

# REFRAMING AN ANCIENT HATRED

The intersection of left-wing antisemitism  
and anti-Zionism

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Analysis Paper 97

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## Foreword

When I wrote *Toxic Mutation of an Ancient Hatred* in 2019, I was investigating what was at the time an unsettling but still largely contained phenomenon — the emergence of antisemitism on the political Left, cloaked in the language of anti-Zionism and human rights advocacy.

The paper traced how Soviet-era propaganda had evolved into a contemporary form of postmodern antisemitism which found fertile ground in identity politics and post-colonial theory. This repugnant seed flourished within universities, NGOs and left-wing political parties.

Five years later, the central warnings of the report have been vindicated by the resurgence of antisemitism throughout the West — from Europe, to the United States, to Australia — following the invasion of Israel by Hamas on 7 October 2023. What was once largely confined to academic seminars and activist circles has exploded into the mainstream, with the number of domestic assaults, abuse, vandalism and hate messages almost five times the level before the October 7 massacre, as reported in December by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.

We have seen university encampments celebrating terrorism, political leaders equating Israel with Nazi Germany, and international institutions weaponising legal frameworks against the Jewish state, which is now routinely accused of committing genocide. As such, the 'new anti-Zionism' I investigated in 2019 has now revealed its true character: not criticism of Israeli government policies or

advocacy of a peaceful, two-state solution, but a fundamental denial of the right of the Jewish state — and of Jews — even to exist.

In this new paper, Julie Claridge, a Senior Contributor to the CIS's research program into antisemitism, has now provided an astute updated analysis that demonstrates how even the very definition of 'antisemitism' has become an ideological battleground. She describes how when respected institutions redefine genocide, apartheid and human rights in order to target Israel exclusively, postmodern antisemitism finds its most recent and most sophisticated expression: the inversion of moral language being used to fuel an ancient hatred.

The global response to 7 October has shown how quickly the veneer of 'anti-racism' can be stripped away to reveal something far darker. More troublingly, it has demonstrated how mainstream institutions, from universities, to media, to international courts, can be captured by ideological frameworks that render Jews as permanent outsiders to their own moral universe.

Understanding these patterns remains essential for defending not merely the interests of Jewish people and the Jewish state, but the integrity of democratic discourse itself.

**Peter Kurti**

*Director – Culture, Prosperity & Civil Society program*

*The Centre for Independent Studies*

## Introduction

Within days of Hamas' attacks on attendees at a music festival in Israel, near the Gaza border on October 7, 2023, simmering antisemitism erupted with alarming intensity. Antisemitism, simply defined as the hatred of Jews, one of the longest standing hatreds of any group of people, is a bigotry that uniquely extends across

ideological lines. With roots dating before the birth of Christianity, this hatred has evolved in its expression, adapting to meet contemporary political and social times.

Since the publication of Peter Kurti's CIS paper, *Toxic Mutation of an Ancient Hatred: Left-Wing Antisemitism*, in November

2019, the continuing resurgence and evolution of left-wing antisemitism in Western democracies is on full display, on the streets and at university campuses across the Western world. The conflict in the Middle East between Israel and its enemies, and primarily for the left, the conflict with Gaza and the West Bank settlements, and periods of upheaval or perceived crisis, have led to spikes in antisemitism in Western democracies. The Hamas-Israeli conflict in May 2021 and the Hamas massacre of October 2023 and the war that followed led to surges in antisemitism, as did COVID-19 conspiracies in 2020, incorporating old antisemitic tropes. Now, anti-Zionism has evolved to create a further mutation of antisemitism, cloaking bias and discrimination in the language of political critique. Lawfare is used as a tool to delegitimise Israel, and the media, particularly social media, is used to amplify narratives that vilify Jews and the Jewish state.

Disturbingly, more recent expressions of antisemitism cross ideological and political lines to converge on Israel as a proxy for

wider anti-Jewish sentiment. Despite stark ideological opposition, both leftist ideologies and right-wing anti-globalisation and nationalist movements have increasingly adopted strong antisemitic discourse and corresponding actions. More challenging are the parallels between elements of the left and the views of some Islamists, which have become more widespread as Muslims move more freely throughout the world, driving the West to shift its allegiance from Israelis to Palestinians.

In Kurti's 2019 paper, he adopted the working definition of antisemitism set out by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). Defining antisemitism has become highly contested. This is evident in the broader debate about the conflict in the Middle East, as well as in promoting anti-colonial and critical race ideologies. Definitions shape the interpretation of laws, policies, and institutional responses and determine what is accepted and what becomes protected. This definitional contest has not only led to confusion but also has obscured clarity in discussions about the issue.

## Ideological, cultural, and political drivers

### The rise of the new anti-Zionism

The Zionist movement has significantly transformed from its inception in the late 19th century to the present day. It began as a movement focused on Jewish national identity and the establishment of a Jewish homeland. The current discourse around Zionism is heavily influenced by ongoing geopolitical tensions, particularly in Gaza, reflecting a broader debate on identity, rights, and the nature of the Israeli state. For some, this has culminated in arguments that question the establishment of a Jewish state at the expense of Palestinian rights.

Many factors have been combined to legitimise anti-Zionism, including pan-Arab nationalism, Soviet propaganda, the capture of the non-aligned movement countries by the former USSR in the United Nations, political dynamics of the UN,

and the embrace of anti-Zionism by the academy and student organisations.

The left has embraced anti-Zionism as a tool used not only against Israel, but also the Jewish people in general. Since the beginning of the new millennium, increasingly anti-Zionism has been used as a cover for antisemitism. Anti-Zionism has been used as a framework for expressing anti-Jewish sentiment in contexts where overt antisemitism is unacceptable. This new anti-Zionism must be distinguished from the first notable anti-Zionism, which emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century among certain Jewish communities that opposed Zionism for religious and cultural reasons.

To contest the establishment of Israel and policies promoting equality and eschewing discrimination, including the Declaration of Human Rights, the USSR began to engage

in state-sponsored antisemitism under the guise of anti-Zionism and actively spread this rhetoric to the Western world. The USSR used its influence in the United Nations to equate Zionism with racism, culminating in now-revoked resolution 3379.<sup>1</sup>

The Soviet Union had a role in arming and training the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, and Soviet media promoted anti-Zionist rhetoric, which often included the publication of Jewish caricatures and perpetuation of Jewish tropes.<sup>2</sup> In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as Israel became more aligned with Western powers, the Soviet Union played a role in legitimising antisemitic language within leftist movements by framing Zionism as a form of imperialism and as racist.<sup>3</sup> Traditional antisemitic tropes were used to support the discourse. This strategic manipulation of language was adopted in Western leftist circles, where debate about colonialism and imperialism led to Israel being seen as a colonial outpost. At this time, there was a rise in the use of terminology like the 'Zionist Lobby' and 'Zionist control', disguising antisemitism behind a Zionist veil. The 'Zionist' label began to serve as a proxy for 'Jew' in some discourses, allowing critics to target Jewish people indirectly.

In Western universities, Soviet influenced leftist groups promoted anti-Zionism as part of broader anti-imperialist struggles. Little by little, human rights terminology like apartheid and later genocide was applied to Israel.

