time – that the contracting parties of the Geneva Convention came together was in December 2001 was to condemn Israel.

## 5. European Antisemitism

The documentary record in Europe since the dawn of the new millennium – and particularly, ironically enough, in the post-September 11 universe – and in the aftermath of the most horrific acts of anti-Jewish terror in Israel that reached a zenith in March 2002 (when 126 Israelis were murdered in a single month) – suggest that antisemitism in Europe is finding continuing and growing expression.

Overall, we are witnessing a rise of antisemitism in Europe almost without parallel or precedent since the Second World War, particularly in Western European nations. In the words of Per Ahlmark, former leader of the Swedish Liberal Party and Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden: “Compared to most previous anti-Jewish outbreaks, this one is often less directed against individual Jews. It attacks primarily the collective Jew, the State of Israel. And then such attacks start a chain reaction of assaults on individual Jews and Jewish institutions ... In the past, the most dangerous antisemites were those who wanted to make the world *Judenrein*, ‘free of Jews’. Today, the most dangerous antisemites might be those who want to make the world *Judenstaatrein*, ‘free of a Jewish state’”.

## 6. Radical Muslim and Arab Antisemitism

The sixth indicator of the new anti-Jewishness is what may be termed the radical, globalizing, totalitarian Arab and Muslim antisemitism. Again, as with European antisemitism, an important caveat is required. None of this is intended to suggest – nor should it be inferred – that Islam is antisemitic, or that any Muslim country is antisemitic. Only that there is an extremist genre of radical Islam that is antisemitic, and it would be patronizing – and dangerous – not to identify and combat it, as many Muslims and Arabs are doing.

## 7. Theological Antisemitism

State-sanctioned Islamist antisemitism demonizes Jews and Judaism as the perfidious enemy of Islam. This is found often state-sponsored in the proclamations from Islamist pulpits – and broadcasts on various television networks – such as the words of the Palestinian Authority-appointed and funded Imam, Ahmed Abu Halabiya: “The Jews must be butchered and tortured: Allah will torture them with your hands. Have no mercy on the Jews... wherever you meet them... kill them.” This is sometimes merged with the doctrine of Christian replacement theology that holds that the Jews have been replaced by the Church in God’s favor, so that all of God’s promises to the Jewish people, including the Land of Israel, have been inherited by Christianity because of the perfidy of the Jews. Thus both major religions are seen to view Jews as punished or rejected by God.

## 8. Cultural Antisemitism

Antisemitic attitudes, sentiments and innuendos have become openly acceptable in academia, in parliaments, among the literati, public intellectuals and the human rights movement. For example:

- The remarks of a French Ambassador to Britain to the effect that why should the world risk another world war because of “that shitty little country Israel”;
- British novelist A.N. Wilson accused the Israeli army of “the poisoning of water supplies”;
- Tom Paulin, Oxford professor and poet, asserted that Brooklyn-born Jews who have settled in the West Bank “Are Nazis, racist ... they should be shot dead. I feel nothing but hatred for them”;

- Peter Hain, a former minister in the British Foreign Office, stated that the present Zionist state is by definition racist and will have to be dismantled.
- In Germany, former minister Norbert Blüm characterized Israeli anti-terrorist activities in the West Bank as a “limitless war of annihilation”;
- Jürgen Möllemann, an official of the German Free Democrats, defended Palestinian terrorism against Jews, the whole causing a commentator in the *Suddeutsche Zeitung* to write: “It’s been a long time since the hatred of Jews – once disguised as antisemitism – has been socially acceptable in Germany as it is today.”
- In Italy, in the liberal daily *La Stampa*, a cartoon showed the infant Jesus looking up from his manger at an Israeli tank and pleading, “Don’t tell me they want to kill me again”.
- José Saramago, a Portuguese Nobel Laureate in literature, wrote that “We can compare what is happening in the Palestinian territories with Auschwitz”;
- In the words of Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis, “Today it is possible to say that this small nation is the root of evil. It is full of self-importance and evil stubbornness.”

### 9. Holocaust Denial

Another variant of this new antisemitism is Holocaust denial, which moves inexorably from denying the Holocaust, to accusing Jews of fabricating the “hoax” of the Holocaust, to indicting Jews for extorting false reparations from the innocent German people, to the building of their “illegal” State of Israel on the backs of the real indigenous owners, the Palestinians. Those who would seek to deny the Jewish people their past are the same people who, if given the chance, would deny the Jewish people their future.

### 10. Economic Antisemitism

There are two main manifestations of economic antisemitism. The first refers to the economic coercion and discrimination practised through the Arab boycott. The new economic antisemitism involves the extra-territorial application by Arab countries of an international restrictive covenant against corporations, conditioning their trade contracts on their undertaking not to do business with Israel (secondary boycott); or not doing business with another corporation which may be doing business with Israel (tertiary boycott); or even, in certain instances, conditioning the trade on such corporations neither hiring nor promoting Jews amongst them.

Second is the rise of academic, university, trade union and related boycotts and divestments that single out Israel, Israeli Jews and supporters of Israel for selective opprobrium and exclusion. As the *UK All-Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism* reported:

- “We received evidence regarding the attitudes of a small number of academics whose critical views of Israel have adversely affected their relations with Jewish students.”
- “At its annual conference in 2005 the Association of University Teachers (AUT) passed a motion boycotting two Israeli universities, Haifa and Bar Ilan.”
- “...though the motivations of the boycotters may not in themselves be antisemitic, the effect of their actions would be to cause difficulties for Jewish academics and students. The majority of those who have institutional affiliations to Israeli universities are Jewish, and thus the consequences of a boycott would be to exclude Jews from academic life.”
- “The singling out of Israel is also of concern. Boycotts have not been suggested against other countries. Also of particular concern to witnesses was the concept of a ‘loyalty test’ for Israeli Jews, described by some as ‘McCarthyite’, signifying as it does the assumption of collective responsibility and collective guilt.”



- “The discourse around the boycott debate gave cause for concern, as it moved beyond reasonable criticism into antisemitic demonization of Israel.”

The *UK All-Parliamentary Inquiry* concluded that “calls to boycott contact with academics working in Israel are an assault on academic freedom and intellectual exchange. We recommend that lecturers in the new University and College Lecturers Union are given every support to combat such selective boycotts that are anti-Jewish in practice”.

### **11. Terrorism against Jews**

The terrorist targeting of Jews, which has continued unabated, is marked by several disturbing characteristics of an antisemitic nature. First, terrorist targets in Israel are expressly and explicitly anti-Jewish – designed not only to kill and maim as many Israeli Jews as possible, but to terrorize Jewish neighborhoods, synagogues, schools, busses, the core symbols and expressions of Jewish life and living. In the words of Muslim cleric Sheikh Ibrahim Mahdi, repeated endlessly on Palestinian Authority television: “All weapons must be aimed at the Jews, at the enemies of Allah, the cursed nation in the Qur’an, whom the Qur’an describes as monkeys and pigs.”

Second, the terrorist aims at Jews and Jewish targets outside of Israel as well. The phenomena of home-grown or extremist terrorism in Europe and North America only exacerbate this threat.

Third, these terrorist attacks are often religiously inspired or ordered, such that anti-Jewish terrorism is considered obligatory, the terrorists are regarded as “martyrs”, and the Jewish victims as an evil abstraction.

Fourth, anti-Jewish terror is the product of a state-orchestrated, state-sanctioned culture of hate – integrating both old and new forms of anti-Jewishness – that finds increasing expression in the incitement to hatred in state-controlled mosques, media, schools and so on, including such recent examples as the broadcasting of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the blood libel, and the appropriation of symbols and motifs from classical antisemitism to demonize Israel and the Jewish people today.

### **12. The Old/New *Protocols of the Elders of Zion***

For over one hundred years, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* – the Tsarist forgery proclaiming an “international Jewish conspiracy” bent on “world domination”, and responsible for all the evils in the world; that ignited the anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia at the turn of the twentieth century; that underpinned *Mein Kampf*, which served as the lynchpin of the Nazi “conspiracy theory” has served as justification for the demonization of the Jew as a prologue to genocide.

Today, the “lie that wouldn’t die” now underpins the most outrageous of international conspiracy thinking and incitement, including:

- That the Jewish people were responsible for September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, claiming that “the Jews” were capable of orchestrating a macabre deed of such magnitude and complexity; or that Jewish workers were forewarned about the attacks, and therefore did not go to work on September 11; or that New York rabbis were also forewarned, and urged to withdraw money from the stock markets; or that the Mossad actually carried out this horrific act.
- Israel and the Jews are held responsible for a series of “new protocols”, including that the Jews are behind the spread of AIDS, Avian flu, the destruction of the space shuttle

Columbia, the Danish cartoons blaspheming the Prophet Mohammed, the Pope's defaming Islam, or the war in Iraq and so on.

- In the last few months, Israel, world Jewry or the "Zionists" have been blamed for fabricating the "genocide" in Darfur, with Sudanese President Omar el-Bashir referring to it as a "Zionist plot"; for conniving with the US to initiate the war against Hezbollah; and for being behind the Argentinean Special Prosecutors' indictment of Iranian leaders for the bombing of the Jewish Community Center in Argentina.

### **Conclusion**

This article is not intended to suggest that Israel is somehow above the law, or that it is not to be held accountable for any violations of law. On the contrary – Israel is accountable for any violations of international law or human rights like any other state; and the Jewish people are not entitled to any privileged protection or preference because of the particularity of Jewish suffering.

The problem is that Israel has been systematically denied equality before the law; the human rights of Israel have not been respected; human rights standards have not been applied equally to anyone else.

Israel and the Jewish people have been singled out for differential and discriminatory treatment in the international arena and, worst of all, have been singled out for genocidal assault and terrorist attack.

The time has come to sound the alarm – not only for Israel and the Jewish people whose safety and security is under existential threat and attack – but for the world community and the human condition as a whole.

## When It's Not Enough to Know: The European Experience

Gert Weisskirchen

We should never lose sight of the specificity of antisemitism, whose history includes 2,000 years of persecution, culminating in the Shoah. Education seeks primarily to draw universal lessons from cases of discrimination, genocide and other crimes against humanity. Holocaust education aims particularly to present the historical material in such a way as to guard against its decontextualization. One may refer here to the recent use in Germany of the expression *Bombenholocaust* (Holocaust by bombs), coined by the extreme right-wing National Democratic Party to describe the bombing of Dresden by Allied Forces during the Second World War. Such expressions must be considered even more dangerous than blunt Holocaust denial – disturbing though that is – as they seek to deceive memory and to destabilize our common adherence to those fundamental values on which our post-war societies have been built.

For several years we have been faced with the risk that contemporary manifestations of antisemitism may fall outside our established frames of reference thereby skewing our ethical judgements. Academics speak of so-called “secondary antisemitism”, which consists of placing all responsibility for antisemitism on its victims. It is thus widely held that the Jews have exploited the Holocaust for their own ends, that Israel treats the Palestinians just as the Nazis treated the Jews, and that the Jews themselves are to blame for the existing antisemitism. Moreover, conspiracy theories, as well as simplistic views on the state of the world, are often congruent with antisemitically-structured thinking. Research on such patterns is complicated by its potential to bolster – rather than combat – antisemitic stereotypes. The fact of making it clear that there is no conspiracy to subject the world to some “Jewish” design can encourage antisemites to disguise the evil intent that underlies their prejudices. What is diabolical about antisemitism is that it reduces the ever more ungraspable complexity of social reality to a question of “the Jews” and blames them for all the conflicts that have arisen in the process of modernization, making them “scapegoats”. Elucidations of antisemitism can thus serve the wrong ends. The risk of that happening should not, however, lead us to conclude that such explanations should not be attempted. On the contrary, if prejudice is not exposed, it may gain a permanent foothold.

Another important aspect in teaching the Holocaust is to avoid presenting Jewish history as a history of victimization. Schoolbooks and curricula in most countries urgently need revision; they need to include information about the place of Jews in the national history, as well as in the United States and Israel. I recommend that the following points be taken into account in any educational work on antisemitism:

1. Holocaust education is of crucial importance for understanding today's world. If feasible, it should entail visits to concentration camp memorial sites, support for educational activities at those sites, and comparative work on contemporary genocides.
2. Teachers should have opportunities to discuss the problems they encounter in teaching on the Holocaust or on antisemitism. Conferences on best practices for educators are needed at both national and international level.
3. Successful educational programs call for dialogue, especially between groups directly affected by intolerance and discrimination.
4. The education authorities should work with non-governmental organizations to produce appropriate elementary and high school teaching materials, which should be made available to teachers.

5. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and its member states should develop curricula to ensure a deeper understanding of the history, traditions, and culture of the Jewish people, as well as their contributions to society in the broader sense.
6. There is a need for educational materials that tell the story of the State of Israel and set its creation in the context of European and world history. An intensified academic exchange between OSCE member states and Israel could serve that purpose.
7. Calls for the boycotting of Israel, related intimidation and antisemitism on university campuses endanger academic freedom and must be condemned. Dialogue is central to education, which must accordingly promote intercultural mediation.
8. Dedicated programs are needed that would underline the respective achievements of Muslim, Christian-European and Jewish civilization, and contribute to mutual acceptance and understanding.
9. OSCE member states should be encouraged to review school books and other materials to ensure their neutrality in respect of subjects like the Holocaust, the history of the Jewish people and descriptions of the modern State of Israel. Ways should be found of promoting similar efforts in OSCE associate member countries.
10. All OSCE member states should be invited to participate in an ODIHR police training program on hate crimes.
11. The OSCE should call on the parliaments of its member states to set up committees to review laws and education on the subject of hate crimes.

To sum up, emphasis should be placed on the following points:

1. Improved training for teachers; modernized teaching materials;
2. Curricula that include significant education against antisemitism;
3. More consideration for multicultural backgrounds of pupils and their families;
4. Holocaust education should not allow issues related to the current situation in the Middle East to confuse the debate.
5. As teachers are also susceptible to prejudice, their continuing education has its own particular importance.

### **What Can Be Done?**

The training of educators and student leaders is an integral aspect of both the revision of school curricula on the Holocaust, and the design of new educational tools for combating antisemitism. Since teachers inevitably mirror society and thus bring phenomena such as secondary antisemitism into the classroom, this is a problem that must be tackled with all due candor. There is no such thing as an easy solution, and yet we must find a solution. We need to take a more open approach to education. It is not restricted to schools, but also extends into the public sphere, including the media.

The quality of educators is crucial. Some of them may hesitate to teach the Holocaust in their class; they have often had to study the subject by themselves, and feelings of shame and anxiety are not so rare. They need to have opportunities for exchanges with teachers who are experienced in the field of Holocaust education. Moreover, the related curriculum content needs be reviewed. Successful material should be disseminated, particularly through conferences of teachers.

But over and above the efforts made in schools, society as a whole should offer possibilities for discussion. There should be places where people can be encouraged to learn about related topics and such places should be interconnected. The annual commemoration of the liberation

of Auschwitz-Birkenau could be accompanied by thematic activities designed to highlight the complexity of the Holocaust. Whenever possible students should have opportunities to visit Holocaust-related sites. For instance, Nazi concentration camps and other authentic sites of extermination and resistance against Nazi rule are all places for commemoration and learning. These sites should be carefully preserved, and where necessary restored, so that they can be made accessible to the general public.

