

**House Foreign Affairs Committee
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission**

**Hearing
on
WORLDWIDE PERSECUTION OF JEWS**

**May 20, 2025 – 2:00 p.m.
2322 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING**

**Statement of RABBI ERIC FUSFIELD
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Mr. Co-Chairman,

It is an honor to appear before this Commission today. I am Rabbi Eric Fusfield of B'nai B'rith International, an organization founded in 1843 and represented today in more than 40 countries around the world. I am B'nai B'rith's Director of Legislative Affairs and Deputy Director of its International Center for Human Rights and Public Policy.

Anti-Semitism is the world's oldest, and most resilient, social pathology. It has existed for thousands of years and has been present in every generation and nearly every region where Jews have lived. And today anti-Semitism – the hatred of Jews – remains as pernicious and widespread as it has been at any time since the World War II era.

Right-wing attacks on synagogues in Halle, Germany, and many other places have left Jewish communities fearful for their safety. In Germany, the Federal Ministry of the Interior has reported a sharp increase in anti-Semitic attacks over the past five years, including an increase in violent assaults.

Since the pandemic settled in in Europe, we have witnessed a concerted campaign by the neo-Fascist Nordic Resistance Movement to intimidate Jews in their places of worship and in communal spaces. A kosher restaurant in France, a country where countless acts of anti-Semitism have occurred, was vandalized with tags of "Hitler was right," "Jews get out," and "Free Palestine." In Greece, multiple cemeteries were vandalized; rabbis were attacked on the street in Berlin and Vienna; and in Germany, on Sukkot, a synagogue was attacked in Hamburg, just days before the one-year commemoration of the Yom Kippur attack in Halle.

And, lest some think anti-Semites cannot bring back classic blood libel charges against Jews from the Middle Ages, the Kantor Center at Tel Aviv University reported there were widespread assertions that Israel or Jews as a whole were responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic. In the early stages of the pandemic, websites charged Israel with creating the virus in order to manufacture vaccines for it, from which the Jewish state would profit.

Anti-Semitism on the left has permeated institutions such as political parties, like the British Labor Party; non-governmental organizations like Amnesty International; and academia. Much of this animus manifests itself in the form of anti-Israel hatred, particularly in the wake of hostilities such as the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza in 2021 and the aftermath of the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. This in turn results in the mainstreaming of anti-Semitic and anti-Israel discourse, as reflected in occasional comments by athletes, entertainers, and politicians.

This highlights a recurring concern in many parts of the world, including the United States. It is vitally important to identify anti-Semitism whether it occurs on the far left, the far right, among radical Islamists, or anywhere else, without regard to one's own political orientation. Felix Klein, the Commissioner for Jewish Life in Germany and the Fight Against Anti-Semitism, has been particularly helpful in advancing this important principle.

It also speaks to the problem that Jews are losing further control of the public narrative about them. This point is underscored by the incursion of anti-Semitic violence into racial justice protests in the U.S. and Europe. The death of George Floyd was followed by attacks on synagogues and Jewish-owned businesses in a number of cities. The frequent appearance of the slogan "Free Palestine" in graffiti on Jewish targets showed the popular tendency to register discontent with the Jewish state by harming Jews in the diaspora. An anti-racism rally in Place de la Republique in Paris featured signs with directives such as "Stop collaboration with Israeli State terrorism" as the crowd chanted "dirty Jews."

Anti-Israel hatred that finds expression in the public square or on university campuses, whether such venom explicitly holds Jews accountable for Israel's actions or not, too often is simply hatred of Jews in another guise. This sinister strategy of using Israel or Zionism as a proxy for Jews has just been infused with new vitality by academic doctrines that may purport to identify and combat discrimination, but in truth help facilitate discrimination against Jews.

Last year the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency released a survey, conducted before the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel, in which nearly all Jewish respondents said they had experienced anti-Semitism in the preceding year. Eight of 10 said that anti-Semitism had increased in recent years.