Critical race theory and intersectional critiques of Israel within the academy build on advocacy for Palestinian rights and not Jewish identity. Israel is portrayed as a settler-colonial state trying to eliminate the native Palestinian population. To take this narrative further, Israel, as the settler, is seen as the perpetrator of genocide by displacing native Palestinians. In the process, indigenous Jewish roots and the complex history of the region are overlooked, and any legitimate claim to the land is eradicated. This theory, explored by historian Patrick Wolfe and others, forms the basis for many claims and actions made against Israel in the United Nations, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and other forums. The narrative is that

because Israel is inherently genocidal, action must be taken to stop it.

The argument that this anti-Zionism is directed at Israeli policies, like settlement expansion or military occupation, is belied by the fact that Jews are targeted as a people. Recent campus activism illustrates the point.

Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) played a significant role in university encampments across the United States following the October 7, 2023, attacks by Hamas. The SJP is a pro-Palestinian student activist organisation, founded in 1993 at the University of California, Berkeley, with more than 350 chapters across universities in the United States, Canada, and New Zealand. Its mission roots it deeply in left-wing ideology, particularly anti-colonialism, intersectionality, and social justice frameworks. Its mission is to develop "a connected, disciplined movement that is equipped with the tools necessary to contribute to the fight for Palestinian liberation", with an emphasis on intersectionality. SJP chapters agree to guard against homophobia, sexism, racism, bigotry, classism, colonialism, and discrimination of any form. This mirrors progressive ideologies that view global struggles as interconnected, often framing Palestinians as an oppressed group and Israel as an oppressor within a colonial paradigm. It specifically opposes Zionism.<sup>4</sup>

The SJP organised the 2024 Columbia University 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment' and rallies condemning Israel's actions in Gaza. These events often demanded ceasefires and divestment from Israeli-linked entities. Some SJP chapters expressed support for Palestinian armed resistance, including Hamas' October 7, 2023, attacks, which they framed as a 'step towards a free Palestine' or 'Al-Aqsa Flood'.<sup>5</sup> 'Don't Take Shitty Zionist Classes' was organised by the SJP at the University of Chicago in 2022 to boycott courses funded by the Israel Institute.<sup>6</sup> These actions led to the targeting of Jews on campus, with some violent incidents. The delegitimisation of Israel was a big part of the campus rhetoric.

Within the academy more broadly, responses to the attacks by Hamas on October 7, have at times crossed these lines. The actual events have been



downplayed, denied, and falsified. The attacks were justified as acts of resistance; any response by Israel was seen as the actions of the oppressor. Judith Butler, a prominent left-wing theorist and professor at the University of California, Berkley, although not agreeing with the methods employed by Hamas, stated at a round table discussion in March 2024 that the attack was an “act of armed resistance”, a response to decades of violence against Palestinians.<sup>7</sup>

Several student organisations at Columbia University, including SJP, issued a statement shortly after the October 7 attacks describing them as part of Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation. In the statement, Israel was held “entirely responsible” for the violence.<sup>8</sup>

A coalition of 34 Harvard student organisations issued a statement saying they “hold the Israeli regime entirely responsible for all unfolding violence”. The Democratic Socialists of America reportedly chanted at a rally that “resistance is justified when people are occupied”. Oren Segal, vice president of the Anti-Defamation League’s Center on Extremism, commented that “the glorification and justification of violence against civilians is not something I’ve seen in this movement in the 25 years I’ve been looking at it”.<sup>9</sup>

Hamas’ actions are omitted, and the focus on Israel is only as the oppressor, where violence against it is justified or downplayed. In this context, Israel is being held to a unique standard, and the Jewish people are held collectively responsible as the perpetrators of the violence.

### **Anti-Zionist = anti-Israel**

The actions of Israel, as the oppressor, are often seen as the actions of Zionists, wherever they may reside, leading to spikes in antisemitic incidents around the world, with record incidents being recorded in May 2021 and October 2023 and following. The term ‘Zionist’ is combined with the stated belief in Palestinian self-determination to complete the narrative. Left activists advocate for a one-state binational solution or a two-state solution that prioritises Palestinian rights, including the right of return for Palestinian refugees and their descendants. Both options would lead to the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state.

Others openly argue for the complete dissolution of Israel as a Jewish state.

Dr Suzanne Rutland, Professor Emerita, Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies, University of Sydney, sees the problem in two parts. Firstly, “80% of Australian Jews believe in Israel’s right to exist. Therefore, if [you as a Zionist] believe in Israel’s right to exist, in the anti-Zionist narrative, you are an evil person, because you are supporting this evil, apartheid, settler colonial state that’s carrying out its ethnic cleansing and genocide. [Secondly], almost half of the world’s Jewish population now lives in Israel. If you are supporting the destruction of Israel, you’re also supporting violence against Jews of Israel”.<sup>10</sup>

### **Disavowing Zionism**

The rise in anti-Zionism, coupled with the hatred of Israel as a state, has put people at risk just for being Jewish.

An American Enterprise Institute survey in 2025 found that left-wing campus cultures amplify anti-Israel sentiment, with Jewish students feeling pressured to renounce Zionism to be accepted in progressive circles. This reflects SJP’s role in shaping campus discourse as noted above.<sup>11</sup>

Professor Shalom Lappin of Queen Mary University of London states that “increasingly, Jews are expected to publicly disavow Israel as a condition for acceptance into widening areas of civilised society. This is particularly the case at universities in the West. Jewish students are frequently required to run a gauntlet of political legitimacy tests in order to participate in a variety of campus organisations”.<sup>12</sup>

Yossi Klein Halevi, American Israeli author and journalist, takes it one step further. He states that Jews are no longer unconditionally accepted into progressive circles. This is a backwards step imposed on Jews by the progressive left. When Jews first arrived in the United States, they hid their Jewishness until they didn’t have to. Now they are being required to once again hide by rejecting Zionism and repudiating Israel. To be a progressive Jew, one must accept that the greatest of evils, colonialism, as seen through the left-wing lens, applies to Israel. Halevi states that



this is dangerous for Judaism. He states that anti-Zionist Jews are challenging the Zionist Jew, claiming that they are the 'real' Jews. He states that this is an expression of being outside Jewish identity.<sup>13</sup>

## Rise of anti-Zionist Jewish groups

Dr Max Kaiser, an expert on antisemitism and Australian Jewish history and executive officer at the Jewish Council of Australia, is such an anti-Zionist Jew. He affirms that not all Jews are Zionists, nor do they support the formation or existence of a Jewish state. With this more recent expression of Jewish identity, there has been a proliferation of Jewish led organisations like the Jewish Council of Australia, formed in 2024, and the Tzedek Collective, established in 2021. Still very much a minority view among Jewish Australians, they challenge the mainstream Zionist narrative.

