

ANTISEMITIC DISCOURSE

in Britain 2020

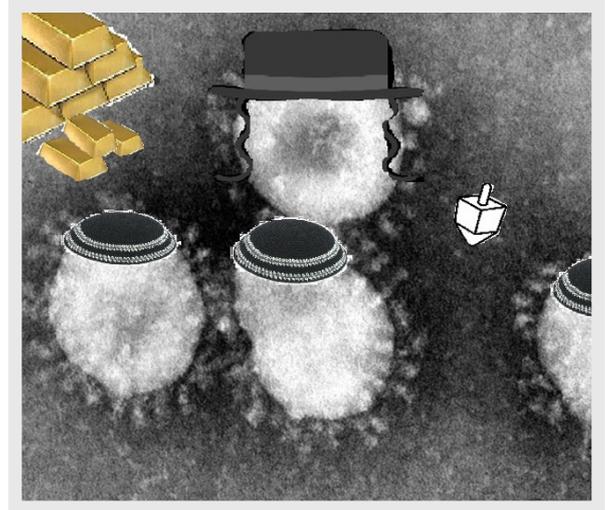
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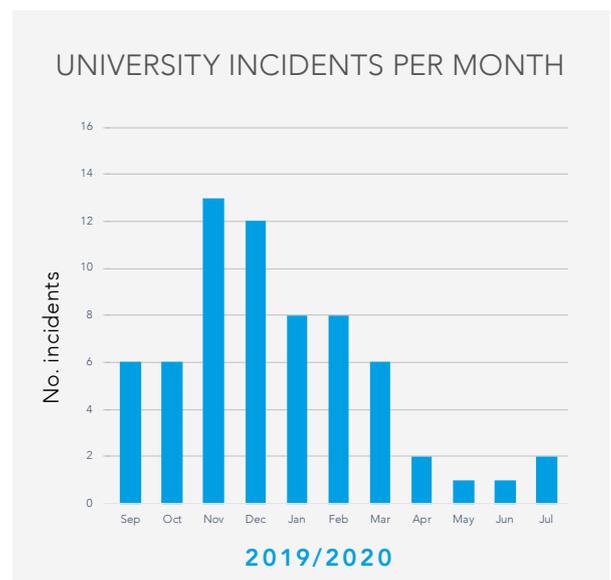
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Antisemitism continued to play a role in the national discourse in Britain during 2020.
- The findings of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's investigation into antisemitism within the Labour Party were **unequivocal that the party breached the law, there were serious failings in leadership and an inadequate process for handling antisemitism complaints.** Former leader Jeremy Corbyn's response that *"the scale of the problem was also dramatically overstated for political reasons"* led to removal of the Labour whip, though, at the time of writing, he remains a party member.
- There has been **significant progress in tackling antisemitism in the Labour Party** under new leader Sir Keir Starmer, but allegations of antisemitism in the Brighton and Hove branch of the Labour Party demonstrated that **the party still has work to do to rid itself of antisemitism.**
- There were also **examples of antisemitism in the Conservative Party, Liberal Democrat Party and Scottish National Party.**
- Antisemitism at British universities is a growing problem, as a CST report released in 2020 showed. **In 2019/2020, CST recorded the highest number of antisemitic incidents on campus in a single academic year,** despite the year being cut short because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- There were a number of developments during 2020 concerning the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. This included **interventions by government ministers calling for**

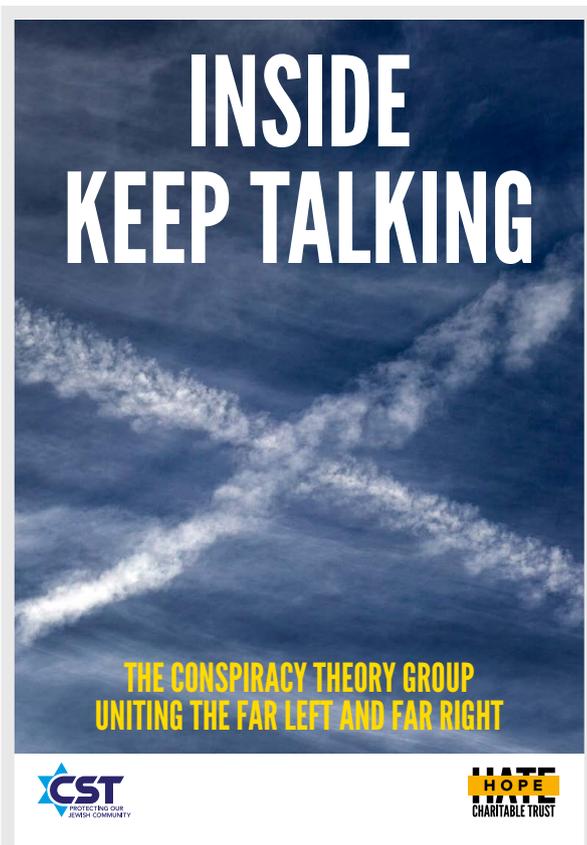
more universities to adopt the IHRA definition and a debate by Members of Parliament about the IHRA definition at university campuses.



- Global events during 2020, including the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic and the murder of George Floyd in the United States, provided ample opportunities for conspiracy theorists to blame Jews. **The pandemic, in particular, led to a surge in online antisemitic conspiracy theories and images.**



- In February 2020, **CST and Hope not Hate** launched a joint report exposing the **Keep Talking** group of conspiracy theorists, antisemites and Holocaust deniers, who met regularly in London. It showed how **individuals with very different ideologies could coalesce over their common hatred of Jews**. The group was also mentioned in the BBC podcast *Mayday*, which looked at some individuals who push conspiracy theories about the Syrian civil war, the White Helmets group and their founder. Some of the people involved in the Keep Talking group became prominent figures in the coronavirus-related conspiracist movement.



CST and Hope Not Hate's *Inside Keep Talking*

- The Port Vale **footballer Tom Pope** was **disciplined by the Football Association for sharing online the antisemitic conspiracy theory regarding the Rothschild family**. The FA's investigation showed that Pope had developed his belief in conspiracy theories after watching hundreds of videos on YouTube.
- In July, the grime artist **Wiley** launched **a series of online antisemitic rants, which led to a weak response by social media companies**. This, in turn, led to a **social media blackout** spearheaded by campaigners, activists, politicians and others, who were disgusted by that response. Wiley's antisemitic tirade led to further expressions of antisemitism online by people supporting him.
- During 2020, a number of board members of the charity **Islamic Relief Worldwide** **resigned after old antisemitic posts on their social media pages were exposed**.
- There were **two announcements by Facebook** during 2020 concerning online antisemitism, which CST and others were consulted on: **a ban on Holocaust denial and a ban on harmful stereotypes about Jews**.

INTRODUCTION

This CST *Antisemitic Discourse in Britain* report analyses written and verbal communication, discussion and rhetoric about antisemitism and related issues in Britain during 2020. It is published annually by CST.¹

‘Discourse’ is used in this report to mean ‘communicative action’: communication expressed in speech, written text, images and other forms of expression and propaganda.²

The report concentrates upon mainstream discourse. It cites numerous mainstream publications, groups and individuals who are by no means antisemitic, but whose behaviour may impact upon attitudes concerning Jews and antisemitism.

The report is not a survey of marginal or clandestine racist, extremist and radical circles, where antisemitism is much more common. Where such material is quoted within this report, it is usually for comparison with more mainstream sources, or because of the wider influence that such material may have.

CST distinguishes antisemitic discourse from actual antisemitic incidents and hate crimes against Jews or Jewish organisations and property.³

The 2006 *Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism* noted the importance and complexity of antisemitic discourse and urged further study of it⁴. By 2008, the parliamentary inquiry process had led to the issuing of the first progress report of the government’s task force against antisemitism. This stated of antisemitic discourse:

“Antisemitism in discourse is, by its nature, harder to identify and define than a physical attack on a person or place. It is more easily recognised by those who experience it than by those who engage in it.