There are numerous examples of good practices; they should be promoted throughout the OSCE region. Teaching materials have been translated into various languages and visits have been organized for young people to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust.

A broad comparative study should analyze their potential to fight antisemitism and suggest improvements for their future. Efforts should be made to identify how local experiences in fighting antisemitism could be used at national level, in order to strengthen weak educational strategies. Knowledge-oriented strategies alone do not suffice. While historical knowledge is necessary for the development of political awareness, individual consciousness is decisive for the fight against antisemitism. We must help to foster a positive emotional climate in respect to the Jewish people. Individual and cultural exchange is the key that will open the door to a common future.

# **The Kreuzberg Initiative against Antisemitism among Youth from Muslim and Non-Muslim Backgrounds in Berlin**

Günther Jikeli

The forms and sources of antisemitism today are diverse, often depending on a national or cultural context. In recent years, antisemitism has often found expression in conspiracy theories and hatred towards the State of Israel, and has penetrated into mainstream discourse. There is a growing consensus among analysts that in Europe antisemitic manifestations today are a feature of three distinct groups: a minority of people from an Arab/Muslim cultural background; neo-Nazis and fascist groups; and the so-called “chattering classes”, primarily parts of the liberal-leftist intelligentsia and media. Some strategies have already been developed to fight far-right antisemitism. So far, however, there has been a lack of strategies for fighting the antisemitism of the “chattering classes”, the left and people from Muslim backgrounds.

The Kreuzberg Initiative against Antisemitism, founded in 2003, is the result of the commitment of a small group of social workers, residents, students, political activists, researchers and teachers - both migrants and Germans - in Kreuzberg, a district in Berlin. They recognized the increase in antisemitism both globally and in their local area, and chose not to tolerate it by developing strategies to fight antisemitism locally and focusing primarily on education. An understanding of current forms of antisemitism and funding for their work were essential in the creation of a local centre for projects against antisemitism. Considerable importance was given to networking with other non-governmental organizations. The Kreuzberg Initiative is not a Jewish organization. The commitment of its founders derives from a perception of antisemitism as a threat for Jews as well as a serious challenge to civil society. In essence, the aim of this organization is to foster individual freedom, emancipation and democracy in general.

The forms assumed by antisemitism in Kreuzberg seem to be similar to those in many European cities. The need for an international exchange and for further research has become increasingly evident. In response, members of the Initiative recently founded the International Institute for Education and Research on Antisemitism. I shall seek here to describe the Initiative’s approaches and experiences in the hope that some of them will prove helpful and encouraging for others.

## **Antisemitism in Berlin-Kreuzberg**

The Berlin district of Kreuzberg has a large population of Muslim origin made up of immigrants, their children, and grandchildren. The immigrants originate mainly from Turkey, but also from Bosnia and a number of Arab countries. In many schools, pupils with a migrant family background represent a large majority. Many people in Kreuzberg depend on social welfare. Unemployment is very high, especially among the young. At the same time the district is very popular for its pubs, cafés, galleries and artists. There are many small non-governmental organizations, networks and individuals that claim to belong to the political left.

In Kreuzberg, antisemitism is frequently expressed with reference to the Middle-East conflict and often in the guise of anti-Zionism. In the past, young people of Arab/Muslim origin have been identified as responsible for documented assaults on Jews. They are sometimes responsible for verbal antisemitic abuse and often use antisemitic expressions in their language. Unfortunately, antisemitism among young people of Arab/Muslim origin is often excused and tolerated by society. To many, it appears only as a more radicalized “criticism” of Israel, which many people share.

In the German context, the casting off of guilt, related to so-called secondary antisemitism, is an important motive for antisemitism. However, migrants in Germany do not feel affected by condemnation of the Shoah as their families were not usually involved in its perpetration; and if they do not consider themselves Germans they therefore do not share Germany's history. The collective identity of migrants is usually linked to their families' country of origin and, at least often in the case of Muslims, to their religion.

Antisemitism forms part of the ideology of Islamism and Arab-nationalist ideology. It is true that only a small minority of Muslims and Arabs are devoted to these ideologies. Nevertheless, their Manichaeic views regarding the community of Muslims (Ummah) or respectively, the community of Arabs and their self-conception are very influential. A key component of Islamist ideology today is the imagined war on Islam, which calls on every person with ties to Islam to unite against an external threat. Radicals overemphasize ties to a collective identity. Some mechanisms in European societies tend to push (post-)migrants into collective Islamic identities as well. Identification as a Muslim has three dimensions: religious self-description, cultural self-description and attributive self-description. The latter means that society imposes pressure on people with alleged Muslim attributes (for example, name or appearance) to identify themselves as Muslim. Similarly, identification as an Arab consists of a cultural and a national self-description, as well as an attributive self-description.

Numerous media in Arab countries, as well as some in Turkey, have been identified as constant sources of hatred against the Jewish people and Israel. Two popular examples are the Hizbollah-TV channel *Al Manar*, and the Islamic daily newspaper *Vakit* in Turkey. In these media Jews, Zionists and Israelis, often without differentiation, are pictured as the natural enemies of all Muslims. *Al Manar* and *Vakit* are both known to many young people of Muslim/Arab origin in Kreuzberg. The newspaper *Vakit* was advertised in Kreuzberg and presented at local book fairs before its prohibition in Germany. The newspaper publishes clearly antisemitic caricatures and articles denying the Holocaust. Where the credibility of facts is concerned young people of Arab origin often state: "You have your sources and we have ours. The truth can be seen on Arab TV channels."

Another aspect is identification with the "Palestinians". A Palestinian flag has been flying since 2003 on top of a house in the centre of Kreuzberg; in Summer 2004 a huge banner spanned Oranien Street for several weeks, stating: "Solidarity with the resistance in Iraq and in Palestine". Some young people see parallels between their own marginalized and stigmatized position and the situation of Palestinians. They have a feeling of being victims of an unjust world order or of an imagined war on Islam. In their eyes, Israel and the United States are responsible for this world order. In such a Manichaeic worldview the Palestinians symbolize the oppressed victims as the "good guys," against the Israelis/Jews who are portrayed as perpetrators and "the bad guys." This perception is also based on the incorrect premise that the (apparently) weak position is always right and the strong position is always unjust. These patterns of thinking can be observed among both migrants and Germans - with different references in each case. In this "competition of victims," the bogeyman image of "the Jews" is the enemy of the "community of the oppressed". An imagined "war on Islam" and in some aspects the term Islamophobia contribute to an affiliation with the "community of the oppressed". The "competition of victims" can also lead to equating present-day discrimination against minorities with the Shoah. This does not mean that people of Arab or Turkish origin are not victims: In Germany they are indeed often victims of racism. Thus, there are two main difficulties in focusing on antisemitism among migrants in Germany. The first risk is a heightening of the stigmatization of migrants, and the second is relieving German mainstream society of the burden of German antisemitism.

In addition to the aforementioned manifestations of antisemitism in Kreuzberg, classical antisemitic stereotypes are still alive. They are transmitted both by migrants and Germans, mainly as a heritage of an anti-Jewish tradition in European culture.

The Kreuzberg Initiative against Antisemitism grew out of several events and observations in the neighborhood. After terrorist attacks on two synagogues in Istanbul in 2003, migrants in Berlin-Kreuzberg organized a memorial demonstration for the victims. The feedback from this memorial showed that people from Turkish communities did not agree with antisemitism and terrorism. Yet, antisemitism in Kreuzberg was rising and becoming obvious to residents:

- “Jew” is used as a swear-word and some youths even glorify the terrorists of September 11, 2001, and suicide bombers in Israel. Teachers and social workers report that they sometimes find serious problems in discussing topics such as the Holocaust, antisemitism and the Middle East conflict.
- Two antisemitic assaults in Kreuzberg were publicized in newspapers within a relatively short period of time.
- Antisemitism in Islamist propaganda became more frequent in Kreuzberg and was distributed in public places, (for example, the German language magazine *Explicit* from the organization Hizb-ut Tahrir). At Turkish book fairs *The Protocols*, *The International Jew* and books from the Holocaust denier Adnan Oktar, alias Harun Yahya, have been advertised and sold.
- A group of young Germans, Turks and Arabs were wearing t-shirts labelled “Anti-Zionist Action Berlin.” Members of this group are responsible for a knife assault on a person who accused them of being antisemitic.
- Antisemitic graffiti, such as “Death to Israel” appeared frequently.
- In 2003, a local study was published, warning of the rise of antisemitism in Kreuzberg.

### **Strategies in Education, Local Administration and Migrant Communities**

The Kreuzberg Initiative is a very small and new organization with an annual budget of approximately 100,000 euro. Nevertheless, it has at its disposal a large office and seminar rooms in the heart of the Kreuzberg neighborhood. The idea of the Initiative is to work through education in schools and youth clubs and confront antisemitic propaganda and assaults in the community. The project aims to work in conjunction with local government officials, stakeholders, teachers, schools, migrant association officials, staff of youth centers, local politicians, researchers, and others. Joint projects with individuals working in institutions, such as schools or youth centers, have proved successful.

The first and most important step is to acknowledge the existence of antisemitism, in all of its forms. A public debate together with the monitoring of antisemitic incidents and research on sources of antisemitism are a precondition for combating antisemitic ideologies and stereotypes in civil society and for effective educational work. In this respect, the Initiative has achieved some success. Teachers, social workers and politicians have become more and more inclined to address these issues, which have been ignored in the past. However, a major problem remains the lack of understanding of contemporary forms of antisemitism, such as the demonization of the State of Israel. For many, antisemitism only exists in neo-Nazi and fascist groups.

Work with Muslim community leaders has proved challenging. Explicitly Muslim organizations tend to adopt a religious perspective as a matter of principle. In the few cases where any action has been taken, their approach towards tackling antisemitism has been inter-religious dialogue, which leaves out many forms of antisemitism. Experience has shown that it is more effective to work with individuals than with “representatives” of communities. The



latter reinforce the pressure for attributed self-identification. Positive results have been achieved through cooperation with secular, progressive organizations with ties to migrant communities who share the common goal of fighting extremism and oppression of women in the name of Islam.

The most progress has been made in the development of educational tools. Instead of schematic concepts, the people working in the Initiative have offered their experience to teachers and social workers to develop concepts adapted especially to their “clients”. Another goal is the creation of a visible organization to help young people become active against antisemitism through their own projects (for example, workshops/debates on antisemitism, homophobia and sexism, projects on the history of the Nazi period, photo/film-projects, and excursions to memorial sites). Considerable success has been achieved through intense work with small groups of pupils over a three-week internship at college.

### **Education**

At the time when the Initiative was founded, few applicable pedagogical tools were available to tackle antisemitism among specific target groups. There was an even more glaring lack of specific pedagogical tools for young people from migrant family backgrounds.

Holocaust education in schools was not sufficiently effective against contemporary antisemitism. Some teachers have reported that they avoid talking about the Holocaust because they do not know how to contend with expressions of antisemitic resentment in the classroom. Contemporary forms of antisemitism are not impeded by knowledge of the Holocaust, as seen in the likening of the State of Israel to Nazi Germany. Knowledge of the Holocaust and empathy for its victims are no guarantee that Jews will not be collectively portrayed as evil. Israel and the Middle East conflict are often pointed to as a justification for antisemitic attitudes.

Present-day European societies are woven of heterogeneous identities and family experiences, resulting from differently lived or bequeathed history. In light of this situation, pedagogical approaches focusing on identity-related issues have been developed. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which makes recommendations for education to combat antisemitism, notes that “different antisemitic motifs require different educational programs”. From a pedagogical point of view it is important to define goals and to find adequate methods to achieve them. Experience shows, not only in Kreuzberg, that the focus of tolerance education and anti-racist education is not sufficiently specific to change antisemitic attitudes and that other approaches have to be adopted.

These pedagogical tools, applied in several schools and youth centers, were developed jointly with teachers and social workers especially for their pupils. In Kreuzberg, this has led to the development of concepts involving hands-on elements for culturally mixed groups composed mainly of young people belonging to Muslim families. For practical reasons, only short-term approaches have been adopted. The Initiative has developed new workshops adapted to the situation in Kreuzberg, which last from a few hours to a maximum of two days. These short programs, however, cannot be a substitute for more holistic approaches in education, which help individuals develop a strong personality structure. Since it is clear that antisemitism is bound up with questions of identity and how the world is interpreted, education against antisemitism must incorporate these dimensions. The crucial question is: Can we offer something better than the antisemitic resentments that provide a certain satisfaction, fulfil a desire to personify evil, explain the world, and allow those who harbor them to feel on the right side of a Manichaeian universe?

One sustainable approach in education against antisemitism is to offer something positive. As we have seen, antisemitism is very often carried and reinforced by collective identities. It does not necessarily reflect a personal *weltanschauung*. Didier Lapeyronnie observes such patterns in the language of the ghetto in France. Some modern primary school teaching methods, focusing on individual pupils and their individual needs and desires, are promising in this respect.

The experiences in Kreuzberg with young people have shown that they are not very often confronted with contradictory thoughts. Their social environment usually confirms their resentments which, in the worst case, are bolstered by friends, family members, and even social workers and teachers, at least when they take the form of antagonism against Israel.

Current approaches in education are obviously not effective in fighting antisemitic thinking. New efforts in education can only be successful if they are assisted by politics and societal discourse. The basis for education against antisemitism on a larger scale is awareness of problems in educational institutions. Training programs geared for those working with pupils is absolutely necessary.

Antisemitism on the part of pupils is often ignored, tolerated, or not even perceived as such. Several factors seem to hamper educators in their handling of antisemitic attitudes and statements by their pupils, namely:

- Lack of knowledge and uncertainties regarding the topic of antisemitism;
- Little expertise and experience in handling current antisemitism;
- Lack of reflection on this topic and their own antisemitic feelings;
- Mistaken “tolerance” for antisemitism if it is expressed by people with a migrant background, because they themselves are victims of racism, and in some cases victims in the Middle East conflict.

Nevertheless, some educators are very committed and do an excellent job. The pupils are usually open to reflect on these complex topics and even to change their minds. They are eager to discuss topics focusing on their identities and feelings. The challenge is to establish the right framework, to ask the right questions and to provide knowledge where necessary. Pedagogy against antisemitism does not mean unmasking antisemites – the person is not the target, but rather his or her resentments.

This is the point where the limits of education appear. Sanctions and isolation may be appropriate if resentment has become entrenched and if it has led to antisemitic incidents. The goal in pedagogy, however, is to encourage youngsters to think, to change their attitudes and to free themselves of feelings of resentment. To achieve this goal, a cognitive approach alone is not efficient, even though knowledge of antisemitic structures is the key to a rational approach. In education, the Kreuzberg Initiative against Antisemitism aims to:

1. Help pupils recognize antisemitic stereotypes, resentments and ideologies in contemporary forms;
2. Encourage them to question Manichaeian interpretations of the world as “good or bad”;
3. Foster reflection and self-perception as an individual and subject (as opposed to self-perception as an object and as part of an ideologically constructed community);
4. Develop a critical historical consciousness (and deconstruct nationalist and Islamist historical interpretations);
5. Condemn antisemitism through recognition of its anti-human character.