The Jewish Council has expressed views which, when viewed from the perspective of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism, are themselves antisemitic. The well-worn antisemitic tropes of undue influence and the disproportionate power of the Jewish community were on display in comments by the Jewish Council of Australia chief executive, Louise Adler, when commenting on the recent recommendations by Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism:

"With the ability to garner prime ministerial dinners, a battalion of lobbyists has gained access to editors, duchessed willingly seduced journalists keen to enjoy junkets and corralled more than 500 captains of industry to subscribe to full-page ads against antisemitism and thereby blurring political argument with prejudice and bias. It is no surprise that this relentless propaganda effort has paid off."<sup>14</sup>

## Cognitive dissonance

Of note is the seeming cognitive dissonance in groups like Queers for Palestine and feminist activists supporting declared terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah as potential liberators for Palestine, despite the strictly culturally different views held by these groups and the people they represent. On full display in recent

protests, objections to the suppression of women, for example, are rejected by these groups as the imposition of Western cultural thinking on an otherwise morally-superior oppressed culture. These views have their roots in Edward Said's writings on Orientalism. The documented sexual assault, rape, and mutilation of women by Hamas on October 7, 2023, has been downplayed, denied, or ignored as it did not fit with the narrative of resistance and oppression. UN Women, an organisation within the United Nations umbrella, did not acknowledge the Hamas October 7 attacks on women in Israel until December of that year, and only after considerable pressure was applied.<sup>15</sup> Since October 7, UN Women has condemned violence against women in Gaza by Israeli military forces in May 2024<sup>16</sup> and in January 2025<sup>17</sup>

The Me Too movement has been successful in supporting women who have been the subject of sexual violence, often in a situation where the balance of power lies with the alleged male perpetrator. Members and supporters of this movement remained disarmingly quiet following the October 7 attacks, to the point that support for women who were raped, sexually assaulted, and mutilated in these attacks became associated with the slogan 'Me too except if you are a Jew'.

## Free speech versus cancellation

The manipulation of language under the guise of anti-Zionism entered the West at the time of the rise of the free speech movement. For example, the Berkley Free Speech Movement was founded in 1964 at a time when free speech was a left-wing issue. As anti-Zionist rhetoric continued to grow and evolve, it became increasingly incorporated into this movement.

University campuses became bastions for free speech and, in turn, anti-Zionist narratives spread with this. Free speech is being overshadowed by calls for the cancellation of speakers who do not espouse the correct ideology or view. Uncensored debate on digital media platforms has grown exponentially. At universities, either through actions brought by administrations or vocal student disruptions, speakers are being cancelled ahead of events or prevented from speaking on the day.

The Center for Countering Digital Hate found in 2021 that 84% of reported antisemitic posts on major platforms, including those echoing anti-Zionist narratives, were not removed.<sup>18</sup> The IHRA working definition

of antisemitism, developed in part as a response to the continuing use of anti-Zionist rhetoric to express antisemitic views, is now challenged as stifling free speech by limiting reasonable debate on Israel<sup>19</sup>.

## The old tropes reimaged

With a stronger focus on Israel than any other country experiencing conflict, the opportunity has arisen to repackage ancient Jewish tropes as critiques of Israel and its supporters. Ancient Jewish tropes have been reframed and reimaged across centuries to fit contemporary ideologies and geopolitical tensions. Now often framed in human rights language, the purpose is to take the moral high ground and dehumanise the other. Libel used in this way perpetuates antisemitism. As Adam Louis-Klein, writer and anthropologist, argues, one doesn't have to prove the veracity of a statement; all one has to do is make it and then repeat it to raise and preserve suspicion. Against a minority the suspicion remains.<sup>20</sup> None of this is new, but recent examples show how that practice continues.

The ancient blood libel, which accused Jews of killing children for ritual purposes, has evolved to accuse Israel and, more particularly, the Israel Defense Forces of intentional harm. The IDF has been accused of deliberately or indiscriminately killing Palestinian children with malevolent intent. In the past two years, over six million mentions have been made online of Israel murdering children, with 10% alleging deliberate action.<sup>21</sup>

Another form that this ancient trope takes is the accusation of the deliberate starvation of children, with images, many subsequently proven to be fake, circulating widely in the legacy and online media. This blood libel is now directed at Israel as the perpetrator of the crimes, reinforcing malevolent intent and branding Israel as evil.

The trope of portraying Jews as uniquely responsible or morally deficient plays out today as the application of double

standards to Israel as a proxy for the Jewish people. Israel is treated differently and generally more harshly than other nations by international bodies, the media, and political actors. Israel's actions in Gaza are amplified, and Palestinian actions are downplayed or ignored. Israel is held to a higher standard because Jews were traditionally seen as dangerous and deceitful.

In the United Nations, Israel faces a higher level of criticism compared with other countries with known human rights violations. Between 2015 and 2023, the United Nations General Assembly adopted 154 resolutions critical of Israel, compared with 71 critical of all other countries.<sup>22</sup> The United Nations Human Rights Commission of Inquiry has an open-ended commission of inquiry targeting Israel, but no other country.<sup>23</sup> Although specific inquiries to look at specific events in countries like Belarus, Burundi, and others have been adopted, none is open-ended. Agenda item seven calls for every United Nations Human Rights Council session to include a debate about Israel's human rights record, something not done for any other country.<sup>24</sup>

The ancient trope of the Jewish moneylender or financier controlling economies is reimaged today as AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a pro-Israel public lobby group in the United States. It is one of many United States-based lobby groups. Claims are made that AIPAC controls vast sums of money and wields disproportionate influence on the United States government. The influence that Qatar exerts in the United States is largely unknown or downplayed.

NGOs are not exempt from continuing to spread tropes. In the July 2025 report of

the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, titled *Forever-Occupation, genocide and profit*, Israel is accused of sustained genocide against Palestinians for profit. As evidence of this, the report

notes that “the Tel Aviv stock exchange soared by 213 per cent (USD), amassing 225.7 billion in market gains” during the ongoing conflict, attributing financial gain to Israel.<sup>25</sup>

## Tactics and platforms

### Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions

Kurti’s 2019 paper argued that the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement has a darker purpose to damage and delegitimise the Jewish state by calling into question the basis of its creation and continued existence as a liberal democracy. Since writing the paper, the BDS movement has not only been very active across many spheres it has also gained a new legitimacy.

Evidence of its strength can be seen across the globe, from trade unions in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom boycotting Hewlett Packard for its role in supplying Israel with biometric ID systems and services for the Israeli prison, to targeting Chevron as a supplier of electricity to Israel. More recently, both McDonald’s and Starbucks have been targeted for alleged support of Israel. In 2024, more than 70 colleges in the USA adopted around 60 BDS related measures, although many universities are yet to implement these measures. Online, the BDS movement uses terms like apartheid and genocide against Israel.<sup>26</sup>

Israel continues to be singled out as the only country subject to a widely-recognised active BDS campaign. There have been calls to boycott Chinese goods in response to human rights violations in Xinjiang and Tibet, and since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, similar calls to boycott Russian goods have been made. None is on the scale or has the reach or commitment of the movement against Israel.

The BDS movement seeks legitimacy as a non-violent political strategy to put pressure on Israel to change policy and to promote Palestinian liberation,

deeming Israel a legitimate target. The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, discussed below, specifically addresses the BDS movement, offering a contrast with the IHRA working definition. In guideline 14, it states that BDS is not inherently antisemitic. This aligns with the move to separate criticism of Israel from antisemitism. What it doesn’t do is address the BDS movement’s 2005 charter, which calls for the end of “Israel’s occupation and colonization of all Arab lands”<sup>27</sup>, which is a rejection of the concept of a Jewish state.