“Antisemitic discourse is also hard to identify because the boundaries of acceptable discourse have become blurred to the point that individuals and organisations are not aware when these boundaries have been crossed, and because the language used is more subtle particularly in the contentious area of the dividing line between antisemitism and criticism of Israel or Zionism.”⁵

The 2015 *Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism* noted the earlier finding by MPs in the 2006 report that: *“the significance of public discourse is that it influences attitudes which in turn influence actions.”⁶*

¹ Previous reports are available on the CST website: www.cst.org.uk/publications

² Paul Iganski & Abe Sweiry, *Understanding and Addressing the ‘Nazi Card’: Intervening Against Antisemitic Discourse*. London: European Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism (2009)

³ CST’s annual *Antisemitic Incidents Report*, available at www.cst.org.uk/publications

⁴ *Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism*. London: The All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism (September 2006)

⁵ *All-Party Inquiry into Antisemitism: Government Response. One year on Progress Report*. London: The Stationery Office (12 May 2008), p. 12

⁶ *Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism*. London: The All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism (February 2015)

ANTISEMITIC DISCOURSE AND ANTISEMITISM

Antisemitic discourse influences and reflects hostile attitudes to Jews and Jewish-related issues. Hostile attitudes can lead to hostile actions and damaging impacts.

Physically, antisemitic discourse may contribute to an atmosphere in which antisemitic hate crimes against Jews and Jewish institutions are more likely to occur. Psychologically, it can make Jews feel isolated, vulnerable and hurt.

The purpose of this report is to help reduce antisemitism, by furthering the understanding of antisemitic discourse and its negative impacts on Jews and society as a whole.

Antisemitic impacts of legitimate debate and media coverage

Antisemitic impacts may arise from entirely legitimate situations that have no antisemitic intention.

Statistics show that hate crimes against perceived members of any particular group can be triggered (or exacerbated) by public discourse or events related to that particular group. For example, antisemitic incident levels typically rise in relation to some public events and stories involving Jews, Jewish institutions, or Jewish-related subjects such as Israel.⁷

Negative media coverage of, or political comment on, Jewish-related events may be entirely legitimate, fair and in the public interest. Nevertheless, those debates can encourage antisemites or cause concern to Jews. This is more likely if such commentary involves inflammatory language or the use of traditional antisemitic imagery, or appears to single out one particular object or individual for scrutiny due to their being Jewish.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the world's largest regional security organisation, explains the relation between antisemitic discourse and hostility as follows:

*"Expressions of anti-Semitism in public discourse remain a serious issue of concern as they exacerbate hostile attitudes towards Jews. They have the potential to fuel anti-Semitic incidents, leading to greater insecurity in the Jewish communities and in societies across the OSCE region."*⁸

⁷ Shown repeatedly in CST's annual *Antisemitic Incidents Report*. Also, Paul Iganski, Vicky Kielinger & Susan Paterson, *Hate Crimes Against London's Jews*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research (2005)

⁸ www.osce.org/cio/75676?download=true

UK JEWISH LIFE: Putting antisemitism into context

Any overall assessment of the condition of British Jewry demands proper consideration of both positive and negative aspects. Britain's diverse Jewish communities have many examples of success, vibrancy and confidence. Nevertheless, antisemitic hate crimes, antisemitic discourse and wider antisemitic attitudes in society are issues of considerable importance for British Jews.

Overview

Jewish life in Britain today is diverse, and most Jews are well integrated into wider society. Government and others often cite the Jewish community as the benchmark of successful minority integration.

British Jews have full equal rights and protection in law, including against antisemitic incitement and bias. Jews who wish to live a Jewish life can do so in many ways, including pursuing educational, religious, cultural or political activities

Generally, overt antisemitism is deemed socially unacceptable and Jews have succeeded in many spheres of public and private life. Nevertheless, the long history of antisemitism, and its remaining manifestations, can cause significant concerns.

A 2014 report by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research noted that whilst "*most British Jews feel integrated into British society and that discrimination against Jews is largely a thing of the past*", it is also the case that "*most Jews feel that levels of antisemitism have increased in recent years, particularly online, in the media, in academia and certain political contexts*".⁹

History

Jews arrived in the British Isles in Roman times, but organised settlement followed the Norman Conquest of 1066. Massacres of Jews occurred

in many cities in 1190, most notably in York. In 1290, all Jews were expelled by King Edward I, but some converts to Christianity and secret adherents to Judaism remained.

Following the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492, a covert Jewish community became established in London. The present British Jewish community, however, has existed since 1656, when Oliver Cromwell formally invited Jews to return to this country.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Jews were largely emancipated politically but still suffered formal and informal exclusion from some professions and institutions, while prejudice towards Jews – especially those who were recent immigrants – remained common. From 1881 to 1914, the influx of Russian Jewish immigrants saw the Jewish community's population rise from approximately 60,000 to approximately 300,000. Many Jews can trace their arrival in Britain back to this wave of immigration. Others can trace their British identity back considerably further. Considerable numbers of Jews of other national origins have arrived in recent years and decades, from countries including South Africa, Israel and France.

Demography

A total of 263,346 people answered 'Jewish' to the voluntary question on religion in the 2011 UK Census. For the first time, the 2011 Census showed Jews living in every local authority in England and Wales.¹⁰

Just under two-thirds of British Jews live in Greater London. Other major Jewish centres are in Manchester, Leeds, Gateshead, Birmingham and Glasgow.

The religious composition of the Jewish community is highly diverse and ranges from the

⁹ Laura D Staetsky & Jonathan Boyd, *The Exceptional Case? Perceptions and experiences of antisemitism among Jews in the United Kingdom*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research (July 2014)

¹⁰ Simon Rocker, 'Census 2011: The Jewish breakdown', *Jewish Chronicle* (13 December 2012) <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/94111/census-2011-the-jewish-breakdown>

WHAT IS ANTISEMITISM? Background and concepts

strictly Orthodox to non-practising.

In essence, antisemitism is discrimination, prejudice or hostility against Jews.

The word 'antisemitism' came into use in the late nineteenth century to describe pseudoscientific racial discrimination against Jews, but is now used more generally to describe all forms of discrimination, prejudice or hostility towards Jews throughout history, and has been called "*The Longest Hatred*".¹¹

It may be spelled as 'antisemitism' or as 'anti-Semitism'. CST uses 'antisemitism', as this spelling limits the notion that there is such a thing as 'Semitism' to which one may be 'anti' (i.e. in opposition to).

Antisemitism: Background

History shows that increases in anti-Jewish sentiment or actions often reflect growing extremism or divisions within society as a whole. Antisemitism is a subject that should concern not only Jews, but all of society.

The near-destruction of European Jewry in the Nazi Holocaust rendered open antisemitism taboo in public life. The strong association of antisemitism with the Nazi Holocaust can lead to the mistaken assumption that antisemitism is an exclusively far right, genocidal phenomenon that essentially ended after the Second World War.

Throughout history, anti-Jewish attitudes have taken many forms, including religious, nationalist, political, economic and racial-biological. Jews have been blamed for many phenomena, including the death of Jesus; the Black Death; the advent of liberalism, democracy, communism and capitalism; and for inciting numerous revolutions and wars.

A dominant antisemitic theme is the allegation that Jews are rich, powerful and cunning manipulators, set against the rest of society for their evil and timeless purpose. The notion of Jewish power (for example as codified within the notorious hoax *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*) distinguishes antisemitism from other types of racism, which often depict their targets as ignorant and primitive.¹²

Antisemitism – like any other form of prejudice – is not solely found in the conscious motivation or intention of an individual or group.

Antisemitism can also reside in the resonance of a perpetrator's behaviour, where this echoes or repeats older antisemitic accusations and behaviours.

Antisemitism can also be the impact (whether intended or inadvertent) of a person's actions, or the consequence of the policies and practices of an organisation.

Types of antisemitism

Antisemitism is a global phenomenon, occurring even where there are no Jews. Its manifestation and expression may range from violent thuggery and murder to literary, philosophical and political discourse. Antisemitism has been described as an ideology in its own right, but others say it is undeserving of such status and should rather be regarded as a polluter of ideologies.¹³ Its persistence and adaptability are not doubted, yet precise definitions of antisemitism, its scale and the nature of its contemporary appearance can cause heated debate.

¹¹ For example, Robert S Wistrich, *Anti-Semitism: The Longest Hatred*. Methuen (1991) and Screen Guides for Thames Television, *The Longest Hatred*. (1991)

¹² See, Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*. London: Serif Books (1996), original publ. 1967

¹³ Anthony Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (2010), p. xliv

Interpretations of antisemitism

Much has been written and discussed regarding what constitutes antisemitism. The definitions shown below are intended as a constructive guide to differing interpretations, but are the briefest of introductions to what is a very large topic.