In order to achieve at least part of these goals it is important to deal with individual structures of resentments. Teachers should be capable not only of recognizing the spectrum of antisemitic motives among their students, but also of addressing the various dimensions and specific forms of antisemitism in their target group.

In Kreuzberg, the Turkish context and discourse are important. Educators should know that antisemitic conspiracy theories appear frequently in Turkish discourse. Clearly, antisemitic caricatures appear in Islamist and left-wing newspapers. Some Turkish nationalists also disseminate antisemitic stereotypes. Another important aspect in working with pupils with a Turkish background is the strong secularism in Turkey and its differentiation from Arab states.

### **Workshop on Conspiracy Theories**

In the framework of this workshop, where the target group consists of pupils from a Turkish background, “the Turks” will be portrayed as trying to conquer Europe, with the help of spies wearing hair scarves to cover their microphones with which they record everything and send it directly to Ankara. Obviously, for the pupils this story is nonsense and they can laugh about it. The aim is to use this as a basis for analyzing elements of conspiracy theories. The pupils are then invited to invent their own conspiracy theories in groups of three or four. They are given questions as starting points, such as: “Why do students with the letter ‘m’ in their name achieve better results in school and who is behind it?” or “Why are mobile phones becoming less expensive, and who is the leading force behind it?” They learn that ‘it is easy to develop weird theories and even to convince others that such theories are “correct”, as one pupil put it. During this exercise they begin to realize that there is a kind of satisfaction in inventing these theories and in believing them. After pupils analyze the characteristics of conspiracy theories with reference to their own invented theories, they deconstruct examples of conspiracy theories in contemporary Turkish and Arab media (TV sequences and cartoons in newspapers and books). The pupils learn to recognize conspiracy theories and to analyze the antisemitic elements in them. Moreover, they also learn some elements of critical media analysis.

### **Workshop on Individual Identity**

This workshop focuses on the conflict between individual desires and the pressure exercised by community-based ideologies, in the name of tradition, religion or nation. Its origins lie in the case of a group of young people who glorified suicide bombings. One of them, a fourteen-year-old boy, told an educator that in ten years it would be a good time to go to Israel and blow himself up to kill 100 Jews. The boy’s fantasy was a complete denial of his individual desires. His literal wish for total self-destruction in order to kill others was fuelled by an abstract hate against Jews. The boy did not know any Jews.

It is evident that one workshop alone cannot deconstruct such a way of thinking. However, the incident led to the development of a workshop that is relevant to young people who are not used to rational discussions and the exchange of arguments. In role-playing they search and find arguments instead of the more typical behaviour of reproducing masks moulded by a group dynamic. For example, the following topics have triggered open discussion about issues of identity:

1. The wish to play football versus having time to meet the cultural or religious expectations of one’s father;
2. Love between two teenagers, where one is the sister of a friend.

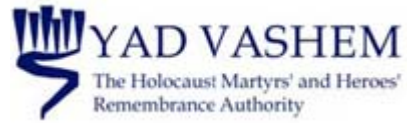
The workshop raises questions highlighting collective identity. The prospect of change is considered through the acting of different roles and self-reflection. The workshop reveals the constraints of collective thinking under the influence of tradition and religion, encouraging individuals to think for themselves.

### **Conclusions**

The example of the Kreuzberg Initiative shows that it is possible to fight antisemitism in civil society at a grassroots level. The interlinking of action in education, civil society and politics at local level seems to hold promise, along with international exchange about sources of antisemitism and education against antisemitism.

International research, declarations such as the Berlin Declaration and the ODIHR and the European Fundamental Rights Agency [working definition of antisemitism](#) are helpful in convincing others to include in their definition of antisemitism contemporary forms of antisemitism that have appeared in public discourse. Since antisemitism is condemned by all societal groups, the definition of antisemitism becomes very important. Cooperation with international organizations raises the level of competency in the fight against antisemitism. More teaching materials specifically focusing on contemporary forms of antisemitism should be provided by pedagogical experts.

It is unclear as to whether the Initiative has actually prevented antisemitic incidents. However, at the very least, the Initiative has provided and generated resources and expertise to become active against antisemitism in this specific community. Such undertakings need a supportive framework from national authorities and international non-governmental organizations. National policymakers can be helpful by expounding the problem of antisemitism and by setting firm boundaries on the social (and legal) acceptance of antisemitism. Effective education and a readiness to address the issue in public discourse must go hand in hand in order to meet the challenge of confronting antisemitism in today's world.



## **Addressing Antisemitism: Why and How? A Guide for Educators**

© December 2007

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## 1. Introduction

These guidelines provide suggestions for teachers and other educators who feel the need to address issues pertaining to contemporary antisemitism. Recognizing that the context may vary in every country, or even in individual classrooms, this document provides educators with a general overview of common manifestations of contemporary antisemitism, as well as with some key educational principles and strategies for addressing this complex and challenging subject. Useful references are provided in the annexes.

This document applies a working definition of antisemitism that was developed by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), in collaboration with the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (formerly called the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia) and with Jewish organizations and prominent academics. According to this definition, antisemitism is "a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews". Manifestations of antisemitism "could also target the State of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for "why things go wrong". It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms, and in actions, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits" (see [Annex 1](#)).

Although antisemitism was fundamentally discredited after the Holocaust, it continues to exist below the surface. For some people, antisemitism is an ideology, a way of interpreting the world. In recent decades, new forms of antisemitism have emerged, with some of them, such as Holocaust denial or secondary antisemitism, directly related to the Shoah.

Since the late 1990s, high numbers of violent antisemitic incidents have been recorded. Jewish and non-Jewish individuals, their property, and Jewish communal institutions, such as synagogues, have been targeted all across Europe and North America. Recently, antisemitism has also come to the fore in educational settings.

According to the ODIHR's annual report for 2006 on hate crimes in the OSCE region, the number of attacks against Jewish schools increased in many countries while Jewish pupils were assaulted, harassed, and injured in growing numbers on their way to and from school or in the classroom, including by their classmates. Educators report that the term "Jew" has become a popular swearword among youngsters. Rather than being confined to extremist circles, antisemitism is thus increasingly being mainstreamed. In this context, the conflict in the Middle East is often used as a justification for the expression of antisemitism at the very centre of society.

The international community, governments, civil society, and individuals have responded to this trend, especially through educational and awareness-raising initiatives. The aim of this guide is to provide teachers and other educators with suggestions and recommendations on to how to identify, prevent, and/or react to manifestations of antisemitism. It thereby seeks to assist educators who believe that pupils should be taught more about antisemitism by becoming aware of the historical and contemporary characteristics of this phenomenon in Europe.

## **OSCE commitments and activities in the field of combating antisemitism**

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is the world's largest regional security organization, whose 56 participating States span the geographical area from Vancouver to Vladivostok. With a focus on politico-military and economic and environmental issues, as well as on human rights and democracy (the so-called human dimension of security), the OSCE takes a three-fold approach to security. The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is based in Warsaw, Poland, and assists participating States with the implementation of human dimension commitments. These commitments aim to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Participating States have committed themselves to abide by the rule of law; to promote the principles of democracy by building, strengthening, and protecting democratic institutions; and to promote tolerance throughout the OSCE region. In the area of tolerance and non-discrimination, the ODIHR focuses on hate crime, racism and xenophobia, antisemitism, intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, and freedom of religion or belief.

Since 2000, the 56 OSCE participating States have reacted to the rise in antisemitism with various declarations, recognizing that antisemitism has assumed new forms and expressions and acknowledging that it poses a threat to democracy, the values of civilization, and security in the OSCE region. With the Berlin Declaration of 2004, participating States committed themselves to "promote, as appropriate, educational programs for combating antisemitism and to promote remembrance of and, as appropriate, education about the tragedy of the Holocaust, and the importance of respect for all ethnic and religious groups".

With a view to providing assistance to participating States, the ODIHR compiled an overview and analysis of education on the Holocaust and on antisemitism that assesses existing educational activities in the region.<sup>1</sup> In follow-up to the OSCE Conference on Antisemitism and Other Forms of Intolerance, held in Cordoba, Spain, in June 2005, experts representing 12 participating States convened at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem to draft guidelines entitled "Preparing Holocaust Memorial Days: Suggestions for Educators",<sup>2</sup> which are now available in 13 languages. The idea for this guide for educators also emerged from that meeting, which was supported by the Asper Foundation in Winnipeg, Canada. In addition, the ODIHR and the Anne Frank House have, together with national experts, developed teaching materials on antisemitism for many member states.

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<sup>1</sup> *Education on the Holocaust and on Antisemitism: An Overview and Analysis of Educational Approaches* (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 2006), [http://www.osce.org/odihr/item\\_11\\_18712.html](http://www.osce.org/odihr/item_11_18712.html).

<sup>2</sup> "Preparing Holocaust Memorial Days: Suggestions for Educators", OSCE/ODIHR and Yad Vashem, January 2006, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/20104.html>.



### **Yad Vashem's work to combat antisemitism**

Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, was established in 1953 by an act of the Israeli parliament. The name of Yad Vashem is taken from the Book of Isaiah, Chapter 56, Verse 5, "And to them will I give in my house and within my walls a memorial ... an everlasting name [a 'yad vashem'], that shall not be cut off."

Since its inception, Yad Vashem has been entrusted with documenting the history of the Jewish people during the Holocaust period, preserving the memory and story of each of the six million victims, and imparting the legacy of the Holocaust for generations to come through its archives, library, school, museums, research institute, and recognition of the Righteous Among the Nations who risked their lives to help Jews during the Holocaust.

Yad Vashem places a heavy emphasis on educating the younger generations about the Holocaust. More than ever before, today's youth are expressing a keen interest in their personal history and identity. Yad Vashem encourages a dialogue between the past, present and future, with the aim to inspire its visitors to work toward a better future for humanity as a whole.

Yad Vashem organizes scholarly conferences on manifestations of antisemitism throughout the ages as well as places an emphasis on contemporary forms of antisemitism in teacher-training seminars that it conducts every year. In addition, numerous educational resources and lesson plans focusing on antisemitism, as well as frequently asked questions pertaining to the Middle East conflict, antisemitism and the Holocaust, are available online at: [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org).

## **2. Addressing Antisemitism in Schools**

Antisemitism in schools may be addressed spontaneously, and it may be prompted by a specific manifestation of antisemitism either in the classroom, the school, or the wider community. Alternatively, a response may be designed as a preventive measure and part of the curriculum. In either case, responding to antisemitism is a multidisciplinary task, while the topic itself can be approached through many subjects, such as civic education, literature, art, history, etc. Teachers may choose to devote an entire course to this topic or, if time and curriculum constraints allow for no more, only a focused lesson. Regardless of the circumstances, a careful approach to the matter is important.

Pedagogical methods should incorporate the need for both Holocaust education and for educational tools to raise awareness of antisemitism. Holocaust education is firmly anchored within the school curricula of many countries, thus reflecting the commitment to promote remembrance and education about this tragedy, which has become part of the collective memory of Europe in particular and humanity in general. Holocaust education sensitizes students to the perspective of victims of antisemitism; it highlights questions of individual responsibility and abuse of power; it confronts learners with the possible consequences of antisemitism, and it also encourages them to speak out, side with democracy, and overcome indifference in situations where Jews and others are being discriminated against.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See the section "For Teachers & Scholars: Guidelines for Teaching" on the website of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, <http://www.holocausttaskforce.org/teachers/index.php?content=guidelines/menu.php>.

However, Holocaust education cannot, and is arguably not designed to, ensure the prevention of antisemitism. Antisemitism and knowledge about the Holocaust are not mutually exclusive, but can exist in parallel. Contemporary antisemitism often evolves around issues that are linked to events that have occurred since 1945, such as the ongoing Middle East conflict, or to debates about the Holocaust, i.e., issues that by definition cannot be addressed within the framework of Holocaust education, that require a different focus. Given that some teachers reportedly avoid teaching about the Holocaust for fear of encountering antisemitic prejudice and Holocaust denial among their students, awareness-raising measures and discussions about antisemitism may in some cases even be regarded as instrumental for the effective implementation of Holocaust education. The Holocaust and antisemitism are topics that can and should be connected, but teaching about one cannot replace teaching about the other.

Although antisemitism can also serve as an example in a class about racism and discrimination, it may be interesting and important for students to realize that antisemitism often coexists with the social inclusion of Jews in all layers of European and North American societies, i.e., it does not manifest itself as discrimination in the classical sense. In addition, elements of racist ideologies are only one dimension of antisemitism. Throughout history, hatred against Jews has manifested itself most prominently as a racist prejudice and policy, but it has also been used as a medium for the construction of religious antagonism, as a cultural tradition, and as political resentment against the Jewish nation as represented by the State of Israel. Teaching about antisemitism within the context of intercultural education may not always clarify the specific nature of antisemitism as a phenomenon that does not require the presence of Jews – hence the notion “antisemitism without Jews”.

Furthermore, it is possible to discuss contemporary antisemitism in connection with human rights. Even though this may be a successful tool to foster a normative framework of respect, understanding, and equality, students may also be interested in understanding the specific historical contexts and developments, as well as the social and cultural processes, that are connected with antisemitism.

Clearly, a variety of frameworks and subjects can provide a good starting point for raising awareness about antisemitism. It is very important to keep in mind that antisemitism is a complex, multidimensional issue, and therefore, a wide variety of educational approaches may need to be developed.

### **3. Educational Approach**

The aim of this guide is to assist teachers in two ways:

- To delineate learning outcomes that engagement with antisemitism in the classroom may yield;
- To provide suggestions and background information about how to recognize and respond to the use of specific antisemitic stereotypes and/or other expressions of antisemitism.

#### **3.1 General Goals and Learning Outcomes**

It should not be presupposed that students are aware of the existence of antisemitism. They do, however, have the right to know and learn about it. While some may have been exposed to the problem in one way or another and have a basic idea of what characterizes antisemitism, others may believe that antisemitism ceased to exist after the Holocaust. In some cases, teachers may

face the difficult task of making their students aware of what contemporary antisemitism is, how it manifests itself, and of the fact that it is a worldwide problem. Teaching about antisemitism can first and foremost aim to create awareness about this issue.

A further goal may be to actively prevent and respond to antisemitism. Apart from imparting knowledge about Jewish history, culture, and the history of antisemitism, educators may want to give their students the opportunity to adopt certain values and attitudes and to acquire skills that empower them to critically engage and actively reject antisemitic views, as well as other forms of prejudice.

Against this background, teaching about antisemitism should enable students to:

- Recognize and reject antisemitic stereotypes and antisemitic thinking rooted in language, media, society and culture, and in extremist ideologies. As a consequence, students may be less likely to subscribe to antisemitic views when exposed to them;
- Learn to see the perspective of others as different, yet equal. Learners are thereby motivated to build an identity based on positive elements rather than defining themselves through and against a negative, antisemitic stereotype;
- Reach a common understanding that every person has to be treated equally and individually, which will contribute to the overall level of tolerance and to an appreciation of diversity in the respective school environment.