Reports of anti-Semitic incidents then spiked dramatically in multiple European counties in the months following the October 7 Hamas atrocities. Population surveys suggest that the degree of anti-Semitism experienced in Europe exceeds even the high number of incidents being recorded by police and monitoring agencies. This rise in anti-Semitism post-October 7 has significantly impacted feelings of safety and security across European Jewry. Open celebrations of brutal Hamas attacks against Israel have revealed an astonishing level of Jew-hatred in parts of Western Europe. A culture of "ambient antisemitism" has emerged in the post-October 7 period, marked by incidents such as defacing or tearing down posters of Israeli hostages, that, whether strictly anti-Semitic or not, create a broader milieu that feels threatening and hostile to many Jewish people.

There has been a significant increase in sympathy for the Palestinians among young people and those on the political left since October 7; levels of sympathy for Israel are much lower, even in the very immediate wake of the Hamas attacks. This disdain for Israel is likely to lead many Jews to feel a greater sense of alienation from the societies in which they live. This in

turn points to a need for a systematic approach to measuring anti-Semitism in society and its effects on Jews as part of a robust strategy to combat the problem.

One of the greatest challenges in the fight against anti-Semitism over the past two decades has been the effort to define the problem. For many of us in the Jewish community, the standard applied by Justice Potter Stewart with respect to pornography – “I know it when I see it” – comes to mind, but public officials, educators, journalists, and law enforcement officers clearly needed something more than that. This underscores the importance of what occurred in 2016, when the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), adopted a working definition of anti-Semitism. The IHRA definition was not intended to be a detailed, deep dive into the causes and manifestations of this millennia-old hatred. It was meant, rather, to speak to categories of Jew-hatred, both classic and contemporary, such as the demonization and delegitimization of Israel, Holocaust denial and distortion, accusations of dual loyalty, and conspiracy theories implicating Jews.

To date, more than 30 countries have adopted the IHRA working definition as a vital tool for education and guidance, and the number continues to grow. And as the need for practical tools becomes more apparent with anti-Semitism on the rise, a handbook of definitions has emerged in the European Union, one that figures to play a significant role. IHRA, in conjunction with the European Commission and with the support of the German government, has published an important guide. Based on extensive research, the handbook is a first-of-its-kind, best-practices manual for use in such fields as law enforcement, the judiciary, education, international bodies, funding institutions, and civil society.

The anti-Semitism handbook connects the IHRA document to real life examples — which helps to make it a real “working” definition. Showing the relevance of the battle against anti-Semitism to government officials and educators will help to monitor, identify, respond to, and counteract anti-Semitism in the open or in dark corners of society across the European continent and beyond. As more countries and non-governmental organizations adopt and implement the IHRA working definition, the questions of how the definition will be applied, and by whom, loom large. That is where the handbook can provide key guidance.

Fourteen EU countries had adopted a national strategy to combat anti-Semitism at the time of the 2024 EU Fundamental Rights Agency report, while 17 European countries had appointed a special envoy to combat anti-Semitism and foster Jewish life. However, the survey results suggest that the work of these envoys and coordinators still remains relatively unknown among Jewish communities.

Another battleground in the fight against anti-Semitism has been the growing threat against Jewish religious freedom in the areas of brit milah, or ritual circumcision, and shehitah, or kosher slaughter. A troublesome milestone occurred in 2020 when the European Court of Justice ruled that individual European Union member states can legislate against shehitah by requiring that an animal be stunned prior to slaughter.

Already some countries place restrictions tantamount to a ban on the practice of shehitah, including Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Slovenia, Estonia, regions of Belgium, and non-EU member Switzerland. Efforts to ban brit milah have been similarly underway in Europe and parts of the United States for some time — though without much success at this point. Denying Jews the right to these essential acts of religious freedom, especially on European soil, where the

greatest crimes against the Jewish people were perpetrated, is not just “discriminatory”; it is a threat to the continued existence of European Jewry.

Anti-Semitism in the form of a contemporary version of Holocaust denial has emerged, as Israel’s detractors claims that Jews are worse than Nazis and that Israel is perpetrating a “Holocaust” upon the Palestinians. Rhetorical attacks on Israel often feature phrases such as “ethnic cleansing,” “forced transfers,” and “human rights violations.” Claims that Jews are exploiting the Holocaust to collect reparation money or that they have used the Holocaust to justify the creation of an “apartheid” state also serve as troubling examples of the misuse of the Holocaust for political purposes.