Steve Cohen argued that antisemitism is defined by its ideological nature:

*"The peculiar and defining feature of anti-semitism is that it exists as an ideology. It provides its adherents with a universal and generalised interpretation of the world. This is the theory of the Jewish conspiracy, which depicts Jews as historically controlling and determining nature and human destiny. Anti-semitism is an ideology which has influenced millions of people precisely because it presents an explanation of the world by attributing such extreme powers to its motive force – the Jews."*¹⁴

Anthony Julius has argued that English antisemitism comprises "several kinds of anti-Semitism"; and he identifies four kinds that wholly or substantially "have an English provenance":

- "A radical anti-Semitism of defamation, expropriation, murder, and expulsion – that is, the anti-Semitism of medieval England, which completed itself in 1290, when there were no Jews left to torment."
- "A literary anti-Semitism – that is, an anti-Semitic account of Jews continuously present in the discourse of English literature...through to present times."

- "A modern, quotidian anti-Semitism of insult and partial exclusion, pervasive but contained...everyday anti-Semitism experienced by Jews...through to the late twentieth century."
- "A new configuration of anti-Zionisms, emerging in the late 1960s and the 1970s, which treats Zionism and the State of Israel as illegitimate Jewish enterprises. This perspective, heavily indebted to anti-Semitic tropes, now constitutes the greatest threat to Anglo-Jewish security and morale...By 'tropes' I mean those taken-for-granted utterances, those figures and metaphors through which more general positions are intimated, without ever being argued for."¹⁵

Brian Klug describes the importance of the imaginary 'Jew' (as distinct to the reality of Jews). He depicts the antisemitic caricature of this imaginary 'Jew' as follows:

*"The Jew belongs to a sinister people set apart from all others, not merely by its customs but by a collective character: arrogant yet obsequious; legalistic yet corrupt; flamboyant yet secretive. Always looking to turn a profit, Jews are as ruthless as they are tricky. Loyal only to their own, wherever they go they form a state within a state, preying upon the societies in whose midst they dwell. Their hidden hand controls the banks, the markets and the media. And when revolutions occur or nations go to war, it is the Jews – cohesive, powerful, clever and stubborn – who invariably pull the strings and reap the rewards."*¹⁶

¹⁴ Steve Cohen, *That's Funny, You Don't Look Anti-Semitic*. Leeds: Beyond the Pale Collective (1984), p. 11

¹⁵ Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora*, pp. xxxvi–xxxvii

¹⁶ Brian Klug, 'The Concept of Anti-Semitism', speech to Oxford University Chabad Society (7 June 2009) http://www.oxfordchabad.org/templates/articlecco_cdo/aid/922682/jewish/Anti-Semitism-Symposium.htm

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism (2016)

In December 2016, the UK Government formally adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism.¹⁷ This is a non-legally binding definition of antisemitism that evolved from a previous working definition, drawn up by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) in 2005, primarily to aid law enforcement when deciding whether crimes are antisemitic or not. This was intended to enable cross-comparison and assessment of levels of antisemitism, and of European nations' policing and prosecuting of antisemitism.

The IHRA definition includes a list of examples of attitudes and language that “*could, taking into account the overall context*” indicate antisemitism, which includes some attitudes and language that relate to Israel as well as to Jews per se. Some anti-Israel and anti-Zionist activists claim this unfairly renders their behaviour antisemitic. Some pro-Israel activists claim that the working definition defines and outlaws certain anti-Israel attitudes and acts as antisemitic. At times, both are guilty of neglecting the working definition's core purpose and its caveat about “*overall context*”.

IHRA adoption plenary in Bucharest
Credit IHRA



Following the UK Government adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism, it has since been widely adopted, endorsed or used by authorities, agencies and institutions throughout British society, making it the standard non-legal definition that is used when trying to identify possible manifestations of antisemitism.

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-leads-the-way-in-tackling-anti-semitism>

ANTISEMITISM: Legal definitions

Legal definitions of antisemitism are primarily intended for police and judicial use in identifying antisemitic incidents and crimes, rather than defining discourse. Nevertheless, these definitions can provide useful tools for helping consider what may, or may not, constitute antisemitic discourse.

Race Relations Act 1976

The 2006 *Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism* summarised antisemitism with reference to the Race Relations Act 1976, which is the basis for legal definitions of racism and antisemitism. This was repeated in the updated 2015 antisemitism inquiry report:

“Broadly, it is our view that any remark, insult or act the purpose or effect of which is to violate a Jewish person’s dignity or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for him is antisemitic.

“This reflects the definition of harassment under the Race Relations Act 1976. This definition can be applied to individuals and to the Jewish community as a whole.”¹⁸

Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (1999)

The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry definition of a racist incident has significantly influenced societal interpretations of what does and does not constitute racism, strengthening the importance of the victim’s perception.

The 2006 *Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism* and the updated 2015 report invoked the Lawrence Inquiry, stating:

“We take into account the view expressed in the Macpherson report of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry that a racist act is defined by its victim. It is not acceptable for an individual to say ‘I am not a racist’ if his or her words or acts are perceived to be racist.

“We conclude that it is the Jewish community itself that is best qualified to determine what does and does not constitute antisemitism.”¹⁹

The UK Government Command response to the Parliamentary inquiry concurred, stating:

“The Government currently uses the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry definition of a racist incident which is an incident that is perceived as racist by the victim or any other person, and this would include antisemitism. This is a very wide and powerful definition as it clearly includes the ‘perception’ of the victim and others.”²⁰

¹⁸ *Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism* (2006), p. 1

¹⁹ *Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism* (2006), p. 1

²⁰ *Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism: Government Response*. London: The Stationery Office (29 March 2007), p. 3

BRITISH JEWS: Relationship with Zionism and Israel

Zionism and Israel are, in part, Jewish responses to the long and often tragic history of antisemitism. The complex dynamics between antisemitism, anti-Israel activity and anti-Zionism play an important role in debates over contemporary British antisemitism.

Overwhelmingly, British Jews do not come from Israel and their families have been British for at least two generations. Nevertheless, Israel plays an important role in the self-identity of many British Jews. This manifests in the practical sense of physical, emotional and family links that many Jews enjoy with Israel and Israeli citizens, as well as in the psychological sense of perceiving Israel as representing Jewish identity, refuge and rebirth in the post-Holocaust age.

A 2010 survey by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research found that 95% of British Jews said Israel plays some role in their Jewish identity, 82% said it plays a central or important role and 72% consider themselves 'Zionists'. The same survey found that 95% of British Jews have visited Israel.²¹ A similar survey by City University in 2015 found that 90% of British Jews support Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state and 93% said Israel plays some role in their Jewish identity.²²

In recent years, Israel has been subject to repeated criticism and outright hostility from relatively large sections of the liberal left, including parts of the media, campaigning groups, trade unions, politicians, churches and the NGO sector. British Jews hold varying perspectives on the legitimacy and motivation of this behaviour, ranging from those who play a leading part in anti-Israel activity, to those who regard these actions as antisemitic.

²¹ David Graham & Jonathan Boyd, *Committed, concerned and conciliatory: The attitudes of Jews in Britain towards Israel*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research (July 2010), p. 9

²² Stephen Miller, Margaret Harris & Colin Shindler, *The Attitudes of British Jews Towards Israel*. London: City University, London (November 2015), p. 15

Antisemitism and anti-Zionism

Like racism, antisemitism can feed off criticism of Jews, Israel or Zionism, regardless of how fair or unfair, antisemitic or legitimate, that criticism may be.

Anti-Zionism

The term 'anti-Zionism' describes a wide range of hostile attitudes towards Jewish self-determination, and particularly towards Jewish peoplehood and the right of the Jewish people to have a nation state (now existing in Israel). Anti-Zionism that denies these beliefs, or seeks Israel's dissolution, should not be confused with criticism of Israel's actions.

Anti-Zionism is a complex and contested term, because definitions of Zionism itself mean different things to different people. In particular, mainstream Jewish definitions of Zionism differ markedly from far left, far right and Islamist definitions – all of which tend to use (and denigrate) Zionism as a term of political abuse.

Not all anti-Zionists are antisemites and anti-Zionism is not necessarily antisemitic. For example, a minority of Jews do not believe, either for religious or political reasons, that the existence of Israel is in the best interests of the Jewish people. However, much anti-Zionism today is expressed in ways that are actively hostile towards Jews and towards the Jewish people as a group, and that bear similarities to older antisemitic language and imagery.

The malicious denial or misrepresentation of Jewish peoplehood is fundamentally antisemitic, as is politically motivated denial of the Jewish people's historical and religious links with the land of Israel.