Sometimes, manifestations of antisemitism in schools provide an occasion to address this issue in the classroom. In such cases, *responding* to expressions of antisemitism by means of a reflective approach may ensure that:

- Pupils have an opportunity to actively engage with a social problem rather than remaining silent, indifferent, or passive; by doing so, they can develop important civic skills;
- Teachers and learners have a chance to recognize their respective prejudices and change their views through a learning process;
- Teachers have an opportunity to discover the wider problems often underpinning antisemitism among youngsters.

Furthermore, some of the objectives of addressing antisemitism in the framework of the school may include enabling both students and teachers to:

- Recognize Judaism as one of many religions and Israel as a democratic state, and to develop awareness of the role that Jews have played in history and the contribution they have made to European and other cultures;
- Accept diversity among peoples and acknowledge the coexistence of diversity and equality, i.e., common humanity. The promotion of human rights and equality may empower students to recognize and respect differences among people;
- Become aware of antisemitism as a problem of the majority society and not of the minority itself and to realize the negative impact of antisemitism upon our societies and ourselves;
- Encourage learners to question simplistic interpretations of the world, such as portraying issues as either absolutely good or evil, by developing critical modes of thinking;
- Gain an insight into how prejudice, scapegoating, conspiracy theories, and mechanisms of exclusion work;
- Develop the ability to identify with the position of a minority that is confronted with discrimination and resentment;
- Learn to oppose discriminatory and offensive prejudices and to foster personal responsibility as citizens in democratic and pluralistic societies.

## 3.2 Methodological Principles and Strategies

There are several challenges to achieving these goals. First, teachers and other educators are often committed to condemning antisemitic views, the use of antisemitic stereotypes, and any other expressions of intolerance and discrimination. At the same time, they want to take pupils who hold or express these views seriously. In other words, teachers strive to counter these views while reaching out to the student. Another conceivable challenge is caused by the desire to promote human rights, such as freedom of religion and freedom of speech, while opposing the abuse of this freedom for racist and antisemitic purposes. Moreover, teachers might want to provide their students with a comprehensive picture of the history of antisemitism, anti-Jewish stereotypes, and the need to reject this deeply rooted hatred. At the same time, they may want to ensure that this teaching is not dogmatic, but rather interactive, interesting, and engaging. In this respect, it is important for students to become aware of the big picture (the long history of antisemitism, the complexity of the issue, and the variety of manifestations of antisemitism) without being overwhelmed.

The following suggestions are designed for educators who want to include the topic of antisemitism in their teaching, develop awareness in the classroom, and respond to antisemitic comments and/or outbursts in the community.

- **Establish a constructive environment**

Teachers and students should create an inclusive atmosphere, in which everybody feels safe to discuss sensitive issues openly. Ground rules that allow for an honest discussion in a respectful way should be developed. Teachers should be aware of hierarchies in the classroom and try to integrate all learners into this process. Students should be given the benefit of the doubt. The creation of such an environment may support teachers in their attempt to discover why a student subscribes to antisemitic views and stereotypes, as fears, frustrations, and negative personal experiences tend to make individuals more susceptible to easy solutions offered by these ideologies.

- **Be patient**

Teachers should allow time for a process to develop and proceed step by step. One way of doing this is to introduce less complex topics first or to find a starting point that relates and appeals to the students. It may also be advisable to keep the topic in view, i.e., to refer back to it in the context of another teaching unit, if there is a connection. Patience is also required in finding the right approach for different age groups and providing the right level of information.

- **Be clear and consistent in your reactions**

Teachers should be prepared to respond to manifestations of antisemitism in the classroom, as silence conveys the impression that prejudiced behaviour is condoned or not worthy of attention. While different ways and strategies of reacting to such expressions may seem appropriate in different situations and contexts, it should always be clear to the students that there is a policy of zero tolerance with respect to antisemitism. Transparency and clarity towards pupils and their families is critical in this respect.

- **Avoid preaching**

Preaching is an ineffective methodology for changing prejudiced attitudes; in fact, it often produces the opposite effect. Educators should therefore provide opportunities

for students to resolve conflicts, discuss problems, work in diverse teams, and think critically. In the end, interactive and engaging teaching strategies may ensure that this difficult topic is not avoided by students, but rather becomes an issue in which some of them may even develop a deeper and long-lasting interest.

- **Remember that individuals make a difference**

Every person has a choice and is therefore responsible for their own actions. Examples from history and contemporary society can be useful when illustrating this principle. Students should have the opportunity to realize and learn that they are responsible for their actions, while also recognizing the impact of those choices. This includes making them aware of the positive effect on the community that civic engagement and socially responsible behaviour can have.

- **Be realistic**

Even if teachers should always try to prevent and respond to antisemitism, there are, of course, limitations. It is important to establish goals and to realistically assess the possibilities and limitations of educational efforts. Naturally, a single teacher with limited resources and time constraints will not be able to fully solve the problem of antisemitism.

- **Encourage self-reflection**

Teachers and students alike should reflect on the images of Jews that come to their mind and think about whether they have been influenced by prejudices. If there are Jewish students present in the class, it is important to be sensitive to their perspectives. As in all cases of prejudice, the learning process can evolve around realizing that individual experiences or characteristics should not be generalized and projected onto an entire group.

- **Use life experiences**

Teachers can provide opportunities for students to share life experiences. The classroom can be a place where diversity is appreciated and students' experiences are not marginalized, trivialized, or invalidated. Many learners will find it easier to start talking about antisemitism if they have an opportunity to focus on their own experiences, such as with discrimination and multiple identities. At the same time, they should learn to abstract from their own experience and to differentiate rather than generalize.

- **Develop critical thinking**

In order to combat prejudice, it is important to become aware of different perspectives. For example, the reading of a source that is written from the point of view of a Jewish person who experienced antisemitism may create a greater understanding and empathy for what it feels like to be discriminated against or offended by manifestations of antisemitism. Taking different perspectives also comes into play when studying pictures and images. Learners should be shown that some pictures of Jews were purposefully taken by antisemites. For example, it may be important to ask students to analyze the motive of the person behind the camera.

- **Try to avoid victimization**

Jews should not be perceived as victims. Rather, they are individuals who have their own lives and personalities and whose identity is made up of many different components.

- **Focus on the diversity of what it means to be Jewish**

Antisemitism works through stereotyping, generalizations, and false attribution. In order to counterbalance these distortions, it can be useful to introduce learners to many diverse examples of what it means to be Jewish. Different approaches to this identity can be found in both history and contemporary society, also among youngsters.

- **Connect the school with the wider community**

It may be worthwhile to involve parents, other family members, and the wider community in the learning process, as they provide the context (both positive and negative) in which students are motivated to learn. Ideally, a wider network in support of tolerance may emerge from these efforts.<sup>4</sup>

- **Call in help when necessary**

The school administration, parents, the police, and the wider community should be consulted in cases of violence or ongoing harassment.

### 3.3 Good Practices

Although there are a number of good practices for projects on the Holocaust in schools,<sup>5</sup> exercises and projects aimed at raising awareness about antisemitism, especially about contemporary antisemitism, are rare.<sup>6</sup>

Teachers considering offering exercises, projects, and workshops that engage students with the problem of contemporary antisemitism should focus not only on racist antisemitism, but also on the subtle and often unconscious forms of antisemitism that have been passed on from one generation to another. The following examples may be of use in this respect:

- Swastikas and antisemitic slogans are written on many walls. There are initiatives where groups of pupils remove antisemitic graffiti in their neighborhood;
- Many streets are still named after known antisemites. This may be a starting point for a history project that provides learners with the opportunity for a critical dialogue about local history. Students could discuss with local authorities why this name has been kept. In addition, the class could do research on Jewish residents or other individuals who have made a positive contribution to local life and thus suggest who the street could be named after instead;
- Students can be encouraged to use the Internet – which has become a major source of antisemitic propaganda – for the purpose of doing some research on organizations and institutions that combat antisemitism and promote tolerance. Alternatively, students may find it interesting to explore the work of famous music groups and/or actors that are committed to combating prejudice and intolerance;
- Advanced learners may engage with antisemitism in an intellectual way by considering different psychological, sociological, and philosophical theories that seek to explain antisemitism or by researching historiographical controversies about the topic;

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<sup>4</sup> “Developing Local Democracy Against Right Wing Extremism: Examples of good practice in East Germany”, Information Leaflet No. 23, UNITED for Intercultural Action website, <http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/pages/info23.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, “Preparing Holocaust Memorial Days”, *op. cit.*, note 3; “For Teachers & Scholars: Guidelines for Teaching”, *op. cit.*, note 5.

<sup>6</sup> See the ODIHR’s teaching materials on antisemitism, *op. cit.*, note 4.

- Memorials for victims of antisemitism can be established, for example a plaque in memory of deported Jewish children from the respective school or victims of local antisemitism before and after the Holocaust;
- Student debates and workshops can be organized with a view to strengthening arguments against antisemitism;
- Visits to Jewish cemeteries may connect students to the Jewish heritage of their region. Many of these cemeteries have been desecrated or abandoned. Helping to restore them can be a worthwhile and rewarding experience;
- Exchange projects with Jewish and/or Israeli students could, inter alia, be aimed at breaking down stereotypes;
- Contact and meetings with the local Jewish community could be a way of learning more about Jewish culture and traditions and the activities of the community.

Educators may also wish to consult resources and tools provided by both national and international networks, teacher associations, specialized institutions, and international organizations (see Annex 2 for a sample list. The ODIHR's Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Information System is a collection point for good practices (<http://tandis.odihr.pl>).

### 3.4 Identity and Context

Teachers addressing antisemitism in school should consider the connection that exists between antisemitism and forms of collective identity in general, as well as the way in which specific forms and manifestations of antisemitism are shaped by different backgrounds.

#### Identity and antisemitism

In many states, the composition of classrooms is often multiethnic, multicultural, and multifaith. In light of this situation, students do not always share the same history, national narratives, or values. Rather, different collective identities interact with one another. In other countries, classrooms may be less diverse, with multiculturalism being an abstract notion. In both multicultural and less diverse settings, forms of collective identity offer a certain sense of security and stability to individuals, especially in times of crisis and change.

It is important for students to be aware of their own personal culture. This means that learners should realize that they, just like many others, have a certain cultural identity. The idea is to help them understand that their culture is not monolithic, but dynamic and, most importantly, one out of many. This includes realizing that one's perspective is usually shaped and informed by one's culture and acknowledging that other perspectives exist. The aim is not to deconstruct all traditions and forms of collective identity, but to strive for the right balance between the individual and the collective and to prevent exclusion. Teachers might help learners realize that using a source of collective identity to compensate for a lack of confidence or a lack of individual self-awareness is not desirable, because it can have negative effects. Instead, pupils should be enabled to express their individualism and autonomy when creatively engaging with the culture(s) around them.

The relationship between forms of collective identity, such as religions or nations, and antisemitism can be explained in a functional way. Antisemitism arguably fulfils a function in social group processes. It has been, and is still, used as a tool to unite a group, defining its boundaries. In other words, antisemitism provides for the inclusion of "us" through the exclusion of "the Jews". Apart from that, antisemitism has been instrumental in giving meaning

to identity. Rather than drawing on positive attributes, some identities are primarily characterized by their definition as “anti” something or someone.

In addition, there is also a historical dimension to the relationship between antisemitism and collective identities. Modern antisemitism, for instance, emerged in the context of nation-building and the consolidation of the nation state as the principal political entity and cultural frame of reference in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the time, antisemitism was part and parcel of the discourse about what and who constituted the respective nation. It also continued to be instrumental whenever a scapegoat had to be blamed for the nation’s problems. As an example, German Jews were blamed for the country’s defeat in World War I.

### **Different backgrounds and contexts**

Different challenges should be addressed in different contexts:

- In some places, antisemitism may mainly appear as anti-Zionism, i.e., as opposition to the existence of a Jewish state, with the conflict in the Middle East being the central theme. In this context, teachers should try to show their students how to transcend the conflict rather than reproducing it in the classroom. Apart from introducing the students to the key factors that determine the conflict in the Middle East, discussions can evolve around how constructive criticism can be distinguished from antisemitism;
- In other places, secondary forms of antisemitism are, for historical reasons, more prominent. Jews are resented for their role in the debates about the Holocaust and about restitution. These views often merge with anti-Zionist resentment, such as, when the Middle East conflict is portrayed as a development that de-legitimizes efforts to commemorate the Holocaust. Teachers could provide students with opportunities to constructively voice their feelings with respect to the Holocaust and the conflict in the Middle East rather than channel them into an antisemitic resentment. Overall, they should be discussed as separate issues;
- The continued and often largely unchallenged persistence of nationalist ideologies also influences antisemitism in some places. In such cases, antisemitic views are passed on from generation to generation and accompany a belief in exclusionary and uncritical national narratives and myths that need to be reviewed. As a first step towards dismantling these narratives and myths, teachers may want to explore the example of another country that has critically confronted its history or introduce the students to antisemitism as a global problem. This may reduce the potential reluctance of students to critically engage with this topic from the point of view of their respective national context;
- Teachers should relate to the multicultural background of their students. Human rights declarations or the national constitution could provide a starting point and establish common ground. One way of relating to different backgrounds and to minorities is to explore a variety of examples from different contexts. With a view to contrasting existing stereotypes or patterns of conflict, it may be worthwhile to explore historical examples of the peaceful coexistence and mutual inspiration of Christians, Muslims, and Jews. A classic example is the case of cities like Cordoba and Toledo in 10th-century Spain, where Jews, Christians, and Muslims lived side by side, exchanging ideas and translating many books, including the Bible and the Koran into Arabic, Latin, and Hebrew. Interfaith activities are a good contemporary example of the positive interaction between different religious groups in many countries.

Educational efforts to combat antisemitism should be sensitive to different cultural perspectives and tailored as much as possible to country- and learner-specific factors such as the individual



history, the cultural background, and prevalent types of antisemitism in a given country. At the same time, the effort to consider and relate to the students' backgrounds should always be balanced against the need to teach students how to transcend and contrast their own perspectives with those of others in a constructive way.

The following questions may be of help when preparing a lesson on antisemitism:

- Who are the students? What are their religious, social, cultural, and political backgrounds?
- Have they had prior experiences with human rights, tolerance, and/or Holocaust education?
- If there are manifestations of antisemitism in this particular classroom, what are they connected to? Could it be that the students are exposed to antisemitism in the media, in their families, in other social circles, or in youth groups?
- What kinds of discrimination and prejudice exist within the group?
- What are their experiences with intolerance?
- Have the students had the opportunity for any personal contact with Jews?
- Teachers who are aware of these factors may find it easier to respond to the specific challenges encountered in different settings.