Anti-Semitism continues to propel Holocaust denial in an effort to recast the history of the Holocaust, so as to make anti-Semitism acceptable and depict the Holocaust as a Jewish ploy in service of nefarious goals. This distinct form of anti-Semitism is aimed at discrediting and demonizing Jews through historical revisionism.

Young Jewish adults live with the constant fear of being the target of an anti-Semitic attack on social media. German social scientist Quint Czymmek cites a 2019 study that found that young European Jews (ages 16-34) were more likely to have experienced anti-Semitic harassment or violence than older Jews and that these younger Jews said the internet and social media was where anti-Semitism, often in the form of anti-Israel invective, is most problematic today. AI models also have played a role in perpetuating anti-Semitic stereotypes and conspiracy theories. The sense of loss of control and despair over the silence of other social media users is particularly haunting for young Jews.

Social media's algorithms reward content that elicits user responses, even if those responses are negative. This is how Holocaust denial and anti-Zionism have thrived on the internet. Even if you are denouncing an anti-Semitic post or calling out the person who published it can increase the likelihood that the content will be promoted on the platform. Many platforms now have methods for reporting hate speech, however.

B’nai B’rith, with its extensive contacts in Latin America, last year contributed to a World Zionist Organization report that documented the growth of anti-Semitism on that continent. Argentina, Brazil, and Chile are among the countries highlighted because of a rise in discriminatory attitudes, hate speech, and physical attacks. As in Europe, the events of October 7, 2023 have been a significant turning point for anti-Semitism.

In Brazil, President Lula stirred controversy by comparing Israel’s military operations to Nazi actions, an example of the gross misuse of a Nazi analogy that is a characteristic manifestation of modern anti-Semitism. Similarly, President Petro in Colombia frequently posts social media content that has been criticized as anti-Semitic, another example of a national leader fanning the flames of Jew-hatred. Lula’s polemics have placed the Jewish community in a difficult position, caught between criticizing Lula and being perceived as supporting his predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro. Meanwhile, in southern Brazil, far right and neo-Nazi movements continue to grow.

In Chile, where Israel is routinely attacked in the media, there is a serious fear of being identified on the street as a Jew and Jews are advised not to frequent certain places. Jewish institutions face threats from mobs, including an incident in which a pregnant woman was accused of “carrying a future genocidist.” The Palestinian community, together with the Senate

and the Chamber of Deputies' Chilean-Palestinian Friendship Society, marked the one-year anniversary of October 7 by commemorating "a year of genocide, 76 years of suffering."

In Argentina, most political parties have recognized Hamas as a terrorist group and affirmed Israel's right to self-defense. The Jewish community, however, faces a challenging environment, balancing government support with increasing security concerns and social tensions. The Jewish community has experienced the daily impact of global waves of anti-Semitism, particularly from supporters of left-wing parties. In public universities, there has been an increase in "new anti-Semitism" under the guise of anti-Zionism, just as there has been here in the United States, and Jewish students say they are afraid of openly identifying themselves as Jews for fear of extremist violence. Concerns about the security of Jewish institutions has increased, particularly after government authorities were forced to dismantle a terrorist cell in Mendoza, seizing weapons and explosives and staving off planned attacks on Jewish communities.

The World Zionist Organization report cited the urgent need for strengthening cultural and religious ties within communities, as well as building strong and supportive networks both within Argentina and with global Jewish communities and Israel. It also stressed education both inside and outside the community about Judaism and the dangers of anti-Semitism. Promoting understanding with society in general and political entities is essential for Jewish security and long-term acceptance.

One of the greatest explosions of anti-Semitism over the past year has occurred in Australia, where a spate of incidents in Sydney and Perth yielded reports of vandalism, harassment, and a possible bomb plot. Egg-throwing, swastika graffiti, arson, and other crimes were among the assaults on the Jewish community. Police outside of Sydney found a cache of the mining explosive known as Powergel, along with a list of Jewish targets, and are investigating whether the activities have been funded by foreign entities.

Anti-Semitic incidents increased fourfold in Australia in 2024, by far the steepest rise among English-speaking countries. The incidents increased not only in number but in severity, with many of the anti-Semitic activities posing threats to human life or damage to Jewish homes, businesses, and institutions.