### Human rights language as a weapon

In 2016, the IHRA introduced a non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism, adopted by 46 countries and more than 1200 institutions<sup>28</sup> to address a perceived rise in antisemitism, accompanied by 11 illustrative examples. However, the definition, particularly its examples linking antisemitism to criticism of Israel and Zionism, has sparked debate and led to alternative definitions like the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism and the Nexus definition.<sup>29</sup>

These newer definitions, developed by scholars and academic initiatives, aim to clarify the distinction between antisemitism and legitimate criticism of Israel, emphasising free speech and context, such as intent and patterns of speech. While all three definitions agree on clear cases of antisemitism, they diverge on when anti-Zionism crosses into antisemitism, with the Jerusalem Declaration and Nexus definitions rejecting the IHRA’s stance that singling out Israel is inherently antisemitic, highlighting ongoing tensions about Israel’s right to exist and accusations of disproportionate criticism.

In February 2025, 39 Australian universities adopted a definition of antisemitism that the working group states is clearer than, but closely aligned with, the IHRA working definition. In an article that accompanied the release of the definition, two of its authors state that “at the core of this ongoing debate are genuinely different understandings of what constitutes antisemitism. The relationship between anti-Zionism and antisemitism has many grey areas. There are many examples from history of campaigns against Zionism that were used to disguise antisemitic sentiments”.<sup>30</sup>

Language, once manipulated, can be used as a weapon to demonise and delegitimise. The language of human rights has been commandeered and manipulated by the left in furtherance of left anti-imperial and anti-colonial ideology. This language carries moral weight and can be difficult to refute, particularly in the context of an asymmetrical conflict.

For example, accusing Israel of ‘genocide’ or ‘apartheid’ in ways that misalign with legal definitions, while ignoring actual genocides (for example, in Syria, Yemen, and Ukraine) and downplaying abuses by Hamas, can suggest an intent to demonise rather than critique.

Legitimate human rights concerns, like settlement expansion or Gaza blockades, can be raised without using language that exaggerates, distorts, or selectively applies human rights terms to delegitimise Israel’s existence or hold it to standards not demanded of others.

For the period January 2020 to October 2023, Amnesty International did not accuse any country of genocide during an ongoing conflict in any of its major reports or statements. While the Amnesty International Report, 2022–2023, labelled Israel’s policies toward Palestinians as ‘apartheid’, it did not use ‘genocide’. ‘Genocide’ was used only to describe historical conflicts, including Rwanda and Srebrenica. From October 2023, all documented instances of the use of the term ‘genocide’ by Amnesty International relate to Israel’s actions in Gaza..<sup>31</sup>

The actions of no other country or conflict are explicitly labelled as genocide in Amnesty International’s major accounts

during this period. Around five to seven major reports or statements explicitly use ‘genocide’ concerning Israel and all postdate October 2023.

Reports on the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar documented ‘crimes against humanity’ and ‘ethnic cleansing’, and in Sudan, Amnesty International highlighted ‘war crimes’ and ‘crimes against humanity’, but all fell short of ‘genocide’. During the resurgence of the conflict in Darfur, no use was made of the term ‘genocide’ in its official statements. In Ukraine, following Russia’s invasion in 2022, Amnesty International documented war crimes but did not apply ‘genocide’, despite allegations by others, including the Ukrainian government and, more recently, historian Niall Ferguson.<sup>32</sup> The actions of Hamas on October 7, 2023, have also not been labelled as being carried out with genocidal intent.<sup>33</sup>

The Kenyan Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide, Alice Wairimu Nderitu, a global expert, opined that the Israel Defence Forces’ war on Hamas was not genocide. The United Nations subsequently failed to renew her work contract.<sup>34</sup>

Compare this with Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories. She has been accused of minimising the Hamas October 7 attacks, stating that the violence must be seen in a broader context as a response to Israeli aggression. She also accused Israel of genocide and has compared Israel’s actions to Nazi Germany. Her actions have been widely condemned in the United States and many European countries. The United States Department of Justice called for her removal in 2025. Despite widespread condemnation, her mandate was renewed by the UN Human Rights Council in April 2025.<sup>35</sup>

The term ‘genocide’ was coined by Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jewish lawyer, in response to the Holocaust. The term then gained legal recognition in international law in its adoption by the United Nations in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948, making ‘genocide’ a foundation for human rights law. The term is now systemically used against Israel as a crude inversion and manipulation of language.

## Legacy media as a weapon

Despite the rise of social media platforms, major newspapers and television networks continue to play a significant role in shaping public perception through selective framing, bias, selective reporting, and sensationalism.

Coverage of Israeli-Palestinian conflicts has often emphasised narratives that implicitly or explicitly vilify Jewish people or Israel, sometimes conflating criticism of policy with antisemitic tropes. For the two weeks after October 7, 2023, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) noted a 388% increase in antisemitic incidents in the United States following media coverage of the conflict, suggesting a possible correlation.<sup>36</sup> Underreporting of antisemitic incidents or framing them as less significant compared to other forms of hate can reduce public awareness of events or put a different slant on actual events on the ground. A 2022 study by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism found that antisemitic hate crimes constituted 78% of religious-based crimes. The media, however, often emphasised anti-Black or Anti-Asian hate crimes.<sup>37</sup>

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), considered by many to be a trustworthy source for news and current events, has faced accusations of antisemitic bias and selective reporting of the conflict in Gaza. Headlines have downplayed the actions of Hamas or disproportionately laid blame at the feet of Israel. A November 2023 report notes complaints against the BBC alleging failure to adequately contextualise Hamas attacks, laying the blame on Israel.<sup>38</sup>

In August 2024, the BBC reported the Gaza death toll at 40,000, citing figures from the Gaza Ministry of Health without noting their Hamas affiliation, questioning their reliability or stating that no distinction had been made between civilian and combatant deaths.<sup>39</sup>

In October 2023, the BBC reported on an explosion at the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza, citing 500 deaths caused by an Israeli airstrike, without verifying the story. Later investigations found that the death toll was between 100 and 200 and was due to a Palestinian rocket.

A report by the Henry Jackson Society in December 2024 analysed 1378 articles from major outlets, including the BBC. Ninety-eight per cent of the BBC articles cited Gaza casualties relying solely on the Hamas-run Gaza Ministry for Health, with 19% presenting the numbers as undisputed.<sup>40</sup>

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), also trusted by many Australians, has quoted figures given by the Gaza Ministry for Health without acknowledging its affiliation with Hamas or lack of independent verification in November 2023 and again in March 2024.

This lack of scrutiny perpetuates narratives that disproportionately blame Israel for civilian casualties, often echoing Jewish tropes of malice or excessive power. Further, it risks legitimising Hamas propaganda and fuels antisemitic acts.

In July 2025, the *New York Times* published a front page photo of an emaciated 11-month old boy, claiming that he was starving in Gaza. It was soon revealed that the child had a pre-existing genetic condition unrelated to hunger. Although the paper was forced to print a retraction, the image circulated widely online. This was not the only deceptive image printed with photographer Ahmeed al-Arini associated with the Turkish Anadolu Agency, linked to multiple misleading images of children in Gaza. German newspaper *Suddeutsche Zeitung* published a report that showed photographs of hunger and starvation in Gaza had been manipulated as Hamas propaganda.<sup>41</sup> These false images contribute to antisemitism by blaming Israel and, by extension, the Jewish people for causing the humanitarian crisis.