## **4. Types of Antisemitism: Suggestions for Educators**

Responses to antisemitism tend to be particularly effective if teachers are familiar with the history of the Jewish people and antisemitism. In this respect, it may be helpful to bear in mind that antisemitic expressions and stereotypes are often used unconsciously or expressed in a subtle and indirect manner. The following may serve as an introduction to the most important contemporary manifestations of antisemitism, as well as to ways of responding to this prejudice. Background information is usually combined with practical examples and strategies for responding to the use of a given stereotype. This background information is, however, not designed as a lesson plan or teaching material.

### **4.1 Antisemitic Stereotypes**

Most antisemitic stereotypes portray and often dehumanize Jewish people as dangerous, inferior, or evil "others" and are associated with discrimination, exclusion, and persecution. Even positive stereotypes shift the focus away from individuals and their characteristics. It is easier and perhaps also more convenient to assume that all members of a group have some common characteristics than to recognize that a group is made up of individuals with unique characteristics. If there are similarities, they are a product of history and thus contingent rather than inherited, natural, or determined. Some people use stereotypes with good intentions without antisemitic motives, seeking instead to romantically revive images of, for example, the "Fiddler on the Roof" and the "East European Jew". In this context, it is important to understand that the history of antisemitic propaganda, which is aimed at creating and reinforcing stereotypes, may make any such references offensive to some Jews. For some people, seemingly harmless images symbolize an entire arsenal and hundreds of years of generalizing and often humiliating imagery.

In order to become autonomous individuals who successfully and constructively engage with their ever more complex surroundings, it may be useful for youngsters to learn to identify and reject stereotypes leveled against any group. Some teachers prefer to encourage learners to seek explanations for why people are different rather than to jump to simple conclusions. If

youngsters are enabled to see and acknowledge the diversity that surrounds them, they might feel confident enough to respect what sets them apart from others, which is also a desirable educational outcome.

### **Educational Responses**

If a specific antisemitic stereotype comes up in classroom discussions, it is necessary to address and discuss patterns of stereotyping first before discussing the specific stereotype and its historical origins. In this regard, it is useful if teachers become aware of their own images of Jews and confront how they use stereotypes. In general, explaining stereotypes and exploring their usage is more helpful than engaging in arguments. A clear distinction has to be made between facts and opinions. There are two types of stereotypes: one is based on pure fantasy, such as the idea of a Jewish world conspiracy or the control of world media or the world's financial systems; the other over-generalizes and distorts fragments of reality. Showing the distortion of those stereotypes can be a successful way of dismantling those perceptions. For example, if Jews are perceived as prominent in a certain profession, that fact should not automatically denote Jewish control of that field. Nor does it mean that Jews are by nature qualified or not qualified for certain professions. There is no difference between Jewish and non-Jewish professionals in any given field.

#### **Contrast stereotypes with other approaches to identity**

Teachers may wish to begin by asking their students to reflect on their own diverse identities. Asking students to question who they are and what forms their identity may encourage them to consider the importance of gender, religion, culture, language, sexual orientation, and origins, but also that of hobbies, interests, ideals, and little idiosyncrasies. Thus, students can learn that humans have different and multiple layers of identity and discover that no one wants to be reduced to one single dimension. While socialization certainly affects our identities, individuals can also actively engage with and define who they are. The fact that identities are being formed by both self-definition and attribution should be an important element of this discussion. Understanding the concept and phenomenon of "identity" also helps students to comprehend the mechanism of acceptance and exclusion – of dividing people into "them" and "us".

#### **Present the diversity of Jewish people**

Jewish life should be presented as a wide spectrum of cultural, religious, and political traditions. Jews are a multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual group of people with a range of lifestyles and opinions, just like Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, or people with other religious backgrounds. They live in many different countries and have many different physical characteristics. Learners should realize that Jews are individuals like others and need to be regarded as such. There is no mysterious connection between Jews other than that they belong to the same religion, share cultural traditions and certain historical experiences, and that they are targeted as a group by antisemites. In the classroom, examples of the everyday life of Jewish youngsters can be given: playing football in a European neighborhood, having a party with friends, or Israelis enjoying the beach in Tel Aviv. Teaching about Jewish culture and history could include lessons on Jewish writers, artists, and scientists whose lives do not fall into the patterns of existing stereotypes and whose biographies exemplify the complex interaction between self-definition and an attributed identity. It is also helpful to search for individuals with a Jewish background who played a role in the respective national history or present and discuss their

biographies or statements about antisemitism. The very mechanism of generalizing and stereotyping can be challenged through studying different individuals.

#### **Address unconscious antisemitism**

It is important to help students recognize when they are unintentionally using antisemitic language or antisemitic perceptions of Jews. Such recognition may help to solve the problem and encourage further awareness. Educators should choose the adequate time and context to address the issue either in a personal discussion or with the whole class. If there are Jewish students in the class, teachers should be sensitive to any issues that may arise in the context of the discussions.

#### **Do not address non-existent stereotypes**

Educators should exercise caution when addressing stereotypes that have not been raised by the students. It is important to note the power of images and the danger of introducing new stereotypes that may remain in the minds of students. In light of this situation, it is even more important to exercise caution when working with antisemitic images and pictures. If one does work with them, it is best to choose this material carefully and analyze it thoroughly so as to enable the students to recognize and critically assess the antisemitic image.

#### **Be careful with the use of images**

Some schoolbooks reproduce anti-Jewish stereotypes. Such examples, when found, can be discussed and critically assessed with the students. Images should generally be critically assessed and used carefully when teaching about the Holocaust and about antisemitism. It is always helpful to place pictures in a certain context and to remember that they do not in themselves represent reality, but are usually taken and created with a certain motivation. As can be shown in class, different people often see different things in the same image.

## **4.2 Conspiracy Theories**

Conspiracy theories satisfy the need for a simple explanation of complex realities, requiring the denial of many facts in order to sustain their internal logic and consistency. People adhering to such theories often try to gain respect that they may be unable to gain in other ways. Some conspiracy theories blame “the Jews” for secretly controlling different sectors of society and for steering those towards their particular interests rather than the common good, thus harming society in a corrosive way. Jews are also scapegoated for disasters and blamed for things that go wrong.

Throughout history, conspiracy theories have proven to be flexible. In Europe, Jews were scapegoated already in the Middle Ages, most notably for causing the Black Death. In the Middle East, by contrast, such theories only appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and were introduced in the context of imperialism. The so-called “Protocols of the Elders of Zion”, a lengthy publication, spreads false allegations about a fictitious meeting of Jewish leaders deciding on how to gain world power. The document became prominent in the context of antisemitic pogroms in Russia at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The “Protocols” have since proliferated on a global scale and have been translated into numerous languages. The ongoing proliferation of such theories is also facilitated by the Internet.

Conspiracy theories are a central characteristic of antisemitism and one of the main reasons why antisemitism differs from other forms of discrimination. Unlike other minorities, Jews are perceived as powerful and influential, and it is their very integration into different majority societies that stands at the core of conspiracy theories. Traditionally, conspiracy theories have been an important part of right-wing ideologies and have been absorbed by new generations. Such thinking can also be found among the radical Left. They are also inherent in the ideologies of some types of religious fundamentalism. Sometimes, antisemitic conspiracy theories are used in mainstream politics to assign blame for current difficulties, thus providing convenient scapegoats or even a common enemy to rally against.

One reason to respond to conspiracy theories is that they harm not only those who are held responsible for the conspiracy, but they also have a negative impact on those who believe in them: conspiracy theories feed off a sense of alienation and tend to emphasize the individual's powerlessness. By providing simplistic answers, conspiracy theories discourage people from grappling with complex issues. At the root of many conspiracy theories lie fears of the unknown and powerful, the inability to understand larger events, and a sense that things are beyond one's control. Conspiracy theories can be interpreted as a psychological strategy to regain control over a frightening reality that defies understanding, and they are also a way of giving voice to the frustration of feeling overwhelmed. All these frustrations, fears, and needs should be taken seriously. Teachers should aim to offer alternative strategies for navigating through our complex reality.

### **Educational Responses**

Antisemitic conspiracy theories claim to offer an all-encompassing explanation, and they place blame. In addition, such theories often contain some of the following elements:

- Jews are portrayed as a threat to society;
- Jews are accused of deploying hidden and nasty methods;
- Jews are defined as a foreign body ("The Other") striving for influence and trying to cause harm;
- Jews' loyalty to their own state and people of other religions is questioned.

Raising awareness and proactively sensitizing learners to the peculiar logic of conspiracy theories is always desirable, as it also sensitizes learners to refrain from believing simplistic good-versus-evil images of the world. The aim should be to bolster the learners' self-confidence and their personal capacity to deal with frustration and feelings of helplessness, i.e., to make them aware of their autonomy by challenging the belief in external control.

#### **Find out why and name it**

If students voice conspiracy theories, teachers should react appropriately. It is helpful to know the background (and source) of the specific conspiracy theory and to ask why the student raised it. Some educators prefer not to engage in a sparring match with pupils, as it is characteristic of conspiracy theories that they are difficult to disprove. The more outrageous the theory, the more it is portrayed as pointing to a secret conspiracy. The discussion should rather be directed towards unveiling the theory, finding out and understanding why conspiracy theories are so attractive and which other strategies could be useful to make sense of the world. If it is a fascination with mystery that has attracted the students to conspiracy theories, teachers should try to find alternative and less harmful ways of satisfying this need.

### **Impart media literacy**

Antisemitic propaganda videos, information available through the Internet, caricatures, images, and media play an important role in the spread of conspiracy theories. Thus, pupils should gain media literacy to be able to critically analyze, select, and compare information and to be able to identify and reject extremist claims and conspiracy theories. Students can establish criteria about which information can be trusted on the basis of verifiable reasoning. This does not mean that the use of certain media should be forbidden. Rather, learners should be encouraged to use sources of information such as the Internet for constructive purposes and with a critical approach, also in teaching about antisemitism.

### **Try to impart a rational approach and encourage participation**

Whenever a student voices a conspiracy theory with respect to, for example, contemporary politics, teachers should work together and ensure that difficult questions are being addressed in the context of civic education or political science classes. Students should have the opportunity to critically analyze global developments and to understand how these relate to their day-to-day reality. Teachers should work with the fears underlying conspiracy-theory explanations and seek to strengthen a reality-based orientation in the world that facilitates informed participation in society. In this regard, educators may consider asking for specific training.

## **4.3 Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism**

The working definition of antisemitism in Annex 1 is useful when identifying anti-Zionism and when trying to distinguish it from criticism of Israel.

There are several manifestations of anti-Zionism, with the connecting element being an approach to the State of Israel that is informed by antisemitic prejudice or by an anti-Jewish disposition. Criticism of Israeli policies should neither be defined as anti-Zionist nor as antisemitic if this criticism is similar in tone and motivation to that levelled against any other government or state.

Anti-Zionism can manifest itself as opposition to the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish state. In this view, Jewish people are denied the right to form a state. As the same view usually does not question the right of self-determination of other nations, an antisemitic motivation seems to be at play. *“Indeed, one can be, in theory at least, anti Zionist without being antisemitic, but only if one says that all national movements are evil, and all national states should be abolished”*, argues Professor Yehuda Bauer, one of the world’s leading scholars on the Holocaust and on antisemitism. *“But if one says that the Fijians have a right to independence, and so do the Malays or the Bolivians, but the Jews have no such right, then one is anti-Jewish, and as one singles out the Jews for nationalistic reasons, one is antisemitic, with an attendant strong suspicion of being racist.”*<sup>7</sup> In other words, since the aims and concepts of Zionism do not differ from the goals of other national movements that also invoke the right of self-determination, it is difficult to explain why Zionist nationalism is singled out for such criticism and why it is Zionism and not nationalism in general that is criticized.

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<sup>7</sup> Yehuda Bauer, “Problems of Contemporary Antisemitism”, 2003, <http://www.ucsc.edu/JewishStudies/docs/YBauerLecture.pdf>.

Other forms of anti-Zionism do not focus on the existence of Israel but on the alleged motives behind its establishment. Drawing on an opinion held in the communist world during the Cold War, Zionism is defined as a form of powerful imperialism and colonialism. At the same time, Zionism itself was not motivated by a desire to economically exploit a foreign country. Rather, Zionism was a response to the fact that European antisemitism was perceived as, and proved to be, a threat and Palestine was considered a safer place, i.e., as a home for Jews.

In Israel, like in other countries, minorities are often disaffected and faced with intolerance and discrimination. Israel has been criticized for discriminating against its non-Jewish citizens. Such criticism crosses a line when Israel is portrayed as a racist state resembling the Third Reich and/or the Apartheid regime of South Africa. Such theories overlook fundamental historical differences. While the regimes mentioned had institutionalized racism and were founded on an ideology of racist supremacy, Israel, albeit explicitly linked to an understanding of Jewish nationhood, is a democratic state where people from many different backgrounds and countries have found their home and where issues of intolerance and discrimination can be openly debated and have been rigorously called into question.

### **Educational Responses**

One of the goals of responding to anti-Zionism may be to enable learners to differentiate. Students should be able to deconstruct the idea that all Jews belong to Israel, even if Israel defines itself as a “Jewish state”. A person’s belonging is always defined by the individual concerned. On a second level, there is a need to differentiate between current Israeli government policies, contemporary Israeli society, the origins of the Zionist movement, and the historical circumstances that led to the foundation of Israel.

#### **Work on empathy**

Many Jews feel threatened by antisemitism. Even if members of the majority society do not perceive contemporary antisemitism as a problem that calls the possibility of Jewish life in Europe into question, this may look different from the point of view of the minority. Attempts should be made to understand that point of view, albeit without victimizing Jews. Understandably, many Jews feel safer in a Jewish state, where they do not constitute a minority under threat. For example, the class may try to analyze a text written by a Holocaust survivor or a victim of a hate crime and discuss whether or not they can see that these people feel more secure in a Jewish state. Moreover, in an attempt to counterbalance the view of Zionism as an imperialist movement, the class may find it interesting to learn the historical, religious, and cultural reasons for why Jews feel so attached to Israel.

#### **Explore history**

Teachers may want to discuss with pupils how and why the Zionist movement developed by placing it in the context of the era of nationalism and modern antisemitism. In order to achieve differentiation, students can be shown what a complex issue Zionism was in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and continues to be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There have been different approaches to Zionism, ranging from socialist Zionism to many forms of religious Zionism. Before World War II, cultural Zionists, for example, sought to reinvigorate Jewish culture within Europe without calling for a Jewish state. Some defined Zionism as a national liberation movement inspired by, for example, the Polish national liberation movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Others drew conclusions from the abortive assimilation experienced by many Jews in Europe in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and thereafter.

It may be useful to look at different biographies in order to explore the fact that Jews have different ideas about their identity. One such example is the family of Gershom Scholem (1897-1982), a German Jew who immigrated to Palestine and later became a famous scholar. While Gershom (originally Gerhard) became a Zionist, his three brothers chose different paths. His brother Werner was one of the Communist party's representatives in the German Reichstag in the second half of the 1920s and was killed in the Buchenwald concentration camp in 1940; his brother Erich was a member of the liberal party and represented the mainstream organization of assimilated German Jews; the eldest brother, Reinhold, in turn was a German nationalist. Another example is Russia, where Jews responded differently to the pogroms of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For example, emigration and a life in the Diaspora in the United States seemed to be the solution for some, while others turned to Zionism and/or socialism, either staying in Russia or trying to emigrate to Palestine. At the same time, many Russian Jews identified with communism and thus criticized Zionism like all other supposedly bourgeois national movements. When looking at these examples, students may find it interesting to realize that different Jews have at different points in time defined their identity in a variety of ways and that it is primarily antisemitism that denies this diversity by labelling people as "Jewish" regardless of their self-definition.