Jews and anti-Zionism

In the decades before the Second World War, anti-Zionism was a relatively widespread and respected position within mainstream Jewish

politics. Many Jewish anti-Zionists opposed the idea of creating a Jewish state because they feared it would threaten the political and civic status of Jews in Diaspora communities. Others opposed Zionism because they believed that revolutionary socialism would emancipate Jews alongside the rest of humanity. Many strictly Orthodox Jews opposed Zionism on theological grounds relating to the coming of the Messiah. After the Holocaust and the creation (and survival) of Israel, Jewish opposition to Zionism declined markedly. Other than in some ultra-Orthodox or far left groups, Jews tend not to describe themselves as anti-Zionists.

Anti-Zionism and criticism of Israel

Antisemitism, anti-Zionism and anti-Israel criticism or hatred are not the same as each other. They can, however, be hard to untangle and distinguish from one another.

It is not necessarily antisemitic to criticise Israel or Zionism, even if the criticism is harsh or unfair. Gauging antisemitic motives and impacts largely depends upon the interaction of the following factors:

- **Target:** Are local Jews being singled out as recipients for criticism, bias or hatred that ostensibly derives from anti-Israel or anti-Zionist enmity?
- **Motivation:** To what extent is the criticism, or outright hatred, driven by the Jewish nature of Israel and/or Zionism?
- **Content:** Does the criticism, or hatred, use antisemitic or otherwise prejudiced language, themes or motifs?
- **Response to concerns:** Are local Jewish concerns about the above sincerely and equally heard? Or, are Jewish concerns viewed with hostility and singled out for scorn?

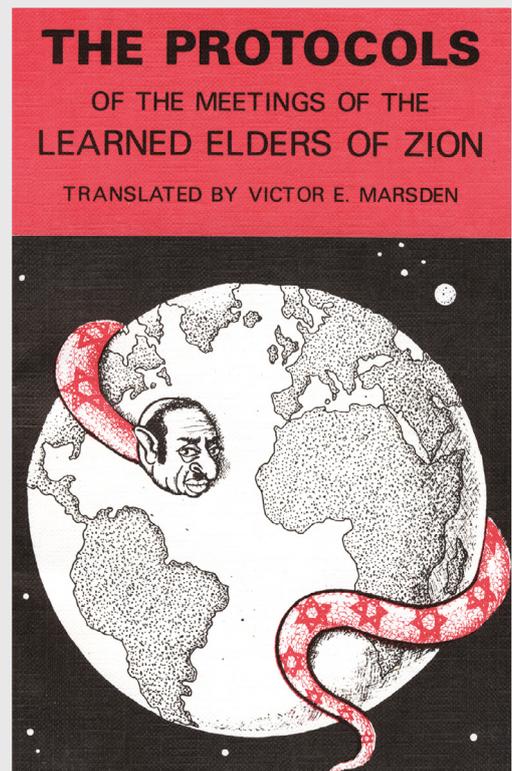
- **Repeat behaviour:** Does the offender repeat their behaviour, knowing the consequences and concerns that will be raised?

Antisemitic anti-Zionism and conspiracy theory

Antisemitism has changed and adapted throughout history to reflect the condition of Jews and the society around them at any given time. Today there is an antisemitic form of anti-Zionism that treats Zionism as a global, malevolent conspiracy, much as antisemites have portrayed Jews in the past. This can be found within far right, far left and extreme Islamist and New Age circles.

The notorious antisemitic forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* claims to reveal a supposed secret Jewish conspiracy to take over the world, depicted in this British version by a Jewish snake encircling the globe.

Championed by both far right and Islamist extremists, it includes chapters on Jewish control of war, politicians, finance and media. *The Protocols* contains old antisemitic themes that still resonate, impact and evolve in modern politics, media and discourse.



These different ideologies all use 'Zionism' and 'Zionist' as pejorative labels for political opponents, often regardless of whether the targets of their hatred are Jewish or pro-Israel, or not. In each different setting, Zionism is commonly discussed and perceived in ways that are strikingly similar to older antisemitic conspiracy theories (for example, as in *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*).

Employing the word 'Zionist' where the word 'Jew' would have previously appeared in open antisemitic discourse may, or may not, be deliberate obfuscation on the part of the user. Nevertheless, it essentially fulfils the same psychological and political purpose as open antisemitism once did.

This antisemitic anti-Zionism has, at its core, a construction of Zionism as a political, financial, military and media conspiracy that is centred in Washington and Jerusalem, and which opposes authentic local interests. It is commonly found in extremist discourse, and sometimes alluded to in more diluted forms in mainstream discourse.

Unlike pre-war Jewish anti-Zionism, these modern anti-Zionists are not motivated by a concern for Jewish political and civic rights.

The 2006 *Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism* noted:

"One of the most difficult and contentious issues about which we have received evidence is the dividing line between antisemitism and criticism of Israel or Zionism.

"...discourse has developed that is in effect antisemitic because it views Zionism itself as a global force of unlimited power and malevolence throughout history. This definition of Zionism bears no relation to the understanding that most Jews have of the concept; that is, a movement of Jewish national liberation, born in the late nineteenth century with a geographical focus limited to Israel. Having re-defined Zionism in this way, traditional

*antisemitic notions of Jewish conspiratorial power, manipulation and subversion are then transferred from Jews (a racial and religious group) on to Zionism (a political movement). This is at the core of the 'New Antisemitism' on which so much has been written."*²³

Historical continuities between antisemitism and anti-Zionism

Other continuities between historical antisemitic themes and the type of modern anti-Zionism that is antisemitic can include the following:

- Alleging that Jewish holy books preach Jewish supremacy and that this is the basis for alleged Zionist racism.
- Dehumanising and demonising language comparing Jews to rats, cancer, plague and bacteria is now repeated in some depictions of Zionists and Israel. This reduces its target to a pest or disease to be cleansed.
- Scapegoating Jews as 'the Other'; blaming them for local and global problems; and demanding their destruction or conversion as a vital step in building a new, better world. This is echoed in the notion that Zionism is uniquely illegitimate, and that its destruction is required for the fulfilment of utopian ideological goals.
- The image of Jews as alien corrupters of traditional, authentic society and established morality endures in today's portrayals of Zionists as somehow hijacking other people's true will and nature, and thereby polluting domestic politics and society.

²³ *Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism*, pp. 16–17

ANTISEMITISM AND UK POLITICAL PARTIES

Labour Party and antisemitism

EHRC investigation into the Labour Party finds unlawful acts of discrimination and harassment. On 29 October 2020, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) released the findings of its investigation, launched in May 2019, into antisemitism within the Labour Party (see *Antisemitic Discourse in Britain 2019* report).

The report identified “serious failings in leadership and an inadequate process for handling antisemitism complaints across the Labour Party”,²⁴ and found multiple failures in the systems it uses to resolve them.

It discovered that there were “unlawful acts of harassment and discrimination for which the Labour Party is responsible”, and a culture within the Party “which, at best, did not do enough to prevent antisemitism and, at worst, could be seen to accept it.”

The EHRC found specific examples of harassment, discrimination and political interference in its evidence, “but equally of concern was a lack of leadership within the Labour Party on these issues, which is hard to reconcile with its stated commitment to a zero-tolerance approach to antisemitism.”

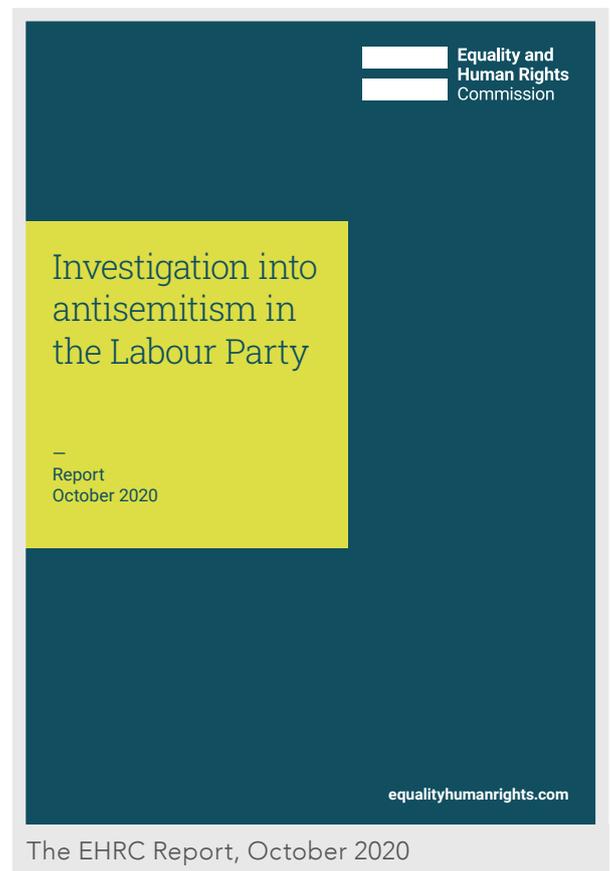
The EHRC found that the complaints process was not properly resourced and those responsible for it were not trained to the necessary standard. They also found evidence that a significant number of complaints relating to antisemitism were not investigated at all.