## Social media as an amplifier

Social media platforms, like X and TikTok, allow rapid dissemination of antisemitic content from conspiracy theories to hate speech. Much of this goes unchecked. Since the October 7 Hamas attacks on Israel, there has been a significant surge in online antisemitic activism globally, as documented by various reports and analyses. The ADL and other organisations have reported a dramatic rise in antisemitic incidents, including online activity. For instance, an analysis by the Institute



for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) found a 50-fold increase in antisemitic comments on YouTube videos related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict following October 7, 2023.<sup>42</sup>

In addition, more than 460,000 posts containing antisemitic keywords were identified on fringe platforms from October 1 to December 24, 2023, with a 25% increase in the daily average of such posts after October 7, 2023, and a 50% spike in October 2023 alone. The surge includes abusive language, harassment, threats of violence, and antisemitic conspiracy theories. CyberWell, an NGO monitoring social media, noted a doubling of highly antisemitic content on Arabic platforms between October 7 and October 31, 2023, often involving demonisation of Jews and denial or distortion of Hamas' actions.

Coupled with this are tools like fake profiles, bots, and groups used to spread disinformation. Israeli organisation Fake Reporter conducted an investigation that revealed a foreign influence network, which it suspects is linked to Iran, and which has operated since 2021. The investigation

uncovered impersonations of rabbis and journalists and the creation of fake organisations that espoused anti-Israel narratives.

With the ability of social media platforms to direct viewing to align with one's beliefs, the need to rationalise beliefs in the face of conflicting data isn't necessary because divergent views are not encountered, only echo chambers. This, coupled with algorithms that reinforce preferred thinking, makes the challenge of dispelling incorrect or simplistic beliefs even harder. Group affiliation amplifies dissonance.

Conflicts between moral values increase discomfort and lead to denial or justification, with aligned information being prioritised over contradictory information. This is only emboldened by anonymity, which enables users to post hateful content without accountability. While platforms state that content is moderated, the evidence suggests otherwise. A 2023 report by Fighting Online Antisemitism noted that only 20% of flagged antisemitic content across major platforms was removed in 2022, down from 25% in 2021.<sup>43</sup>

## Lawfare

Long before October 7, 2023, lawfare had emerged as a tool in the context of anti-Zionism. The Oxford Dictionary defines lawfare as legal action undertaken as part of a hostile campaign against a country or group, and the Cambridge Dictionary as the use of legal action to cause problems for an opponent.

According to NGO Monitor, on March 18, 2023, the Gaza based International Center of Law Studies held a conference with the theme "Jurists Confronting the Occupier". Speakers "stressed the importance of using lawfare to attack Israel, claiming it was no less important than the 'military' and political activities against it".<sup>44</sup>

This was only one of many like conferences over the last decade, held by groups like Al-Haq, Al-Mezan, and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR), all

Palestinian human rights organisations with links to terrorism.

On November 17, 2023, South Africa and others made a formal request to International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Karim Khan to investigate alleged crimes committed by Israel in Palestinian territories, including Gaza, since June 12, 2014. The referral covered potential war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. On December 29, 2023, South Africa initiated action in the ICJ alleging genocide in Gaza. ICC actions focus on individual criminal accountability, and the ICJ on state responsibility.

Arrest warrants were issued by the ICC for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant. In the ICJ, the court found that some of Israel's actions were "plausible" violations of Palestinian rights under the Genocide

Convention, but it did not rule that genocide was occurring.<sup>45</sup>

NGO Monitor claims that the ICC arrest warrants are the product of years of lobbying and engagement on the part of NGOs, including Al-Haq, Al-Mezan, and the PCHR. Former Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar was a participant in panel discussions with members of Al-Haq and Al-Mezan. NGO Monitor alleges that Hamas had identified the ICC as a tool to advance its agenda.<sup>46</sup>

Professor Gerald M Steinberg argues that prominent groups like Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International, and the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), have been instrumental in promoting anti-Israel narratives under the guise of human rights and international law advocacy by using terminology like 'genocide', 'starvation', 'apartheid', and 'war crimes', against Israel. These narratives are repeated in United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) reports and the ICC.

To support this claim, Steinberg argues that immediately after the October 7 attacks, NGOs launched campaigns that downplayed or whitewashed Hamas' actions while targeting Israel. For example, Human Rights Watch's Omar Shakir labelled Israel's actions as "collective punishment" and "war crimes", while Amnesty International pushed for ICC investigations into alleged Israeli crimes, including apartheid and genocide.

Steinberg connects NGO narratives to the rise of antisemitic campus protests, particularly through groups like SJP, which rely on NGO-driven demonisation of Israel to mobilise support for disruptive actions. These protests often echo NGO slogans and contribute to a broader political war against Israel.<sup>47</sup>

The reports of these NGOs, often cited by the ICC and used more broadly by pro-Palestinian supporters, shape a biased evidence base. Emotionally-charged terms are accepted as given because they have been raised in forums like the ICC and the ICJ and are consistently levied against Israel by NGOs, including some which claim to be neutral. While some NGOs strategically use international law to delegitimise Israel, activists focus on broader ideological goals to dismantle

imperialist structures, often overlooking the NGOs more radical objectives.

Israel and its supporters argue that the ICC's narrative omits critical context, such as its effort to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza or targeting Hamas militants embedded among civilians. They claim that the ICC's portrayal of 'starvation as a method of warfare' ignores Israel's security-driven restrictions and Hamas' alleged diversion of aid. Additionally, some claim that the court's focus on Israeli leaders fuels a global narrative that unfairly paints Israel as a pariah state, while other conflicts, like Syria and Yemen, receive less scrutiny. These claims taken together all point to antisemitism. The consequent impact on global perceptions of Israel by isolating it and reinforcing negative stereotypes has contributed to the rise of antisemitic incidents around the world.

## Country case studies, an update from 2019

### United Kingdom

The United Kingdom, like many other Western nations, has seen an unparalleled rise in incidents of antisemitism since October 7, 2023. However, as set out in Kurti's 2019 paper, overt antisemitism was rising within the Labour Party, under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, long before these attacks. As in many left-wing circles, the unrelenting focus on Israel was for Corbyn a refusal to accept that opposition to racist colonialism is equivalent to hatred of Jews.

New overt forms of antisemitism, including the glorification of the Holocaust and increases in the incidence of denial of the Holocaust itself, are now on display in the United Kingdom. Of 955 incidents in 2023 referencing Hitler, Nazis, or the Holocaust, 184 involved Holocaust celebrations. By some, the Hamas attacks have been expressed as akin to the Nazi extermination of Jews in World War II, and Hitler's failure to eliminate all Jews has been lamented.<sup>48</sup>

Terms like the Holocaust, colonialism, and apartheid have been inverted to frame Israel as a perpetrator of similar injustices, rather than a victim or legitimate state. The Holocaust has been misapplied to equate



Palestinian suffering with Nazi atrocities, ignoring historical context and scale.

The Community Security Trust (CST), a charity that monitors antisemitism and provides security for Jewish communities in the UK, in 2020 noted a rise in antisemitic conspiracy theories, particularly about Jewish control over global affairs. In that year, the CST reported 41 incidents of antisemitic conspiracy theories linked to COVID-19. These included claims that Jews were responsible for spreading the virus for malevolent reasons or financial gain.