In addition, Jewish perspectives on the foundation of the State of Israel after the Holocaust can be discussed if the pupils have some knowledge about the Holocaust. Topics can include working on the main movements within Zionism and their influence on Israeli society, exploring the fact that socialism and the wish to build a non-discriminatory society were influential in many Zionist groups, and learning that a very small minority of ultra-Orthodox Jews disagree with Zionism. A focus on all of these factors is likely to shift the emphasis away from false generalizations and comparisons.

#### **4.4 The Middle East Conflict and Antisemitism**

Whenever tensions escalate in the Middle East, the number of antisemitic incidents in Europe, North America, and other parts of the world increases, thus suggesting that there is a connection between the two. This connection frequently leads to the conclusion that Jews and/or Israel are responsible for antisemitism, and it is assumed that, if only there were peace in the Middle East, antisemitism would cease to be a problem. As history shows, this is not likely to be the case, since antisemitism has always been an issue that Jews have not been able to positively influence, but that continues to be a projection and a problem of the majority society.

A balanced analysis of the conflict in the Middle East may, however, result in acknowledging the Palestinian cause and the impact of Israeli governmental policies on Palestinians. Many youngsters will tend to identify with what they consider the weaker party – in this case the Palestinians. Criticizing the policies of the Israeli government may be viewed as legitimate and should not be labelled antisemitic – after all, this criticism is put forward both by Jews and non-Jews both inside and outside of Israel. Although it is legitimate to disagree with these policies, criticism of Israel's action crosses a line whenever the application of double standards occurs.

The conflict is often perceived through the lens of existing antisemitic resentment and is linked to traditional antisemitic images. On the other hand, what may start as criticism of Israeli

policies may encounter and become susceptible to the entire arsenal of antisemitic imagery and literature that has been created over the centuries and is now being used against Israel. In the wake of this process, it has been suggested that Israeli policies are an attempt to gain world power in an imperialist manner and at the expense of others, that Israeli soldiers are particularly bloodthirsty, etc. Furthermore, it has been observed that anti-Jewish imagery dating back to the Christian anti-Judaism of the Middle Ages in Europe reappears in media accounts in some parts of the Arab world. These images even suggest that Jews use the blood of Muslim children for ritual religious purposes. The translation and adaptation of such age-old myths to different contexts is what makes antisemitism a powerful force.

Another problem is that some encounter Jews primarily in their role as victims of antisemitism and the Holocaust. In light of this situation, there is a subconscious assumption that Jews have to be better people with higher moral standards than others. This prevalent reduction of Jews to their role as victims of the Holocaust can apparently not be integrated with the idea of the Jewish state being engaged in war and conflict. If Jews are essentially victims, it is asked, how can they inflict suffering on the Palestinians or on Lebanese civilians? In response to this perceived contradiction, two ways of debating Jewish victimhood can be observed. Some relate the victims of the Holocaust to the conflict, implying that Israeli policies de-legitimize the victim role of, for example, Anne Frank, as if the victimhood of the inmates of Auschwitz and other death camps were a topic of debate. Others resolve this tension by relating the National Socialist perpetrators to Israel. While Israeli politicians have been equated with Hitler and Israeli soldiers with the SS, Israel's treatment of Palestinians has been related to the systematic mass murder of Jews by the National Socialist regime. Such equations and comparisons, in addition to being offensive and historically inaccurate, do not contribute at all to the understanding and solution of the conflict in the Middle East. They may be regarded rather as attempts to use the conflict in the Middle East not only as a justification for antisemitism, but also as a way of bringing an end to the ongoing commemoration of the Holocaust, which is sometimes accompanied by uneasy feelings.

Given the prominence of public debates about Israel, its existence and policies, the topic is likely to sometimes appear in classrooms. Within different manifestations of antisemitism, anti-Zionism is probably the least discredited, as there is only a fine and disputed line between antisemitic anti-Zionism and criticism of Israel. It has, however, been observed that anti-Zionism has affected Jewish communities and also children in many European countries. Resentment against Israel has thus been projected onto all Jews. What is defined as retaliation for Israeli policies often violently affects Jewish individuals and communal institutions all around the world. Jews, regardless of their self-definition, are still often perceived as belonging to Israel by some people. However, it has to be made very clear that political tensions or the actions being taken by the Israeli government or army never justify antisemitism or violent attacks against anyone, regardless of whether they are Jews or not, whether they are Israelis or not, or whether they agree or disagree with the politics of the State of Israel. None of these criteria affects the right of every human being to physical inviolability.

### **Educational Responses**

With respect to this topic, teachers should try to present basic historical facts as objectively as possible while being aware of antisemitic images used in this context.

#### **Satisfy the need to talk about the topic**

Given the prominence of the issue, students should be given the opportunity to learn more about this conflict, especially about its history. The transfer of balanced and sound knowledge may correct the views of some and empower youngsters against antisemitic explanations. The more students become aware



and understand the intricacies and specific characteristics of the conflict, the peculiar historical circumstances and the sensitivities on both sides, the more they will be immune to false comparisons or simplistic conclusions. Rather than reproducing resentments, students should learn about those people who are involved in various initiatives aimed at coexistence, and they should also have the opportunity to learn more about the peace process. At the same time, teachers should make it very clear that there is no basis for comparing the conflict to the Holocaust. The Holocaust was not a conflict between Germans and Jews, but was rather the product of antisemitism.

#### **Accept that solutions are hard to find**

Antisemitism offers easy solutions to tricky questions. It may be useful to realize and accept that some issues remain insoluble and contradictory. Politicians, peace activists, and a variety of experts have at various stages tried to find a solution to the conflict in the Middle East and only partially or temporarily succeeded in doing so. It is therefore not realistic to assume that a solution can be found within the framework of a classroom. In that sense, educators may want to encourage youngsters to accept contradictions, insoluble problems, and social realities.

#### **Create awareness of, and respond to, antisemitic approaches to the conflict**

Teachers should sensitize their students to the prominence of antisemitism in discussions and media coverage about the Middle East conflict. Students may appreciate being given an opportunity to discuss this issue in a non-biased way. To that end, it is worth discussing the question of double standards with them.

- In what ways are double standards being applied and what explanations can be given for this?
- Do students think that this is morally justified or useful with respect to understanding the conflict?

Whenever students have basic knowledge about the functioning of conspiracy theories and different antisemitic stereotypes, this knowledge can be used to identify antisemitic discourse about Israel. The effect will most probably be stronger if students themselves identify something as antisemitic and demonstrate the ability to differentiate between justified and unjustified criticism.

#### **Counterbalance distorted images**

Although media coverage about the conflict is extensive, it does not always provide background information. Some reports create a distorted image of Israel, thus overlooking the fact that Israel is a diverse and democratic society. Whenever possible, teachers should try to counterbalance such images. Students may want to do a research assignment about different political parties and opinions in Israel. Following their research, students should realize that Israeli society is not a monolithic entity and that it may not be justified or helpful to speak in a generalized way of “the Israelis”. If pupils discuss Israeli policies in a de-contextualized way, teachers should try to sensitize them to Israeli fears, not least by teaching empathy for the feelings of many Israelis in the context of suicide attacks. It is also important for an understanding of the

conflict to acknowledge the fact that many countries of the region take an aggressive tone towards Israel, based on antisemitic stereotypes, and that this shapes the overall political discourse, including political elites and leadership. Israelis even face calls for the complete destruction of their state by political leaders of the region. An equally distorted image is the dichotomy between Islam and the West and/or Israel. Students may enjoy broadening their perspective by becoming aware of diversity among countries, including with respect to relations with Israel. This may include realizing that Muslims from countries such as Bosnia and Albania, as well as the Turkish consul in Rhodes, personally protected some Jews in World War II.<sup>8</sup>

Teachers may want to impart to learners that the antagonism between the Israelis and the Palestinians is a historical conflict about land. Culture and religion have become a medium of the conflict, but they are by no means its cause.

#### 4.5 Antisemitism and the Holocaust

While in some ways differing from Holocaust denial, attempts to diminish and trivialize the Holocaust can be equally offensive. Relating the Holocaust to other events in history is a complex and complicated endeavor. It *can* give further insight into historical realities, but this is *not* the case if the comparison is based on a distortion of facts. Such distortions of facts may occur when the Holocaust and the images associated with it are used for purposes other than commemoration or gaining further insight. Notorious examples of this tendency are animal-rights or anti-abortion movements that use the term “Holocaust” to gain attention for their respective issue of concern. Relating something perceived to be an injustice to the murder of the European Jews is inappropriate and can contribute to the trivialization of the Holocaust.

Referring to the Holocaust in a trivializing way, such as by making jokes, can be consciously antisemitic if it is done to offend and humiliate Jews. The Holocaust has become a theme in traditional and contemporary forms of antisemitism. For example, some integrate the Holocaust into antisemitic conspiracy theories, suggesting that it is “a Jewish matter” and a way for Jews to gain, so the argument goes, even more money and control. The most controversial notion in this context is the idea of a “Holocaust industry” being run by Jews. Apart from that, new forms of antisemitism have tended to focus on, and evolve around, the Holocaust. Images and references associated with the *Shoah* are used in polemics against Israel. Furthermore, the difficult process of coming to terms with an individual’s, institution’s, or nation’s involvement in the Holocaust has in some countries resulted in what has been defined as “secondary antisemitism”, i.e., a form of antisemitism that exists not despite, but because of, the Holocaust. At the core of this antisemitism is resentment against Jews as victims of the Holocaust. The EU Fundamental Rights Agency defines secondary antisemitism as “any form of antisemitism that is itself a reflection of the establishment of the taboo of expressing antisemitism. The notion is commonly used primarily to describe antisemitism in Austria and Germany, where secondary antisemitism is usually considered as a reaction to the debates on national identity and National Socialism. Drawing on older stereotypes about Jewish power and influence in the media, a typical claim of secondary antisemitism is, for example, that Jews are manipulating Germans or Austrians exploiting feelings of guilt.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See information about an exhibit by photographer Norman Gershman called “BESA: A Code of Honor - Muslim Albanians Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust”, on the website of Yad Vashem, [http://www1.yadvashem.org/about\\_yad/what\\_new/gershman/temp\\_index\\_whats\\_new\\_Gershman.html](http://www1.yadvashem.org/about_yad/what_new/gershman/temp_index_whats_new_Gershman.html).

<sup>9</sup> “Antisemitism: Summary overview of the situation in the European Union 2001-2005”, European

Teachers may want to address such tendencies in schools primarily because they think that this is essential with respect to Holocaust remembrance. Given the advanced age of the last living witnesses and survivors, some believe it important that young generations wholeheartedly commit to upholding the memory of the *Shoah*. Naturally, diminishing and trivializing the Holocaust opposes this effort. It also runs the danger of calling into question the process of critically addressing individual, institutional, and national histories currently underway, a process that has turned the Holocaust into part of the collective memory of Europe and humankind. Many students may appreciate the opportunity to join and support this process together with youngsters from other countries.

### **Educational Responses**

The best way to confront tendencies to diminish and trivialize the Holocaust is to strive for the best Holocaust education possible. Reading, learning, thinking, and writing about the Holocaust should be an attractive and rewarding exercise for students. In this context, awareness of the Holocaust as a European legacy, a watershed in world history, and an event that “fundamentally challenged the foundations of civilization”<sup>10</sup> is crucial. Secondary forms of antisemitism may be efficiently combated by referring to international initiatives that take place in this field, including on the level of international school projects. When learning about this, students might realize that neither antisemitism nor the Holocaust is solely a Jewish issue.

#### **Address unintentional diminishing of the Holocaust**

Students may make statements that trivialize the Holocaust, but in doing so they are merely repeating something that they have learned or picked up elsewhere. In such cases, it is advisable to encourage these students to think about their remarks and to critically assess what was said. If an educator discovers that a student equated an event to the Holocaust because they were upset about that particular event, but lacked the words and tools to express their thoughts, the teacher can assist in finding alternative ways of expressing concern about the issue. If a student relates other events to the Holocaust in an inappropriate way, the teacher should try to provide the learner with as much information as necessary to discard this false comparison. If students feel that diminishing the Holocaust is the only way of making the suffering of other people known, the class should discuss whether the Holocaust can be in any way instrumental for other purposes. In addition, teachers may want to seriously address the topic raised by the student and discuss it separately.

#### **Actively prepare Holocaust memorial days**

Preparing Holocaust memorial days in schools can foster empathy towards the victims. Engaging with individual victims and their story may sensitize students against abusing their memory. Vivid personal examples often make students aware of the impact and significance of the Holocaust for humankind. Activities that focus on the stories of real people, whose names or faces have been identified (for example, former Jewish inhabitants of a town or neighborhood, former teachers or students of a school) or that can be discovered through research, are recommended. Further suggestions are

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Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (now the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights) working paper, updated version of December 2006,

[http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/AS/Antisemitism\\_Overview\\_December\\_2006\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/AS/Antisemitism_Overview_December_2006_en.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> “Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust”, Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, <http://www.holocausttaskforce.org/about/index.php?content=stockholm>.

provided in guidelines called “Preparing Holocaust Memorial Days”,<sup>11</sup> which are available in 13 languages.

#### **Provide students with realistic and rewarding tasks**

Attempts to diminish or trivialize the Holocaust often point to feelings of being overwhelmed by the topic. It might be useful for teachers to take into consideration that this is an emotionally demanding subject, one that unavoidably addresses the issue of identity and that could create a conflict for students who want to positively identify with their country, even if that country was involved in collaboration. Teachers should strive to provide students with an opportunity to discuss and explore the questions they think about with respect to the Holocaust. After all, students should not feel that they have to carry a burden but can contribute to both the national and the international process of researching and remembering this event. Once the students form an attachment to a project or a research assignment connected with the Holocaust, they are less likely to use strategies of distancing themselves from the topic. Teachers should emphasize responsibility and not blame.

## **4.6 Denial of the Holocaust**

The partial or complete denial of the Holocaust, as, for example, at a state-sponsored conference in Teheran in December 2006, is an example of the most extreme form of historical revisionism. It appears on the surface as a pseudo-scholarly challenge to the well-established record of the National Socialist genocide during World War II. Holocaust deniers portray themselves as individuals and groups engaged in a legitimate, dispassionate quest for historical knowledge and the “truth”. Some argue that the Holocaust is a myth and consequently regard feelings of grief and notions of responsibility as being manufactured, the desire to mourn and remember as illegitimate, and the quest to bring justice to the victims as wrong. Others acknowledge the persecution and discrimination of Jews in the Third Reich, asserting at the same time that the antisemitic policies of the National Socialist regime were in large part a legitimate response to Jewish misdeeds and disloyalty or else claiming that the number of Jews killed was in fact much smaller than assumed. Equating the Holocaust with other actions undertaken in wartime denies the specific characteristics and singularity of this event.