Moreover, the EHRC investigation found that the Labour Party “breached the Equality Act 2010 by committing unlawful harassment through the acts of its agents in two of the complaints we investigated. These included using antisemitic

tropes and suggesting that complaints of antisemitism were fake or smears.”

They also found that the Labour Party breached the Equality Act 2010 “by acts of indirect discrimination relating to political interference and a lack of adequate training.”

The political interference in the handling of antisemitism complaints that the EHRC discovered included clear examples of interference at various stages throughout the complaint handling process. They concluded that “this was indirectly discriminatory and unlawful, and that the Labour Party was legally responsible for it. This practice has created a lack of transparency and consistency in the complaints process and a serious risk of actual or perceived discriminatory treatment in particular complaints. It has also fundamentally undermined public confidence in the complaints process.”



²⁴ [Investigation into antisemitism in the Labour Party](#), EHRC Report, October 2020

The report identified failings of the party leadership as a key reason why this discrimination occurred, writing: *“it is hard not to conclude that antisemitism within the Labour Party could have been tackled more effectively if the leadership had chosen to do so.”*

According to the report: *“The Labour Party must live up to this commitment and acknowledge the impact that multiple investigations and years of failing to tackle antisemitism has had on Jewish people. Rebuilding trust and confidence with its members, the Jewish community and the wider public will be crucial for the future. A transparent and independent antisemitism complaints process, which ensures that all cases of alleged discrimination, harassment or victimisation are investigated promptly, rigorously and without political interference, must sit at the heart of this.”*

In response to the report’s findings, Sir Keir Starmer, who took over as leader of the Labour Party from Jeremy Corbyn on 4th April 2020, said the following: *“I found this report hard to read. And it is a day of shame for the Labour Party. We have failed Jewish people. Our members. Our supporters. And the British public. And so: on behalf of the Labour Party: I am truly sorry for all the pain and grief that has been caused. To Jewish people, our Jewish members, our long-standing Jewish affiliate, JLM. To the people driven out of our Party, the Jewish Members driven out of Parliament, including Louise Ellman and Luciana Berger. And to the members of Labour Party staff who spoke out, I want to say this: I know how hard these last few years have been for you. How painful today will be and how hard you have had to fight to have your voices heard. So let me be clear, I hear you. And I can promise you this: I will act. Never again will Labour let you down. Never again will we fail to tackle anti-semitism. And never again will we lose your trust. The Labour Party I lead accepts this report in full. And without qualification. We will implement all the recommendations. And we will*

*implement them in full.”*²⁵

Former leader, Jeremy Corbyn, who was in charge of the party when the report was initiated, also released a statement in response to the report’s release, in which he said:

*“One antisemite is one too many, but the scale of the problem was also dramatically overstated for political reasons by our opponents inside and outside the party, as well as by much of the media. That combination hurt Jewish people and must never be repeated. My sincere hope is that relations with Jewish communities can be rebuilt and those fears overcome. While I do not accept all of its findings, I trust its recommendations will be swiftly implemented to help move on from this period.”*²⁶

In response to that statement, the Labour Party’s disciplinary unit swiftly suspended Corbyn from the party.²⁷ On 17 November, Corbyn attempted to clarify his position when he stated: *“concerns about anti-Semitism are neither ‘exaggerated’ nor overstated”*. Later that day, a panel of members from the party’s National Executive Committee (NEC) decided to reinstate Corbyn as a party member.

In response to that decision, Keir Starmer said: *“The disciplinary process does not have the confidence of the Jewish community. That became clear once again yesterday. Jeremy Corbyn’s actions in response to the EHRC report undermined and set back our work in restoring trust and confidence in the Labour Party’s ability to tackle anti-Semitism. In those circumstances, I have taken the decision not to restore the whip to Jeremy Corbyn. I will keep this situation under review.”*²⁸

²⁵ [Keir Starmer’s statement in response to EHRC’s report into anti-semitism](#), Labour, 29 October 2020

²⁶ [Jeremy Corbyn rejects overall findings of EHRC report on antisemitism in Labour](#), *The Guardian*, 29 October 2020

²⁷ [Labour suspends Jeremy Corbyn over reaction to anti-Semitism report](#), *BBC*, 29 October 2020

²⁸ [Jeremy Corbyn will not return as Labour MP, says Sir Keir Starmer](#), *BBC*, 18 November 2020

At the time of writing, Corbyn sits in the House of Commons as an Independent MP, but remains a member of the Labour Party.

Allegations of antisemitism within Brighton and Hove Labour group

During 2020, the Brighton and Hove branch of the Labour Party experienced several allegations and resignations related to antisemitism.

In May, Nichole Brennan, Brighton and Hove city councillor since 2019, resigned from her council cabinet posts in advance of an investigation into allegations of antisemitism. In 2018, Brennan attended a rally at Hove Town Hall protesting the city council's adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism. Photographs of Brennan reportedly show her holding up a handwritten placard stating: *"South Africa was a racist, apartheid state. Israel is a racist, apartheid state. We oppose apartheid. No to the IHRA"*.²⁹ Brennan released a statement apologising for her actions.

In July, Anne Pissaridou, a Brighton and Hove councillor and chair of the authority's Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee, was suspended over a 2016 Facebook post she shared, which promoted antisemitic conspiracy theories.³⁰ The post links Jacob Rothschild with the supposed imminent collapse of the German banking system. It included a statement that the Rothschild family was in *"de facto control of the world's central banks for centuries"*. There was a second post from August 2018 on a website run by Mike Sivier, who was expelled from the Labour Party in the same year for posting comments online, which the party said had breached its code of conduct on antisemitism. Following her suspension, Pissaridou released a statement in which she apologised for her actions and any distress caused to the Jewish community.

²⁹ [Brighton's Labour housing chief resigns in anti-Semitism row](#), *Argus*, 13 March 2020

³⁰ [Labour suspends Brighton councillor over alleged antisemitism](#), *The Guardian*, 15 July 2020

A few days later, Kate Knight, also a Brighton Labour councillor and deputy chair of the council's Children, Young People and Skills Committee, resigned from the Labour Party and the council's Labour group with immediate effect after she was reported to the Labour Party for numerous alleged antisemitic Facebook posts.³¹ The posts were put on Facebook between 2016 and 2019 and claimed that accusations of antisemitism made against Jeremy Corbyn were part of a smear campaign or manufactured by Israel. For example, Knight posted in 2016 that she was certain that accusations of antisemitism are *"a vehicle for a vicious attack – not even thinly veiled – on the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. The cynicism of people employing this tactic is appalling."* *The council's former Labour leader, Nancy Platts, apologised to the Jewish community "for the hurt these posts have caused"*.³² Following their resignations, both Kate Knight and Nichole Brennan sat in the council as independents.

In addition to the resignations, Greg Hadfield, a former secretary of the Brighton and Hove Momentum group was suspended by the Labour Party ahead of an investigation into alleged antisemitism.³³ Hadfield posted a series of messages on social media in response to the resignations from Brighton's Labour group. For example, Hadfield tweeted: *"I haven't mentioned this in a while: The state of Israel is a racist endeavour. And always has been."* He also retweeted two tweets from former Labour MP Chris Williamson, who was suspended from the Labour Party for alleged antisemitism and later resigned.