More recently, 4103 antisemitic incidents were recorded in 2023, a 147% increase from 1662 incidents in 2022 and an 81% increase over the previous record of 2261 in 2021. Two thirds of these incidents occurred after October 7, 2023. In the week following the Hamas attacks, there were 416 incidents, the highest weekly total recorded by the CST. This was despite Israel having not launched a military response to the attacks.<sup>49</sup>

From January to June 2024, the CST recorded 1978 incidents, a 105% increase from 964 in the first half of 2023, indicating sustained high levels of antisemitism. Incidents not only included abusive behaviour, assaults, threats, and property damage, but also incidents referencing Israel, Palestine, and the Hamas attack.<sup>50</sup>

These incidents are often linked to left-wing post-colonial ideologies, under the guise of anti-Zionism or solidarity with Palestine. This shift was highlighted during Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party from 2015 to 2020, when the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) found unlawful actions of harassment and discrimination against Jewish members.

The EHRC report held the Labour Party under Corbyn liable for 23 instances of inappropriate interference in antisemitism complaints and two cases of unlawful harassment, noting a "culture within the Labour Party which, at best, did not do enough to prevent antisemitism and, at worst, could be seen to accept it". Labour received an unlawful act notice, requiring an action plan.

Sir Keir Starmer, now leader of the Labour Party, accepted the report, called it "a

day of shame for the Labour Party"<sup>51</sup>, apologised, and vowed to implement all EHRC recommendations. By February 2023, Labour was removed from EHRC supervision due to progress in addressing antisemitism.

Corbyn, suspended for claiming antisemitism was overstated, was expelled and re-elected as an independent in 2024. He co-founded the Independent Alliance of MPs, a group of five independents elected on progressive, pro-Palestinian platforms. In July 2025, he and Zara Sultana launched Your Party, a pro-Palestinian party, seeking wealth redistribution and "an end to all arms sales to Israel".<sup>52</sup> The UK government suspended some arms sales to Israel in September 2024.<sup>53</sup>

The Forde Report, published in July 2022, concluded that the party was consumed by internal warfare, highlighting the mishandling of issues like racism and antisemitism.<sup>54</sup> Labour continues to see controversies relating to antisemitism, leading up to the Manchester synagogue attack in October.

Initially, following the October 7 attacks Starmer showed support for Israel. More recently, this appears to be changing. He dropped the United Kingdom's initial opposition to the ICC proceedings against Netanyahu and Gallant. He resumed funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine (UNRWA), despite findings by the UN Office of International Oversight Services of direct involvement by nine UNRWA staff in the October 7 attacks.

On July 21, 2025, the United Kingdom was one of 28 countries to sign an open letter calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. On September 21, 2025, the UK recognised a Palestinian state. Four conditions preceded recognition, including agreeing to a ceasefire. It was not a condition that Hamas release the remaining hostages, and no mention was made of the fact that it was Hamas that walked away from the ceasefire negotiations that preceded the announcement in July.

A significant trend is the use of anti-Zionism to cover for antisemitism and the further complication of political critique, where criticism of Israel's policies or

existence spills into targeting Jewish individuals or communities. This conflation of issues and terminology has created an environment that has exacerbated antisemitism, particularly since the October 7 attacks. The CST noted that phrases like 'free Palestine' were used in 427 incidents post October 2023, often directed at Jewish targets, for example, synagogues and kosher shops, without a clear connection to Israel's actions. At universities, pro-Palestinian protests have included chants like 'intifada' or 'Zionists out', which Jewish students report as intimidating, contributing to a 465% rise in higher-education-related incidents in early 2024.

### ***United States of America***

The emerging influence of the ultra-left Squad in the Democratic Party was noted in Kurti's 2019 paper. The influence of the Squad, now comprising seven members, has been mixed over the last five years, with a further push of the party to the left, but also some pushback. With primary support for members like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez coming from younger generations, her time may yet come.

The Squad's criticism of Israel has repeated the old tropes of Jewish greed, disproportionate influence, and obsession with money. In 2019, Ilhan Omar tweeted "It's all about the Benjamins", referring to the USD100 bank note while criticising a pro-Israel lobby group, AIPAC. In 2023, Rashida Tlaib was censured by 22 Democrats for anti-Israel rhetoric and her use of the phrase "from the river to the sea".<sup>55</sup>

Generally, this anti-Israel stance has been at odds with the support of the United States government. However, antisemitism in the United States has exploded on college campuses, a reflection of left-wing ideology dominating discourse at all levels at American universities. The Harvard Crimson Faculty Survey in 2022 reported that 82% of respondents identified as 'liberal' or 'very liberal' and only 1% identified as 'conservative'.<sup>56</sup>

Antisemitism has seen a significant rise in the United States since 2019. The ADL has tracked incidents of antisemitism in the US since 1979. The rise in antisemitism, as in other Western countries, has coincided

with events primarily in the Middle East. Antisemitic incidents hit a record in 2021, with 2717 reported cases representing a 36% increase from the previous year. The ADL reports that October 7, 2023, marked a turning point with 3291 incidents recorded from October 7, 2023, to January 2024, a 361% increase for the same period in the previous year. By year-end 2023, the ADL reported 8873 incidents, with 5200 occurring after October 7, and 732 occurring on college campuses. The FBI reported that in 2023, antisemitic hate crimes accounted for 68% of all religion-based hate crimes in that year. Jews comprise 2% of the population of the United States.<sup>57</sup>

The Israel-Hamas conflict is a driver in the escalation of incidents of antisemitism, with the ADL stating that 36% of reported incidents were linked to anti-Zionist rhetoric or references to Israel, despite criticism of Israeli policies being specifically excluded. Unlike many other Western countries, antisemitism in the United States is driven significantly by both the left and the right. A rise in the spread of antisemitic tropes online has been noted, with a 2024 survey by the Combat Antisemitism Movement finding that 28% of American Jews heard 'Jews care too much about money' and 25% heard 'Jews control the world'.

Campus tensions saw 500 incidents in the three months following October 7, 2023, up from 33 in the year prior.<sup>58</sup>

Marches and campus encampments at over 130 universities follow the left-wing bias at these campuses, with leftist ideology the subject of many university courses. The framing of Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policies in these institutions provides an interesting case study of how universities have approached antisemitism. A study in 2022 conducted by Stop Antisemitism found that only two out of 24 major US university DEI initiatives had specific programming or materials addressing antisemitism. This is despite a 34% year-on-year increase in antisemitic incidents reported by the ADL in 2021. If concerns by the Jewish minority are not addressed in training or policies, an understanding of valid criticism and antisemitic rhetoric is blurred, and acts of antisemitism become normalised.

Examples of anti-Zionism in United States DEI policies include the exclusion of Jewish identity from DEI protections, bylaws banning Zionist speakers, inaction against anti-Zionist harassment, and the absence of antisemitism in DEI training. These issues stem from the tendency of DEIs to see Jews as white and to frame Zionism as oppressive and racist, often sidelining Jewish students who support Israel.