Holocaust denial thus intentionally distorts the historical record and refuses to acknowledge the victimization of Jews by the National Socialists and their collaborators in World War II. In certain cases, a further antisemitic twist is added to the argument, as some believe that what is in their eyes “the construct of the Holocaust” has led to Western, specifically US, support for the establishment and sustenance of the State of Israel. Other conspiracy theories are also being ventilated in this context, including the claim that Jews themselves committed the Holocaust or that Hitler was Jewish.

The perpetrators of the Holocaust sought to leave no trace behind. They partially succeeded. Holocaust denial in a sense completes this plan and has therefore been made illegal in many countries. Many think there is a moral and civic obligation to address Holocaust denial whenever it occurs in order to protect and defend the memory of the victims, as well as the historical record. If a student questions the Holocaust and/or shows support for the ideas of Holocaust deniers, this may be symptomatic of the pupil’s involvement in extremist activities or

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<sup>11</sup> “Preparing Holocaust Memorial Days”, *op. cit.*, note 3.

at least suggest exposure to extremist ideas. After all, the denial of the Holocaust has continued to be a staple of many groups on the extreme right, but is also widespread among some religious fundamentalists. Recent developments in international politics reveal that Holocaust denial is being politicized and deployed in antisemitic statements and threats against Israel. While a student may express such views as a means of provocation, it is equally conceivable that such statements reflect familiarity with other antisemitic views. Thus, responding to Holocaust denial is critical.

### **Educational Responses**

Just like conspiracy theories, Holocaust denial is at its core based upon lies. While it is necessary to contrast this view with the historical record and with facts, any discussion about whether or not the Holocaust occurred is not only out of place, it is also counterproductive, since every fact presented can be met with a new lie. As some already have an entrenched antisemitic world view and choose to deny the Holocaust, providing them with information about the Holocaust is not likely to solve the problem. Teachers might first want to make sure that such views, if voiced, do not dominate the discourse within the group and that the pupils understand why Holocaust denial is wrong and needs to be responded to in a swift manner. One way of doing so may be to introduce pupils to recent political efforts aimed at banning Holocaust denial and to the arguments used in this context. One recent example could be the EU Framework Decision on combating racism and discrimination, which states: "Public approval, denial or gross trivialisation of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes will be criminalised if the crime is directed against a group of persons because of their race, color, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin."<sup>12</sup>

#### **Explore and understand student motivations**

Rather than engaging in a discussion with students who hold such views, they should be approached individually in order to ask them about their reasons for denying the Holocaust. This approach can focus on personal questions, such as, "Why did you say this? Where did you get this information? Why is it important to you? What do you think you achieve when saying this?" During such exchanges, it may be possible to uncover the rationale behind this Holocaust denial. Teachers may also wish to encourage students to reconsider what they have said by making it clear that many people have changed their views without facing problems. If a teacher concludes that the student was trying to gain attention through this provocation, ways should be explored and opportunities provided to give the student the chance to gain attention and self-confidence in a constructive way.

#### **Avoid discussing denial claims, but don't avoid discussions**

Discussing denial claims may lend legitimacy to this rhetoric and usually does not yield any results. Students should instead be provided with the opportunity to have discussions, develop their views, explore complex questions, etc., i.e., it may be a positive experience to see that the Holocaust is a topic that can be talked about and discussed in an interesting and original way – on the basis of acknowledging that it occurred. It may be an idea to visit a local archive or to ask a historian about what questions concerning the Holocaust are currently being explored in academic research and what sources historians and archivists use. Alternatively, a Holocaust survivor, a peer

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<sup>12</sup> "EU: Common Criminal Provisions Against Racism and Xenophobia", German Presidency of the European Union, press release, April 20, 2007, [http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Press\\_Releases/April/0420BMJRassismus.html](http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Press_Releases/April/0420BMJRassismus.html).

educator, or a community leader can be called in with a view to positively counterbalancing the appearance of Holocaust denial in the classroom.

#### **4.7 Antisemitic Symbols**

For many students, it is important and considered cool to identify themselves with a group. When trying to do so, they may, in some cases, unconsciously use symbols that have an antisemitic connotation. While some people are unaware of the antisemitic meaning of these symbols and associate other meanings with them, others may use them consciously, i.e., as a code to identify individuals, groups, or institutions that subscribe to antisemitic and extremist ideologies, such as youth cultures associated with neo-Nazism. Symbols of right-wing extremists are by definition antisemitic, because antisemitism stands at the centre of the respective ideology. That is why many of these symbols are illegal in several countries. Furthermore, antisemitic and anti-Israeli symbols are also used by left-wing and religious fundamentalist movements, which tend to combine them with anti-American symbols.

Antisemitic symbols can be found in pictures, caricatures, numbers, letters, music, phrases, or religious and mythic symbols that have more than one meaning. Not all are as easily identifiable as the swastika and the flag of the National Socialists. Colors can also be used to convey an antisemitic message. In Germany, for example, black, red and white – the colors of the flag of the German Empire (1871-1918) – are used to indicate a right-wing extremist background.

Using antisemitic symbols is a political technique used to create a group identity and to designate inclusion and exclusion. *Consciously* showing such symbols in public, such as in school, usually occurs in an attempt to influence the local atmosphere by literally setting a sign. Apart from being an internal tool employed by right-wing extremist groups, such symbols and codes may also assist efforts of the right-wing extremist camp to create a transnational network.

In addition, teachers should note that antisemitic slogans and images are also disseminated through popular music. While this is an area beyond the control of the teacher, it is nonetheless important to be sensitive to it.

#### **Educational Responses**

Addressing this problem requires an understanding of the reasons behind the use of certain symbols. Depending on the background, different approaches can be considered. For a pedagogical approach, it is important to be aware of the dynamics of the group and the need to treat group members differently, especially because of their different hierarchical positions within the group and the different circumstances of each individual case. This careful approach requires a concentrated effort and cannot be undertaken by a single teacher. Close cooperation with other teachers and the school administration, law enforcement officers, and civil society are necessary when trying to address the issue in a responsible and effective way.

Parents should be involved in the process. While many parents are aware of the existence of extremist and violent video games, they often lack knowledge of more subtle manifestations of antisemitism and extremist political views. For example, many do not know that white laces in black boots, certain fashion brands, or some music groups spread symbols attached to neo-Nazism. Often conveying a political message, fashion and music are thus more than just expressions of taste.

Before engaging in this process, teachers and parents alike may need to be better informed about the meaning of different symbols.

Prominent examples include:

- 88: this number is used by certain groups to represent the words “Heil Hitler”, since the letter H is the eighth letter in the alphabet;
- 18: this number is used by certain groups to represent the name of Adolf Hitler, since the letter A is the first and the letter H the eighth in the alphabet;
- 14 words: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children” is the 14-word credo of David Lane, a neo-Nazi and a member of the terrorist group The Order. It is used as a greeting, and appears on CD covers as well as clothing;
- 666: A number also used by Satanists appears in extremist circles as a symbol for the Jewish Anti-Christ. In that view, Jews are portrayed as Satanic and evil;
- ZOG: stands for “Zionist Occupied Government” and refers to countries in Europe and North America that in this view are secretly governed by Israel. The symbol is often used in phrases like “Stop ZOG!”, and it is also incorporated in drawings and graffiti.

Since antisemitic symbols in youth culture change very rapidly, teachers may want to consult the following websites, which offer updated information on the issue:

- Anti-Defamation League (ADL): “Hate on Display. A Visual Database of Extremist Symbols, Logos and Tattoos”, [http://www.adl.org/hate\\_symbols/default.asp](http://www.adl.org/hate_symbols/default.asp);
- Agentur für soziale Perspektiven: Das Versteckspiel. Lifestyle, Symbole und Codes von neonazistischen und extrem rechten Gruppen. (in German), <http://www.dasversteckspiel.de/index.html>;
- The Coordination Forum for Countering Antisemitism, a visual database of extremist symbols, <http://www.antisemitism.org.il/eng/Introduction>;
- Demos (in Danish), <http://www.demos.dk/Symboler.htm>;
- Lonsdale News (in Dutch), <http://www.lonsdalenews.nl/symboliek.html>;
- Searchlight Magazine, Signs of Hate, <http://www.opwedge.org.uk/SOHad.php>;
- Simon Wiesenthal Center: Digital Terrorism and Hate 2007, <http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/apps/s/content.asp?c=fwLYKnN8LzH&b=253162&ct=3876867>;
- The website <http://www.rechtsextremismus.ch/> offers advice in Switzerland.

### **Explain the meaning**

Some students may not be fully aware or not aware at all that certain symbols are codes for a specific ideology they do not want to be associated with. Teachers should therefore discuss with their class why some symbols have an antisemitic meaning and why they can be seen as denoting support for an antisemitic and racist ideology. Teachers are best placed to distinguish the contexts in which the symbols may function as a political code from a context in which such a message is neither consciously nor unconsciously conveyed. For example, students should not be made to feel that celebrating their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday by wearing the number 18 on their shirt is an expression of antisemitism. At the same time, educators need to be aware that some extremist movements tend to exploit the fact that a symbol like the number 18 can also have a harmless meaning and may merely refer to someone’s age. The teacher’s experience and familiarity with the student might be a good guide in this regard.

### **Enlist additional support**

If a teacher notices any illegal activities, headmasters and law enforcement officials should be involved in addressing the problem.

**Try to offer alternatives**

Young people who are in the process of finding and exploring their individual identity often look for symbols, groups, and ideas to identify with. In an effort to prevent them from subscribing to extremist views, it is recommended that as much space as possible be provided for expressions of identity that do not cause any harm and that they be introduced to as many alternatives as possible besides joining extremist youth groups. If the school is inclusive and sensitive to individual needs, while also offering students opportunities to freely express themselves in an atmosphere of respect and understanding, an important step has been taken. In order to promote alternatives and to foster tolerance, various campaigns have been launched. Inspiring posters have been developed, for example, for European Action Week against Racism or in the context of the International Day against Fascism and Antisemitism on 9 November (see <http://www.unitedagainstracism.org>). Another point of reference is the Council of Europe's "All different – All equal" campaign; for more information, see <http://alldifferent-allequal.info/>.



## **Annex 1. Working Definition of Antisemitism**

In order to give practical guidance in identifying antisemitic incidents to those who are confronted with expressions or acts of antisemitism, the ODIHR and the European Fundamental Rights Agency, together with Jewish non-governmental organizations and academics, developed a working definition of antisemitism that encompasses both traditional and contemporary manifestations of antisemitism.

### **Working Definition**

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred towards Jews.

Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed towards Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, towards Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

In addition, such manifestations could also target the State of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity.

Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for “why things go wrong”. It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.

Contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

- Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion;
- Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as a collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions;
- Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews;
- Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g., gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust);
- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust;
- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.

Examples of the ways in which antisemitism manifests itself with regard to the State of Israel, taking into account the overall context, could include:

- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor;
- Applying double standards by requiring of it behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation;

- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis;
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis;
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the State of Israel.

However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.

Antisemitic acts are criminal when they are so defined by law (e.g., denial of the Holocaust or distribution of antisemitic materials in some countries). Criminal acts are antisemitic when the target of an attack, whether people or property – such as buildings, schools, places of worship, and cemeteries – is selected because it is, or is perceived to be, Jewish or linked to Jews. Antisemitic discrimination is the denial to Jews of opportunities or services available to others and is illegal in many countries.

## Annex 2. Recommended Websites

For more information, the following websites can be consulted:

### a) International Organizations

#### **The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)**

<http://www.osce.org/odihr>

Based in Warsaw, Poland, the ODIHR is active throughout the OSCE area in the fields of election observation, democratic development, human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination, and rule of law.

- ***The ODIHR's Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Program*** (<http://www.osce.org/odihr/20051.html>) provides assistance to the 56 OSCE participating States on the following issues: hate crime, antisemitism, racism/xenophobia, intolerance against Muslims, and freedom of religion or belief.
- **Teaching materials on antisemitism** developed in close co-operation with the Anne Frank House, Amsterdam, can be downloaded from the ODIHR's website at: [http://www.osce.org/odihr/item\\_11\\_23875.html](http://www.osce.org/odihr/item_11_23875.html);
- The document "**Preparing Holocaust Memorial Days: Suggestions for Educators**", developed together with Yad Vashem, is available in 13 languages at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/20104.html> or <http://www1.yadvashem.org/education/department/english/specproj.html>;
- The ODIHR's **Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Information System** (<http://tnd.odihr.pl>) stores and provides information related to tolerance and non-discrimination from the participating States, as well as from partner organizations. The education section provides links and materials and tools for those involved in the formal or non-formal education sector throughout the OSCE region.

#### **The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance**

<http://www.coe.int/ecri>

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) was set up following a decision of the Council of Europe. ECRI's task is to combat racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, and intolerance at the level of greater Europe and from the perspective of the protection of human rights.

#### **The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights**

<http://www.fra.europa.eu/fra/index.php>

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights works in information and data collection and analysis, raises public awareness of fundamental rights, promotes dialogue with civil society, and advises EU institutions and member states on their policies, including in the area of the fight against racism, xenophobia, and related intolerance.

#### **The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Program**

<http://www.un.org/holocaustremembrance>

This website provides background information on a resolution adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly, condemning without reserve all manifestations of religious intolerance, incitement, harassment, or violence against persons or communities based on ethnic origin or religious belief, whenever they occur. Resources and discussion papers are available for download.

## **The Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education Remembrance and Research**

<http://www.holocausttaskforce.org>

The website of the Task Force maintains an international directory of organizations working in the fields of Holocaust education, remembrance, and research; an international calendar of events; a directory of archives; listings of remembrance and education activities; as well as additional information about the Task Force. Holocaust education guidelines developed by the Task Force's Education Working Group can also be downloaded at <http://www.holocausttaskforce.org/teachers/index.php?content=guidelines/menu.php>.

## **b) Museums, Educational Centers, and Research Institutions**

### **The Anne Frank House**

<http://www.annefrank.org>

The Anne Frank House is a museum and an educational organization. It develops teaching materials, organizes exhibitions, does research, and undertakes educational projects. Key themes include: Anne Frank, the Holocaust, antisemitism, discrimination, and human rights.

### **Casa Sefarad Israel**

<http://www.casasefarad-israel.es>

Casa Sefarad Israel is a Spanish institution aimed at studying and preserving the history of Jews in Spain, increasing knowledge about Jewish culture, and initiating co-operation projects between Spain and Israel. Casa Sefarad is also active in the area of education.

### **The Center for Research on Antisemitism, Berlin**

<http://www.tu-berlin.de/~zfa>

An institute of the Technical University Berlin, the Center is the only institution of its kind in Europe. Research focuses on antisemitism, as well as on prejudice against minorities. A further focus is on German-Jewish history and on the Holocaust. Further information on teaching materials is available online.