As a result of the resignations and suspensions, the Green Party took over control of Brighton and Hove City Council from the Labour Party.³⁴

³¹ [Councillor quits Labour after being reported for anti-semitism](#), *Brighton and Hove News*, 20 July 2020

³² [Greens tipped to run Brighton council after 'anti-Semitic' resignations](#), *BBC*, 22 July 2020

³³ [Former Momentum exec suspended by Labour in antisemitism probe](#), *The Jewish Chronicle*, 24 July 2020

³⁴ [Greens control Brighton council after 'anti-Semitic' resignations](#), *BBC*, 23 July 2020

Allegations of antisemitism in the Conservative Party

In February 2020, police launched an investigation into allegations made by a Jewish Labour Party candidate of antisemitic social media abuse by Conservative rivals for a seat on Herstmere Council.³⁵ Dan Ozarow, the Labour candidate, claimed that online trolling followed the mounting of an electronic billboard outside Borehamwood station days before the by-election, which consisted of his photograph alongside a mocked-up newspaper headline about support for Hizbollah. Conservative councillor Paul Morris, who reportedly owns the billboard, said that he was legitimately drawing attention to a letter defending Jeremy Corbyn's past meetings with representatives from Hizbollah and Hamas, which Ozarow had signed during the Labour leadership contest. Social media posts subsequently referred to Ozarow as a "Jew-hating Jew", an "antisemite appeasing liar", a "kapo" and not having a "Jewish soul". Details of the story were also included in official Conservative leaflets distributed in the ward in the days before the election. Ozarow reported Hertsmere Conservatives to the police for inciting hatred and registered a complaint with the Advertising Standards Authority. In January 2021, the Conservative Party announced it had launched an investigation into the allegations of antisemitism.³⁶

In April 2020, Lorraine Cullen, a Conservative Party activist from Inverness, was suspended from the party in Scotland for alleged racism.³⁷ Cullen allegedly generated anti-Muslim social media posts and promoted the far right, antisemitic conspiracy theories known as the 'Kalergi Plan' and the 'Great Replacement'. These conspiracy theories claim that white Europeans are being 'replaced' by mainly Muslim immigrants and Jews are actively promoting it.

³⁵ [Jewish Labour election candidate accuses Tory rivals of inciting racial hatred against him](#), *Independent*, 23 February 2020

³⁶ [Tories launch investigation into antisemitism allegations](#), *Independent*, 22 January 2021

³⁷ [Far right Tory activist suspended from party over vile racist online posts](#), *Daily Record*, 14 April 2020

CST's *Antisemitic Discourse Report 2019* featured Councillor Ryan Houghton, the Conservative candidate for Aberdeen North, who was suspended after a series of posts he wrote on a martial arts forum in 2013 were made public. Houghton wrote that he found some of the events of the Holocaust "*fabricated and exagarated (sic) in some cases.*" He also referred to Holocaust denier David Irving and wrote: "*a lot of his research is interesting.*" Houghton apologised and, in June 2020, the Conservative Party lifted his suspension and he was readmitted into the party.³⁸

In July 2020, Chris Green, Conservative MP for Bolton West, apologised after he promoted a poem on Twitter called 'The Right To Hate'.³⁹ Green shared a video of poet Chris McGlade reading out a section of the poem and added the comment, "*If you love poetry, this is worth a listen*". Although the clip of the poem, which is dedicated to "*all those globalists out there*", did not include antisemitic tropes, the full version includes references to the 'Rothschilds' and the 'New World Order'. Green subsequently deleted the tweet and offered a full and unreserved apology.

³⁸ [Tories lift suspension of Aberdeen councillor in anti-semitism and Islamophobia row](#), *The National*, 8 June 2020

³⁹ [Tory MP apologises after promoting clip of 'Rothschilds' poem](#), *The Jewish Chronicle*, 6 July 2020

'Cultural Marxism' and Conservative Party politicians

On 9 November, a number of Conservative MPs and peers, who announced themselves as 'The Common Sense Group', wrote a letter to the *Daily Telegraph*.⁴⁰ This group was formed, they wrote, "to speak for the silent majority of voters tired of being patronised by elitist bourgeois liberals whenever issues such as immigration or law and order are raised." They then went on to berate both National Trust and the National Maritime Museum for following a "woke agenda". The letter declared that, "A clique of powerful, privileged liberals must not be allowed to rewrite our history in their image" and the group tasked itself "to ensure that institutional custodians of history and heritage, tasked with safeguarding and celebrating British values, are not coloured by cultural Marxist dogma." The use of this phrase attracted criticism as it has been associated in the past with antisemitic conspiracy theories.

The phrase "cultural Marxism" is generally ascribed to Herbert Marcuse,⁴¹ a German-Jewish intellectual who formed part of the Institute for the Study of Marxism, a collection of like-minded thinkers based at the University of Frankfurt in the inter-war years and known as the 'Frankfurt School'. Marcuse theorised that Marxism should not only try to influence the economic and material parts of society, but should also attempt to shape broader culture. The Frankfurt School was targeted by Nazi propaganda in the 1930s, which claimed that through "Kulturbolschewismus" ("cultural bolshevism") Jews during the Weimar Republic were doing their utmost to spread all kinds of deviant and destabilising political and cultural ideas through German society, and then by extension the Western and Christian world. The Nazi authorities also targeted the Frankfurt school itself, which was exiled to the United States.

40 [Letters: Will the police not break up Armistice Day ceremonies on Wednesday?](#), *Telegraph*, 9 November 2020

41 [Cultural Marxism: An Antisemitic Conspiracy Theory?](#) Antisemitism Policy Trust

Modern-day far right activists echo this old Nazi propaganda by using the phrase "cultural Marxism" as a code to denote a Jewish, Marxist conspiracy to undermine traditional values and institutions. However, the phrase is also used in less toxic and more legitimate contexts, including by academics, to describe liberal and left-wing influence. The use of the phrase by a group of Conservative parliamentarians caused concern in the Jewish community, because of its potential, however inadvertent, to act as an antisemitic 'dog whistle'. Whereas some politicians may not be fully aware of the phrase's more sinister meaning, far right terrorists have used it to inform their worldviews. Anders Breivik referred to the phrase in his 1,500-page political manifesto "2083: A European Declaration of Independence",⁴² before carrying out the terror attacks in Norway on 22 July 2011. He wrote that "sexually transmitted disease (STD) epidemic in Western Europe is a result of cultural Marxism", and that "cultural Marxism defines Muslims, feminist women, homosexuals, and some additional minority groups, as virtuous, and they view ethnic Christian European men as evil" and that the "European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg is a cultural-Marxist-controlled political entity." John T. Earnest, who carried out the fatal gun attack against the Chabad of Poway synagogue in California on 27 April 2019, stated in an online manifesto that he believed "every Jew is responsible for the meticulously planned genocide of the European race" through the promotion of "cultural Marxism and communism."⁴³ And British neo-Nazi Jack Renshaw, who was convicted of plotting to kill Labour MP Rosie Cooper and a police officer, made reference to "cultural Marxism" in a 2014 video titled 'BNP Youth Fight'.⁴⁴

42 [Anders Behring Breivik's Complete Manifesto "2083 – A European Declaration of Independence"](#), *Public Intelligence*, 28 July 2011

43 [The Resurgence of Right-Wing Anti-Semitic Conspiracism Endangers All Justice Movements](#), *Rewire News Group*, 1 May 2019

44 [BNP Youth Promotional Video Decries Gays, Zionists, Bankers, Media, Islam, Immigration And Stephen Lawrence's Mum \(VIDEO\)](#), *Huffington Post*, 13 May 2014

Two days after the letter's publication, a briefing paper prepared by the Antisemitism Policy Trust was sent to all Conservative MPs and Peers.⁴⁵ It concluded with these words:

"Whatever the intention of those using the phrase cultural marxism, it will be received as a code by far-right antisemites. To that end anyone using those words has a duty to explain why they do so, and to educate about the associated dangers. Public figures must consider this dogwhistle, even if not blowing it."