In May 2023, the Biden administration issued the National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism, emphasising four pillars: increasing awareness of antisemitism, improving safety for Jewish communities, reversing normalisation of antisemitic discrimination, and building cross-community solidarity. It included more than 100 actions, such as Holocaust education initiatives and enhanced security funding for Jewish institutions. In November 2023, the Biden administration warned colleges that funding would be lost if they failed to curb antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents.<sup>59</sup>

On January 29, 2025, President Trump signed Executive Order 14188, which places greater emphasis on the use of legal tools to combat antisemitism. It directs federal agencies to call on civil and criminal authorities to address antisemitic harassment and violence, with a particular focus on campus incidents following October 2023. It also mandates monitoring and reporting of activities by non-citizens who may endorse or support terrorist organisations, potentially leading to visa cancellations or deportations. The Trump approach is heavier on enforcement, whilst the Biden approach was more whole of society.

Earlier this year, the United States government compiled a list of 60 universities to be investigated for Title VI violations of the Civil Rights Act related to antisemitic harassment. As part of this process, federal funding to Columbia and Harvard universities was frozen, with inaction on antisemitism cited as one of the reasons for this step. Columbia University settled with the government, agreeing to pay \$US221 million to restore its funding, and Harvard University is challenging the actions of the administration in court.

Antisemitism has been a growing concern on university campuses for many years,

with rises across the board since October 7, 2023. Incidents include the assaults of Jewish students at Harvard and Tulane universities, Jewish students at Stanford University being instructed to stand in a corner, comparing this action to Israel's treatment of Palestinians, Jewish students being trapped in a library as pro-Palestinian demonstrators banged on windows and doors at Cooper Union in New York, and 'Holocaust 2.0' graffiti on campus sidewalks at the University of Maryland.

In response to the rise in incidents affecting Jewish students, many universities have revised policies and increased external law enforcement. However, very few perpetrators have been disciplined or charged, with university administrators being criticised for a lack of action.<sup>60</sup>

In addition, the United States government has responded to the actions of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Sanctions have been imposed on Karim Kahn, ICC prosecutor, for illegitimately asserting jurisdiction of the court and abuse of power<sup>61</sup>, and on four judges of the ICC also for illegitimate actions.<sup>62</sup> Sanctions have also been imposed on United Nations Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese, alleging that she "has directly engaged with the International Criminal Court in efforts to investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute nationals of the United States or Israel, without the consent of those two countries".<sup>63</sup>

The United States government sees the actions of the ICC targeting Israeli leaders as delegitimising Israel, equating this with antisemitic bias. These actions reflect broader tensions in international law and the intersection of geopolitics, anti-Zionism, and antisemitism. France, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia all recognised a state of Palestine at the United Nations in September 2025 — even though it did not meet the necessary criteria under international law<sup>64</sup>. This has led to further tensions between the United States and its allies. In response, the United States government has issued visa bans against members of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation for supporting terrorism, providing payments to families of convicted terrorists, and seeking the ICC prosecution of Israeli officials.

Recently, Zohran Mamdani, a Ugandan-born Democratic Socialist was elected the first Muslim and South East Asian mayor of New York City with 50.4% of the vote. His win has raised concerns among many in the Jewish community, given his association with anti-Zionist rhetoric that sometimes crosses into antisemitism and his openly pro-Palestinian stance.

## **Australia**

Kurti's 2019 paper highlighted a small rise in antisemitism in Australia from the left and more particularly from the Australian Greens Party. This trajectory has continued with year-on-year increases in reported incidents of antisemitism, other than 2020, which saw a slight decline from 2019. The 2062 reported incidents in 2024 represent a 316% increase over the 495 incidents in 2022-2023, and a 680% increase over the three-year average (2019-2022) of about 303 incidents annually. The Executive Council of Australian Jewry which compiles the yearly statistics noted that October 7, 2023, acted as a "signal" or "green light" for anti-Israel activists, Islamists, and other groups to target Jewish communities in Australia, who are often perceived as proxies for Israel due to their support for its right to exist and defend itself.<sup>65</sup>

Like the United Kingdom and other Western countries, antisemitism is becoming normalised in Australia. As Michael Gawenda, Australian journalist and editor, recently reported, three not insignificant antisemitic events in July 2025 went largely unreported. Ten-year-old Jewish school children were called "dirty Jews" by older non-Jewish school children at the Melbourne Museum. The entrance to the National Gallery of Victoria was blocked by an angry mob when one of its galleries was named after generous Jewish philanthropists, both in their nineties, with protestors calling them "influential billionaire Zionists". Former NSW Premier and federal foreign minister Bob Carr described Israel's actions in Gaza as "the worst of the past 100 years, of Stalin's Ukraine, of the Warsaw Ghetto, of Mao's Great Leap Forward".<sup>66</sup>

Also, like other parts of the Western world, groups in Australia have aligned with Palestinians and not Israelis since October 7, 2023. These shifts are noticeable in

the left-wing Albanese and some state governments, community activism, and public and private organisations.

Australia initially took a more nuanced approach to voting at the United Nations on the Israel-Gaza conflict, sometimes aligning with the United States, but increasingly diverging from it. Australia abstained from votes on the Humanitarian Truce Resolution in October 2023 and Withdrawal from Occupied Territories in September 2024. It went further in November and December 2024, voting in favour of resolutions affirming Palestinian sovereignty over resources in the 'occupied territories' and calling for an "irreversible pathway" to Palestinian statehood.

In July 2025, Australia joined 27 countries in a statement condemning Israel's aid delivery model in Gaza as "dangerous" and calling for an immediate ceasefire and the release of hostages held by Hamas. In early August 2025, the Labor government announced that Australia would recognise a state of Palestine. This call severed the long-standing bipartisan approach to Palestinian state recognition with Australia's other major party, the Liberal Party.

Australia's now noticeable shift follows pressure from human rights and community groups urging stronger support for Palestinian statehood and away from support for Israel. This change reflects the growing Muslim population in Australia, in line with other Western democracies, as Muslim migration to the West increases. The 2021 census records a Muslim population in Australia of more than 813,390, with projections taking the population to more than one million in 2025. The Jewish population in 2021 was 99,950, with estimates of a population of between 110,000 and 120,000 in 2025.

The Australian Greens Party has become increasingly more vocal in the debate on the Middle East, calling for an end to occupation by Israel, calling Israel's actions in Gaza genocide, calling for boycotts against Israel, and calling for sanctions against Israeli Members of Parliament. The Greens Party has no equivalent policy or indeed any policy at all targeted at the conflict in Sudan, the Russia-Ukraine war, the conflicts in Yemen and Ethiopia, or in China against the Uyghur people.



In October 2024, Senator Fatima Payman, a former Labor Party member, launched a new political party called Australia's Voice. Part of the party platform calls for an end to genocide in Gaza. In the May 2025 election, no candidate received more than 1% of the vote. Senator Payman remains a member of the Senate, being elected as a Labor member in 2022 for a six year term.

The federal government acknowledged the rise in antisemitism in Australia and on July 9, 2024, Jillian Segal AO was appointed Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism. The role was created to preserve social cohesion and combat rising tensions in the community.<sup>67</sup> Concurrently, a special envoy to combat Islamophobia was appointed, despite no apparent rise in anti-Muslim activity in Australia.