### **The Coordination Forum for Countering Antisemitism**

<http://www.antisemitism.org.il>

The Coordination Forum for Countering Antisemitism is a state forum that monitors antisemitic activities throughout the world. It co-ordinates the struggle against antisemitism with various government bodies and Jewish organizations around the world.

### **H-Antisemitism**

<http://www.h-net.org/~antis>

This network encourages scholarly discussion of the history of antisemitism and makes available diverse bibliographical, research, and teaching aids.

### **Lernen aus der Geschichte**

<http://www.lernen-aus-der-geschichte.de>

A German website that provides information about educational projects and initiatives focusing on National Socialism, the Holocaust, human rights, and their respective relevance for today. Part of the website is a European forum.

### **The Living History Forum**

<http://www.levandehistoria.se>

A Swedish Government organization, the Living History Forum takes history as a starting point to study contemporary processes that could lead to intolerance and injustice. Innovative methods are applied to encourage young people to apply their own creativity to define the intolerance that exists in their own lives. Further information about the activities is also available in English.

### **The Middle East Media Research Institute**

<http://www.memri.org>

The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) explores the Middle East through the region's media. MEMRI bridges the language gap that exists between the West and the Middle East, providing timely translations of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish media, as well as original analysis of political, ideological, intellectual, social, cultural, and religious trends in the Middle East.

### **The Museum of Tolerance**

<http://www.museumoftolerance.com>

The Museum of Tolerance is a hands-on experimental museum that focuses on racism and prejudice in the United States and the history of the Holocaust.

### **Projekte gegen Antisemitismus**

<http://www.projekte-gegen-antisemitismus.de>

Projekte gegen Antisemitismus is a German initiative supported by the Amadeo Antonio Foundation that provides teaching materials, ideas, background information, and news on antisemitism.

### **The Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism**

<http://www.tau.ac.il/Antisemitism>

The Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism at Tel Aviv University is housed in the Wiener Library, which contains one of the largest collections of antisemitic, Nazi, and extremist literature in the world.

### **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

<http://www.ushmm.org>

A living memorial to the Holocaust, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum stimulates leaders and citizens to confront hatred, prevent genocide, promote human dignity, and strengthen democracy.

### **The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism**

<http://sicsa.huji.ac.il>

The Center engages in research on antisemitism throughout history, focusing on relations between Jews and non-Jews, particularly in situations of tension and crisis.

## **Bibliography on Arab and Muslim Antisemitism** (a project of the Vidal Sassoon Center)

<http://sicsa.huji.ac.il/islam.html>

### **Yad Vashem**

<http://www.yadvashem.org>

Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, was established in 1953 by an act of the Israeli Knesset. Since its inception, Yad Vashem has been entrusted with documenting the history of the Jewish people during the Holocaust period, preserving the memory and story of each of the six million victims, and imparting the legacy of the Holocaust for generations to come through its archives, library, school, museums, and recognition of the Righteous Among the Nations.

## **c) Non-Governmental Organizations**

### **The Anti-Defamation League**

<http://www.adl.org>

Founded in 1913, the Anti-Defamation League is one of the premier civil rights agencies, working to combat antisemitism and all forms of bigotry and defending democratic ideals.

### **The American Jewish Committee**

<http://www.ajc.org>

The American Jewish Committee is an international think tank and advocacy organization that promotes pluralistic and democratic societies where all minorities are protected. Their key areas of focus include combating antisemitism and all forms of bigotry, promoting pluralism and shared civil values, protecting human rights, asserting Israel's right to exist in peace and security with its neighbors, and safeguarding and strengthening Jewish life.

### **The Kreuzberger Initiative gegen Antisemitismus**

<http://www.kiga-berlin.org>

The Kreuzberger Initiative gegen Antisemitismus is a non-governmental organization focusing on combating antisemitism, especially among immigrant youth. Various educational programs are available online.

### **Ligue Internationale contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme**

<http://www.licra.org>

The Ligue Internationale contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme is engaged in the fight against racism and antisemitism, monitoring, *inter alia*, racist websites. Resources and background information are offered.

### **The Simon Wiesenthal Center**

<http://www.wiesenthal.com>

The Simon Wiesenthal Center is an international Jewish human rights organization dedicated to preserving the memory of the Holocaust by fostering tolerance and understanding through community involvement, educational outreach, and social action. The Center confronts a number of contemporary issues, including antisemitism, hate, and terrorism and human rights.

### **The SOVA Center**

<http://www.sova-center.ru>

A Russian NGO, the SOVA Center monitors and reports on extremism, intolerance, and antisemitism in the Russian Federation. Part of the website is also available in English.

# Antisemitism on the Internet

By Mark Weitzman

## Introduction

- The Internet is the prime means of communication and marketing in the world. With more than one billion three hundred million users, it offers the largest pool of potential targets for all those involved in the marketplace of ideas.
- The Internet's unprecedented global reach and scope combined with the difficulty in monitoring and tracing communications make the Internet a prime tool for extremists and terrorists.
- The Simon Wiesenthal Center has been monitoring these developments for nearly two decades. Our findings reveal that as the Internet has grown, the escalation of extremist sites has kept pace in number and in technological sophistication.
- In April 1995, the first extremist website went online: Today, more than 8,000 problematic hate and terrorist websites and other Internet postings have been identified. Extremists are leveraging technologies to dynamically target young people through digital games, Second Life scenarios, blogs, and even YouTube- and Facebook-style videos depicting racist violence and terrorism.
- Every aspect of the Internet is being used by extremists of every ilk to repackage old hatred, demean the "enemy," to raise funds and since September 11, 2001, recruit and train Jihadist terrorists. Of special concern is the use of the Internet by various regimes to justify terrorism and spread its influence.
- The Internet continues to be used to demean and threaten minorities, such as immigrants, gays, Jews, African Americans and virtually every religious denomination. These guidelines aim to help Internet users become pro-active in identifying and curbing Internet hate and terror.

## Impacting the Young

Hate sites target diverse populations, and emanate from a variety of sources from organized groups to anonymous individuals. Everyone is a potential target; nobody is immune whether categorized by racial, religious, ethnic, sexual or gender identity, or by political or other types of beliefs. However, it is clear that antisemitism (in its various manifestations) and racism represent by far the greatest percentages of hate online. This hate, targeting real and imagined enemies, is expressed in a variety of ways ranging from the blatant and crude to sophisticated, pseudo-scholarly formats.

From the outset, the use of the Internet by bigots was meant not only to launch online attacks but also to recruit mainstream support, respect and sympathy. More often than not, leveraging the fact that the Internet was, virtually from the beginning a young person's medium, they focused on teens and preteens.

In one study, such websites were described as using "persuasive storytelling" (i.e., the use of narrative to persuade or convince). Researchers noted that 25% of US teens have encountered sites with information about hate groups; 14% have seen sites that teach individuals how to build bombs, and 12% have looked at sites that discuss how or where to purchase fire arms. Their findings lead them to suggest that, "Although teens may be better able than younger children to distinguish between legitimate and unfounded content, some adolescents appear to take Internet content at face value, suggesting the potential for an immediate message effect.

The fact that 25% of US teens surveyed admitted to exposure to hate sites would lead to the belief that the number is actually higher.

### **Online Strategies**

Often extremists tailor their messages to the intended audience, and appear to speak directly to their targets. Their messages targeting youngsters commonly include crude and explicit language, and at other times the approach is more sophisticated, sometimes even appearing without any overt racist symbols or language. In any case, since there often is a perception, especially among relatively unsophisticated users that whatever appears in print (or in this case online) has to be true (or else it wouldn't be allowed there), website narratives are accepted at face value.

A key reason for the popularity and credibility of the Internet can be described as the desire to quickly access information and receive it in an easily digestible format. Researchers have found that while more subtle messages have a short-term impact, more explicit messages seem to have a longer lasting effect. The bottom line is that whether short- or long-term, coded or explicit, young people – a key and growing online constituency – will continue to be prime targets of the proliferating digital haters.

### **Internet Hate Games**

The growing sophistication and radicalization of the extremists also began to manifest in the technological domain. From the mid-1980s, crude versions of Nazi computer games began appearing. These games, with titles like Aryan Test, Clean Germany, Anti-Turk test and KZ (German for concentration camp) Manager appeared in both US and European websites. Designed to mock victims of genocide and racism and clearly aimed at younger users, hate games serve the triple purposes of dehumanizing the enemy, while entertaining and recruiting youngsters. An Internet culture was emerging that normalized violence, advanced it as a form of problem solving, and mocked victims who were invariably members of minorities. Tragically, these games continue to proliferate online, with even the older games continuing to attract visitors. For example, a more advanced version of KZ Manager can be found online today. The game uses allusions to the gassing of Jews, and applies that to a contemporary minority target in Germany – the Turkish community. The deploying of such games enormously expanded the potential reach of bigots around the world.

### **Common Themes in Virtual Neighborhoods of Hate**

While many groups try to stress their differences and uniqueness, there are some hate themes that consistently appear online. One of the most pervasive canards is an alleged Jewish conspiracy aimed at dominating the world. This theme is embodied in the classic conspiratorial text, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, that appeared over 100 years ago. The book was a source for every prominent Jew-hater, including Adolf Hitler. Today, this antisemitic publication is easily accessed online, showcased by extremists and antisemites, ranging from neo-Nazis to Islamic extremists to conspiracy theorists, via scores of websites and languages.

Even though antisemitism is a prevalent theme among online extremists, no group is immune from attack and at the same time, no group is immune from having online extremists in their midst. Catholics, Muslims, Hindus, homosexuals, women and immigrants are some of the most targeted groups. Such sites are based on a combination of age-old theological extremism and stereotyping, and frequently rely on historical distortions. Others manipulate history to rewrite or deny it; including Holocaust deniers, those seeking to deny or minimize mass murder in



Armenia, Nanjing or other places, or those attempting to justify slavery and the repression of minorities.

If the hate is old, what is new about its repackaging online? On the Internet, there are no controls, fact-checkers, editorial functions or even internal inhibitions to control the flow of false information. Moreover, the Internet surpasses geographical borders, local laws and traditions.

Although a virtual neighborhood of hate has been created by extremists on the Internet, it is our responsibility to respond to their challenge.

### **What to Do About Hate Sites**

Communicate and challenge your students: Just because its posted doesn't make it true or real. Students should understand that we must adopt a zero tolerance policy for any websites promoting hate and illegal actions. Address the subject of hate groups on the Internet with your students. Ask them to share what they have seen on blogs, in games or websites that they think cross the line. However, any web postings teaching how to act as a terrorist should be immediately reported to the authorities.

Hate is never cool. That means that it is never okay to download racist music or play online hate games – no matter whoever the target may be. Help your students learn to verify online postings, and provide them with tools – on and offline – that will contribute to their critical thinking skills. Suggest to your colleagues in school to also address these important issues in their classes.

Ultimately, it is important that students understand the difference between legitimate criticism or analysis and hate that seeks to rewrite history. If a “line has been crossed,” make the effort to contact your Internet service provider and urge them to remove the posting and take action against online bigotry. Involve your students in this process by teaching them that words have consequences; so should actions. Non-governmental organizations and governmental officials can also be helpful resources.

# Antisemitism Then and Now: A Lesson Plan

This lesson is geared toward senior high school students.

## Objectives:

In this lesson, students will:

- Define the term antisemitism and gain more information about this phenomenon throughout the ages
- Learn about contemporary forms of antisemitism and intolerance
- Become more sensitized to the dangers of hatred and prejudice within society
- Improve their critical thinking skills

## Procedures:

### **Introductory Exercise**

Begin this lesson by asking students:

- Are you familiar with the terms “antisemitism,” “prejudice,” and “xenophobia”? Discuss their understanding of what these words mean.
- Have you seen or heard expressions of antisemitism in your school or in your community (verbal, physical or other)? Cite specific examples.

### **Origins of Antisemitism and Contemporary Manifestations**

Ask students to read the [Short Overview on Antisemitism](#) and the [Working Definition of Antisemitism](#), in this resource guide, in small groups or individually for homework. After reading both of these handouts, students should answer the following questions in their own words:

- What are the origins of antisemitism?
- What are the characteristics of contemporary antisemitism?

### **Antisemitism in Nazi Germany**

In Nazi Germany during the 1930s, Jews were often banned from recreational activities, such as ice skating, swimming and even sitting on certain benches in public parks. Antisemitic signs, such as “Dogs and Jews Are Not Allowed” or “Jews Are Unwelcome Here,” could be seen all over Germany.



*Photo of a Jewish woman sitting on a bench marked “For Jews Only” in Nazi Germany.  
Courtesy, Yad Vashem Photo Archives*

In 1933, Jews in Germany were less than one percent of the national population – a tiny minority within the country. Overall, most of the people who saw these signs at the time were not Jewish nor did these anti-Jewish measures personally affect them.

### **Discussion Questions:**

If so few Jews lived in Germany in the 1930s, then to whom are these signs being directed? Jewish people? Non-Jewish People? What do you think was the motive to publicly display these antisemitic signs? Explain your answer.

**Notes to the Teacher:**

These discussion questions may trigger other questions about the responsibility of the bystanders, the vast majority of the country's population, non-Jewish citizens in Nazi Germany. The German population overall did not protest against antisemitic measures, but rather passively tolerated anti-Jewish policies and laws. In the words of the German-Jewish essayist, Kurt Tucholsky, "A country is not just what it does, but also what it tolerates." For more information, see: [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org)

**Antisemitism Today**

Ask students to read the short article, "[Antisemitism on the Internet](#)," in this resource guide, and discuss the ways some sites on the World Wide Web promote hatred, antisemitism and other forms of prejudice. Encourage students to underline the three most important points raised in this handout. In addition, if you feel comfortable doing so, ask them to relate their personal experiences from surfing on the Internet, asking whether they have ever encountered hate games, Holocaust denial sites or other antisemitic material in cyberspace.

**Suggested Activities:**

- Write letters to Internet service providers to encourage them to block access to antisemitic sites.
- Encourage a campaign to make the school a "no tolerance to intolerance" zone. Team up with other school staff, such as teachers of art, to design posters on this theme to be displayed in school hallways.

**Additional Activity**

After reading the [Working Definition of Antisemitism](#), in this resource guide, developed by international organizations in response to the rise of antisemitism throughout the last decade, students should examine the caricature below and answer the discussion questions.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What symbols do you notice in this caricature?
2. What is the message of this caricature?
3. Who is being criticized in this caricature? The entire Jewish people? The government of the State of Israel? Others?
4. Do you perceive this caricature to be antisemitic? Why or why not?



**Notes to the Teacher:**

In this political cartoon, an Arab man is being crucified, alluding to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ by the Romans more than 2000 years ago. The message of this caricature is that the Palestinians have become the Jesus Christ of the twenty-first century and that Jews are murdering Jesus once again. Blaming Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus has been a part of antisemitic discourse throughout the ages. By referring to this false accusation, this caricature is placing blame on the entire Jewish people for the Arab-Israeli conflict. Since the caricature is based on a false historical myth, perpetuating anti-Jewish stereotypes, it is a current form of antisemitism.