According to the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, "There is a widespread sense of insecurity across the Jewish community – of not knowing what is coming next, and not knowing whether governments, police services, and leaders of civil society will respond appropriately, not respond at all, or respond in a way that allows the situation to worsen."

B'nai B'rith Canada's League for Human Rights, in its 2024 Annual Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents, detailed an increase of more than 200 percent in incidents over the previous year. B'nai B'rith urged new Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney to prioritize the fight against anti-Semitism as his government takes office. "This previously unimaginable rise in anti-Jewish hatred has had a profound negative impact on the day to day lives of Jewish Canadians. Jewish persons have increasingly become the targets of physical assault, threatening harassment (both online and in person), and grotesque intimidation. Jewish institutions and Jewish owned businesses in multiple cities have been repeatedly the targets of caustic protests, vandalism, arsons, shootings, and bomb threats," according to the B'nai B'rith Canada letter.

Given the escalating security needs of the Canadian Jewish community, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Advocacy is calling for a more comprehensive community-focused security

solution to protect vulnerable communities, particularly in high-risk areas such as Toronto and Montreal. The organization points to the role that anti-Israel protests play in fueling hate crimes and intimidating vulnerable Jewish communities, with demonstrators displaying symbols of terror groups such as Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Hezbollah.

In the Arab and Muslim world, anti-Semitism has become a central motivator behind radical Islamist movements, unifying disparate groups under a common enemy and providing a scapegoat for societal grievances. It also legitimizes violent actions against Jewish targets and other targets perceived as allies of Israel. Radical groups propagate anti-Semitism through satellite television channels, internet platforms, and social media, all vehicles for reaching audiences not just in the Middle East but in Europe as well.

State actors in the Middle East also play a role in fomenting anti-Semitism. The dictatorship in Iran, for example, routinely perpetuates anti-Semitic narratives, incorporating hatred of Jews and Israel as part of their official ideology and using it to bolster their anti-Zionism and Holocaust denial, as well as legitimizing their nefarious foreign policies.

Iran's educational materials, media content, and political rhetoric promote anti-Semitism and harden poisonous attitudes among the populace. This entrenchment in turn provides a effective vehicle for radical groups to mobilize support and justify their actions. Radical Islamists appeal to deep-seated historical and religious prejudices by framing their struggle as a defense against Jewish and Zionist conspiracies, thus greatly amplifying their message.

As anti-Semitic incidents continue to mount, the need for awareness of anti-Semitism's real-life manifestations and impact becomes more apparent. The IHRA working definition is an important tool for education and guidance. Governments and civil society must continue to use it. They must also continue to employ strategies that show the relevance of the battle against anti-Semitism to individual branches of government, or to educators, who can help amplify those strategies to confront anti-Semitism wherever it occurs.

Last July in Buenos Aires, Argentina, participating states and international bodies convened to adopt the Global Guidelines on Countering Anti-Semitism, a useful compendium of non-legally binding best practices that have helped formulate public policy in numerous countries and have formed the basis of many regional and national action plans. Dozens of countries, including the United States, and multilateral organizations have embraced the document.

These Global Guidelines are a road map for addressing the problem of anti-Semitism. Their recommendations are, in summary: leaders should denounce anti-Semitism; we should recognize that anti-Semitism can appear across the political spectrum and should not be ignored because of bias; governments should adopt and implement well-crafted strategies and action plans; governments should appoint coordinators or special envoys on anti-Semitism; countries and institutions should adopt the IHRA working definition; authorities should increase security of Jewish communal institutions; governments should support the uniform collection of data on anti-Semitic incidents; authorities should enforce hate crime and anti-discrimination laws; countries should increase education about Jewish culture and contributions to society; countries should cultivate a whole-of-society commitment that requires the active participation of civil society; stakeholders should engage social media and stay educated on evolving trends; and countries should strengthen international collaboration.

Twenty-one years ago, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) hosted a landmark anti-Semitism conference in Berlin that gave rise to the Berlin Declaration, in which the member-states vowed to “Condemn without reserve all manifestations of anti-Semitism.” Today, cascading events around the globe underscore the urgency of continuing to fight this persistent social illness in all of its forms and mutations, with all the defiance we can summon. Such moral clarity is needed now more than ever.

Thank you.