Andrew Percy, MP for Brigg and Goole and co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism, wrote an article entitled, *We have warned Tories about 'cultural Marxism'*.⁴⁶ He described it as *"a phrase which will likely be unfamiliar to many of the great British public. It has been used in academic circles for many years but has also been misappropriated by extremists. Several colleagues, seeking to make valid and reasonable points about the limits of freedom of expression, have used the saying and their words might have inadvertently acted as a dog-whistle for the far-right."*

Allegations of antisemitism in the Liberal Democrat Party

In September, the Liberal Democrat Party suspended Geeta Sidhu-Robb, a prospective parliamentary party choice for Mayor of London.⁴⁷ This followed the emergence of footage from the 1997 general election of Sidhu-Robb urging Muslim voters in Blackburn not to vote for Labour's Jack Straw, claiming he was Jewish. In the footage, Sidhu-Robb tells a

reporter that Labour had accused her of being anti-Islam and in response she would *"get into a car and walk around, and drive through town telling everyone Jack Straw is a Jew. How is a Muslim going to vote for someone who is Jewish?"* She then used a megaphone from a car being driven around Blackburn saying in Urdu: *"Don't vote for a Jew, Jack Straw is a Jew"*. Sidhu-Robb apologised and said she was *"deeply ashamed of the ignorant and abusive language I used on one occasion."* Sir Ed Davey, leader of the Liberal Democrats, criticised the effectiveness of the party's vetting process in allowing Sidhu-Robb to be shortlisted as the candidate for Mayor of London.⁴⁸

In December, the Liberal Democrats launched an independent investigation into a speech made by Jonathan Coulter, a spokesman for the party in Bromley, south London.⁴⁹ Coulter, a former editor of the Liberal Democrats Friends of Palestine newsletter, spoke on 12 December at the launch of a group called the Campaign for Free Speech (co-organised by Labour Left Alliance and Labour Against the Witchhunt). In his speech, Coulter reportedly claimed that the *"fake antisemitism campaign against Labour is the worst single episode of misinformation I have ever witnessed."* He claimed that since 2015, the mainstream media had *"put out a uniform wall-to-wall narrative"* on Labour's antisemitism issue *"and failed to report evidence that disputes it."* He also praised the group's *"unapologetic approach in dealing with antisemitism smears"*.

⁴⁵ [Cultural Marxism: An Antisemitic Conspiracy Theory?](#) Antisemitism Policy Trust

⁴⁶ [We have warned Tories about 'cultural Marxism'](#), *The Jewish Chronicle*, 24 November 2020

⁴⁷ [Lib Dems drop mayoral contender over antisemitic comment about Jack Straw](#), *The Guardian*, 14 September 2020

⁴⁸ [Liberal Democrats leader Sir Ed Davey raises concern over the party's vetting processes after antisemitism scandal](#), *The Jewish Chronicle*, 29 September 2020

⁴⁹ [Lib Dems open investigation into 'fake antisemitism' speech by Bromley party activist](#), *The Jewish Chronicle*, 22 December 2020

Allegations of antisemitism in the Scottish National Party

Neale Hanvey, the Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath candidate of the Scottish National Party (SNP), was suspended from the party in November 2019 for sharing a post on Facebook in 2016 from the Russian state news agency Sputnik, which included an image of George Soros, the billionaire philanthropist (who is of Jewish heritage), as a puppet master controlling world leaders. In another post, Hanvey compared the treatment of Palestinians to the treatment of Jews in the Holocaust. Hanvey remained on the ballot and won the election as an independent MP with a majority of 1,243.

In March 2020, the SNP suspended Hanvey for six months, backdated to when he was first suspended at the end of November 2019, ordered him to take an education course on antisemitism organised by the Jewish community and to apologise for his previous actions.⁵⁰ Hanvey issued an “unequivocal” apology, saying he wanted to “seek to make amends for these dreadful errors of judgement with the Jewish community”. Hanvey was readmitted into the SNP at the end of May.⁵¹ In December, Hanvey was elected to serve on the SNP’s disciplinary board.⁵²

⁵⁰ [SNP to readmit MP Neale Hanvey after anti-Semitism probe](#), BBC, 4 March 2020

⁵¹ [Anti-Semitism row MP Neale Hanvey announces reentry into SNP](#), The National, 2 June 2020

⁵² [British MP suspended for anti-Semitism is elected to party disciplinary board](#), Jewish News Syndicate, 3 December 2020

The far left event where David Irving was praised

On 28 July, an event was held online organised by the far left group Labour Against the Witchhunt.⁵³ It was ostensibly about free speech but turned into an attack by some speakers on mainstream Jewish community organisations, including CST, that were portrayed as a “Zionist lobby” attempting to stifle free speech.

The speakers included Jackie Walker, Tony Greenstein and Marc Wadsworth, who were all expelled by the Labour Party for various contraventions of the party rules; Professor David Miller of Bristol University, who left the Labour Party after he was suspended; Tariq Ali, who helped found the Stop the War Coalition; Norman Finkelstein, who wrote the book ‘The Holocaust Industry’; and Chris Williamson, the former Labour MP, who lost the Labour whip before the 2019 General Election, following an investigation into allegations of antisemitism. The event was moderated by Tina Werkmann, co-chair, along with Jackie Walker, of Labour Against the Witchhunt and Secretary of the Labour Left Alliance.

Norman Finkelstein described Holocaust denier David Irving as “a very good historian, I don’t care what Richard Evans says, he was a very good historian.” (Professor Richard Evans had given expert testimony at Irving’s failed libel trial against Deborah Lipstadt, in which Evans painstakingly demonstrated multiple occasions on which Irving had manipulated, misrepresented or cherry-picked historical evidence to back up his own far right sympathies). None of the speakers objected to Finkelstein’s comments and many took pains to make it clear they agreed with everything that had been said. Tony Greenstein went as far as to agree with Finkelstein, saying Irving “is a historian, one can’t take it away from him” while conceding “the problem is his politics have got in the way of his history and his research and he certainly did tamper with sources from my reading of the transcript of the Irving trial”.

⁵³ [The far left event that attacked CST and praised David Irving](#), CST Blog, 7 August 2020



Over the course of the meeting, the speakers attacked the *"Zionist lobby"*. Williamson claimed that the *"lobby"* is *"very, very powerful"* and sits on *"both sides of the Atlantic"*.

Professor David Miller made an explicit attack on CST, claiming it is *"at the forefront of pursuing the witch hunt."* He spoke about the Israeli government and a *"Zionist lobby"* in warlike terms arguing that: *"The Zionist movement and the Israeli government are the enemy of the left, the enemy of world peace and they must be directly targeted"*. He also called the British Government *"the enemy"*.

Tariq Ali claimed, *"the uses that are being made of the Holocaust to silence and blackmail people into capitulation or inaction, inactivity on this question have been getting stronger and stronger."* He also referred to Gaza as *"the largest ghetto in the world today"* in the same speech.

ANTISEMITISM ON CAMPUS

Campus Antisemitism in Britain 2018-2020 Report

In December 2020, CST released a report entitled *Campus Antisemitism in Britain 2018-2020*.⁵⁴ Despite the strongly positive experience that many Jewish students enjoy on campus, antisemitism does affect Jewish students and staff.

The report uncovered a much higher number of antisemitic incidents on UK campuses than had previously been reported. CST recorded a total of 58 university incidents in the 2018/2019 academic year and 65 incidents in the 2019/2020 academic year, making a total of 123 antisemitic incidents during 2018-20. The total for 2019/2020 is the highest total CST has ever recorded in a single academic year, despite the year being cut short because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

From 2018-2020, CST recorded incidents from 34 different towns and cities across the UK. The six cities with five or more recorded incidents throughout this period were Coventry (with 14 incidents, 13 of which took place at the University of Warwick), Birmingham (13), Leeds (11), Nottingham (nine), Bristol (seven) and Leicester (five). With the exception of Coventry and Leicester, these cities represent the locations with the largest Jewish student populations, and therefore follow the national trend towards more incidents in areas with larger Jewish populations.

CST recorded four instances of Assault, two of which were in the 2018/2019 academic year and two in the 2019/2020 academic year. These took place in Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds and Manchester.

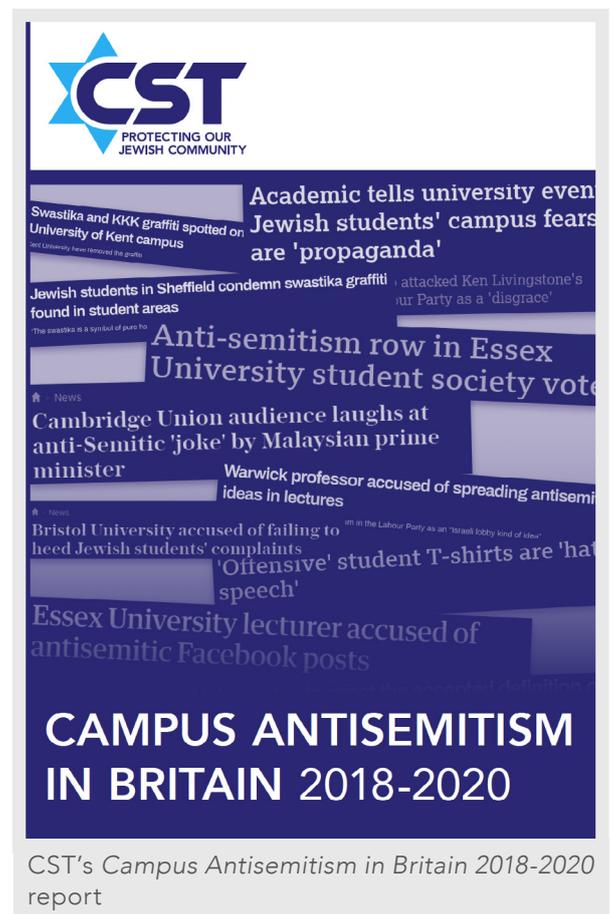
Eighty-seven per cent of the antisemitic incidents during this two-year period were in the Abusive Behaviour category, totalling 107 incidents. Examples of this category

include antisemitic messages sent in group chats, antisemitic emails received by Jewish societies and antisemitic comments made by students in class, on nights out and at speaker events. This total also includes 16 instances where swastikas or antisemitic messages were graffitied, painted, or carved on property that was not Jewish-owned or associated with Jewish students and staff.