In July 2025, Segal produced recommendations to combat antisemitism in Australia. The report adopts the IHRA working definition of antisemitism, which has garnered criticism from the left-wing and new anti-Zionist Jews. The plan calls for supervision of universities, cultural institutions, charities, and festivals, with the potential for loss of funding if these institutions and bodies do not act to combat antisemitism. It also calls to strengthen hate-speech laws and tighten visa screening to detect individuals with antisemitic views. Another recommendation is mandatory Holocaust education and modern antisemitism education. Media scrutiny, both legacy and online platforms, is another aspect.

Criticisms of the recommendations from Amnesty International Australia, the Jewish Council of Australia, the UN Special Rapporteur Ben Saul, and the National Union of Students make claims that adoption of the IHRA definition thwarts freedom of speech and assembly and confuses criticism of Israel with antisemitism. Amnesty International Australia objected to the adoption of "the IHRA's deeply flawed definition of antisemitism that conflates antisemitism with criticism of Israel. Amnesty International rejects the IHRA definition ... "

<sup>68</sup>

Australia, until recently seen as a safe haven for Jewish people, is now turning its back on its Jewish citizens. On October 9,

2023, a protest at the Sydney Opera House devolved into a threatening display of anti-Israeli hate, weeks before Israel responded to the October 7 atrocities. On August 3, 2025, around 90,000 people participated in the March for Humanity across the Sydney Harbour Bridge, many holding pro-Palestinian symbols and banners, including a prominently displayed portrait of the Ayatollah of Iran. Images of this march have been seen globally.

## Global update

Recent trends in the rise of antisemitism highlighted in the country-specific sections above reverberate not only around the Western world but also in Arab and other Muslim countries. In the years 2020 and 2021, Tel Aviv University noted sharp global rises, including in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Australia, driven by radical left- and right-wing movements, social media spread of conspiracy theories, including related to COVID-19, and increased focus on Israel and the Middle East.<sup>69</sup> This was before the recent surge.

The Combat Antisemitism Movement reported a 1753% quarter-on-quarter increase in far-left antisemitic incidents worldwide after October 7, 2023, driven by radicalised social movements and anti-Israel activism. Far-left ideology accounted for 68.4% of incidents in 2024, while Islamist-motivated incidents rose by 44.3%.<sup>70</sup>

The ADL Global 100: Index of Antisemitism report by the Anti-Defamation League, released in January 2025, found that 46% of the world's adult population, about 2.2 billion people, "hold deeply entrenched antisemitic attitudes". The survey sampled 58,000 adults across 103 countries and territories, covering 94% of the global adult population. Eleven negative stereotypes about Jews were used to measure responses. Unsurprisingly, the highest rates of antisemitism were in North Africa and the Middle East, then Asia, Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas, Oceania, and Western Europe, in this order. Younger adults showed higher antisemitic attitudes, with 40% of those under 35 agreeing that "Jews are responsible for most wars". Twenty per cent had never heard of the Holocaust, and 23% expressed favourable views of Hamas. The survey was conducted

post October 7, 2023, and this, along with social media influence, was seen as a key factor. More positively, 57% of respondents recognised antisemitism as a serious problem, and 67% opposed boycotts of Israeli businesses.<sup>71</sup>

Germany has been a staunch supporter of Israel, the moral memory of World War II a key driver. Unlike the rise of left-wing support for Palestinians, the rise of antisemitic incidents in Germany has aligned with the rise of right-wing groups and increasing affiliation with right-wing political parties like the Alternative for Deutschland. This rise in right-wing antisemitism correlates with the open border policy of Angela Merkel in 2015, when more than one million primarily Muslim asylum-seekers entered Germany. Anti-Israel sentiment has seen a marked rise since 2022,<sup>72</sup> with sharp increases seen following the October 7, 2023, attacks, including holding Jews responsible for Israeli actions.<sup>73</sup>

In 2022, Germany approved its first plan against antisemitism, covering areas

of data collection, education, Holocaust remembrance, security enhancements, and promoting Jewish life. In November 2024, a non-binding resolution titled *Never Again is Now* was passed in the Bundestag, with the effect of denying public funding to organisations that spread antisemitism, questioned Israel's right to exist, and supported the BDS movement.<sup>74</sup> This resolution has been criticised by organisations like Amnesty International. A Citizenship Law Amendment in 2024 will deny citizenship to individuals who endorse antisemitic slogans.

As the global tide swings against Israel, so too have the German people and their government. A poll by ARD-DeutschlandTREND in June 2025 showed a shift in public attitudes, with 55% of Germans polled rejecting Germany's special responsibility to Israel and 63% saying Israel's actions have gone too far. In response, the German government, in August 2025, suspended arms exports that could be used in Gaza, and in May 2025, Chancellor Merz rebuked Israel's operations in Gaza, including aid distribution.<sup>75</sup>

## Conclusion

Antisemitism, an ancient and irrational hatred, persists like a mutating virus, adapting old tropes to modern contexts. The 12<sup>th</sup> century blood libel has evolved into accusations of the indiscriminate killing of children in Gaza, while other stereotypes, such as Jews controlling global affairs, orchestrating violence in Gaza, or profiteering from COVID-19, continue to fuel hostility. The interplay between antisemitism and anti-Zionism complicates efforts to address it, as seen in the confusion and controversy surrounding their overlap.

Since October 7, 2023, a sharp rise in antisemitism, often tied to the Middle East conflict, has been driven by strategic campaigns from left-wing academics, NGOs, and student groups. These efforts,

framed as anti-Zionism or advocacy for Palestinian rights, frequently blur into rhetoric that threatens Jewish safety and well-being.

As the world moves further from the memory of World War II, antisemitic incidents surge, particularly during Israeli-Palestinian tensions. The debate over distinguishing legitimate criticism from antisemitism muddies the waters, while the new anti-Zionism's focus on dismantling Israel, whether through political advocacy or human rights narratives, raises existential concerns for the Jewish people. Ultimately, whether labelled antisemitism or anti-Zionism, the impact is clear: a growing threat to Jewish communities worldwide. The question remains, does this distinction matter when the outcome is the same?

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This paper is published at a time when antisemitism is rising sharply across the world and is increasingly expressed in the language of contemporary politics. It shows how an ancient hatred has adapted to modern narratives, particularly through the growing use of anti-Zionism as a cover for hostility towards Jews. Drawing on events since 7 October 2023, the paper traces how certain academic, activist, media and political movements have reframed old prejudices as claims of justice or human rights. It documents how these narratives spread quickly through universities, NGOs, international institutions, and social media, and how they have contributed to unprecedented levels of antisemitic incidents in many Western democracies.

The analysis does not deny the legitimacy of criticising any government, including Israel's. Instead, it calls for clarity about when criticism becomes demonisation, when political positions slip into collective blame, and when advocacy reproduces long-standing stereotypes. By bringing together evidence and case studies across multiple countries, this paper provides an important guide to understanding the new forms of antisemitism and the forces driving them. It reminds us that confronting prejudice requires honesty, consistency, and a willingness to resist simplistic narratives, even when they appear under the banner of justice.

## About the Author



**Julie Claridge** is a retired lawyer with a 35-year career spanning several disciplines. She served as a judicial officer on the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (Guardianship Division), practised as a corporate lawyer at a major Australian law firm and worked as business development manager for a food rescue charity. In addition to her professional roles, she volunteered as a disability rights lawyer and chaired a charity dedicated to women in crisis in Sydney.

## Related Works

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