CST recorded 14 university antisemitic incidents perpetrated by staff, including four at the University of Warwick, two at the University of Leeds and two at the University of Nottingham.

Successes and failures in university responses to antisemitism

Whereas some institutions provided strong support to Jewish students, some universities failed in their duty to investigate and adjudicate complaints about antisemitism fairly, objectively



⁵⁴ [Campus Antisemitism in Britain 2018-2020](#), CST report, December 2020

and quickly. The University of Essex provided an example of good practice, having dealt with antisemitic posts made by one of their professors in an effective manner, therefore minimising the impact on Jewish students. Contrastingly, the report provided case studies in which the University of Warwick and the University of Bristol had failed to address Jewish students' concerns seriously and in a timely manner.

The report recommended that universities should adapt their procedures for addressing antisemitism and handling complaints in the following ways: allow third party reporting; use the IHRA definition of antisemitism; provide an adequate time frame in which to respond to complaints; have processes in place to gather evidence of antisemitism when it is reported; provide an independent process for complaints that involve alleged antisemitism from a member of staff.

The report directly led to a debate in the House of Lords on 'Antisemitism: University Campus Incidents', which took place in January 2021 and will be covered in next year's *Antisemitic Discourse in Britain* report.

SOAS repays Jewish student's fees over 'toxic antisemitic environment'

In December, the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London refunded a Jewish student £15,000 in fees after he said he was forced to abandon his studies due to a "toxic antisemitic environment".⁵⁵ The Canadian student claimed that during his time at SOAS, Jews and people who were pro-Israel were labelled as "Zionists" and antisemitic graffiti and symbols were found on lockers, desks and toilet walls. When he said he wanted to write a dissertation on the "systemic biases that exist in the United Nations and target the state of Israel", he was accused by fellow students of being complicit in covering up Israeli war crimes and was called a "white supremacist Nazi".

As a result of the stress and extreme discomfort caused by the toxic environment, the student felt he had no alternative but to leave the university and return to Canada. He requested that his tuition and related fees be refunded. A panel investigating the allegations offered an apology for the "emotional trauma... experienced due to the perceived antisemitic discrimination which he had to endure" and offered £500 compensation. The student appealed and an appeal panel said that the original investigation had been inadequate and there was a case for an external reinvestigation.

Jonathan Turner, executive director of UK Lawyers for Israel (who represented the student), said: "The panel grasped the nettle and has set a benchmark for best practice which should be followed in other cases of an antisemitic environment. We hope that other students who experience antisemitism at universities will now be encouraged to object."

Debates over the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition

There were a number of developments during 2020 concerning the IHRA's working definition of antisemitism.

At the end of January, to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick MP announced new funding to help universities tackle antisemitism.⁵⁶ Jenrick also insisted that all universities and local authorities must adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism and said he would shortly publish a list of councils who have adopted the definition and urge others to follow.

⁵⁵ [Soas repay student's £15,000 fees over 'toxic antisemitic environment'](#), *The Guardian*, 29 December 2020

⁵⁶ [New funding to help universities tackle antisemitism announced on Holocaust Memorial Day](#), UK Government press release, 28 January 2020

At the end of September, according to an update from the Union of Jewish Students (UJS):⁵⁷

"After a Freedom of Information request campaign and investigation by UJS, we discovered that out of 133 Higher Education (HE) institutions, only 28 have adopted the IHRA definition. 17 HE institutions wrote to us saying they plan to meet and discuss the adoption of the IHRA definition at a formal meeting in the near future. While, astonishingly, 80 institutions said they have no current plans to adopt the definition. 7 institutions did not respond... The IHRA definition of antisemitism is only the first step in ensuring that our universities take accusations of antisemitism seriously and are doing their utmost to protect all Jewish students and staff. The IHRA definition is a cornerstone in ensuring that antisemitism, when reported, is dealt with in a way which the Jewish community can be confident in."

Following the release of this FOI request, Robert Jenrick responded: *"I'm extremely disappointed by these findings. Education is one of the most powerful tools we can use to combat anti-Semitism and adopting and actively using the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism sends a clear signal that Universities are serious about tackling antisemitism on campuses."*⁵⁸

On 6 October, MPs held a debate about the IHRA definition of antisemitism at universities.⁵⁹ The motion stated: *"this House has considered the adoption by universities of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism"*. The debate was chaired by Clive Betts MP (Sheffield South East, Labour) and the motion was moved by Christian Wakeford MP (Bury South, Conservative). Wakeford said: *"All universities have not just a moral obligation but a duty to ensure that our Jewish students are safe on campus."*

⁵⁷ [Universities defy Secretary of State's demand to adopt the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism](#), UJS, 30 September 2020

⁵⁸ [Jenrick "extremely disappointed" after UJS survey shows 80 per cent of universities have not adopted IHRA definition](#), *The Jewish Chronicle*, 30 September 2020

⁵⁹ [IHRA Definition of Antisemitism: Universities](#), Hansard, October 2020

Jonathan Gullis (Conservative) told the debate: *"I am disgusted that we stand here today, in 2020, to condemn the ways in which universities have not only refused to engage with or listen to students, but, as in the instance of the University of Warwick, have been gaslighting Jewish students and the wider Jewish community."*

Nicola Richards (Conservative) said: *"Adopting the IHRA definition of antisemitism is just the start. It is the beginning of universities' efforts to prevent this age-old hate crime from having a safe space on our university campuses. Universities should be places where all should thrive, and no one should fear not belonging because of who they are or where they are from."*

Vicky Ford (Conservative) told the debate: *"As a Government, we have adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism and have encouraged universities to do so. We will ask them to do this again and we will be clear that there is much more progress to be made. Our universities should be inclusive and tolerant environments. They have such potential to change lives and society for the better. I am sure that our universities are serious in their commitment to tackle racism and hatred, but much more work remains to be done."*

Three days after the debate it was reported that Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson MP, had written to vice-chancellors to express his shock and disappointment that so few universities had recognised the IHRA definition of antisemitism.⁶⁰ Mr Williamson said in his letter that there were *"too many disturbing incidents of antisemitism on campus, and a lack of willingness by too many universities to confront this...The repugnant belief that antisemitism is somehow a less serious, or more acceptable, form of racism has taken insidious hold in some parts of British society, and I am quite clear that universities must play their part in rooting out this attitude and demonstrating that antisemitism is abhorrent."* Williamson

⁶⁰ [Gavin Williamson threatens funding cuts over universities' antisemitism failures](#), *The Times*, 9 October 2020

reportedly asked officials to consider directing the Office for Students to impose a regulatory condition of registration or suspend funding from universities where antisemitic incidents have taken place that have not signed up to the IHRA definition.

At the end of November, a group of 122 Palestinian and Arab academics, journalists and intellectuals wrote a letter to *The Guardian* to express their concerns about the IHRA definition.⁶¹ The group wrote: *"In recent years, the fight against antisemitism has been increasingly instrumentalised by the Israeli government and its supporters in an effort to delegitimise the Palestinian cause and silence defenders of Palestinian rights. Diverting the necessary struggle against antisemitism to serve such an agenda threatens to debase this struggle and hence to discredit and weaken it...The fight against antisemitism should not be turned into a stratagem to delegitimise the fight against the oppression of the Palestinians, the denial of their rights and the continued occupation of their land."* They then outlined seven principles that they felt were "crucial" in that regard.

A few days later, David Feldman, director of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism at Birkbeck, University of London, wrote an article entitled, *The government should not impose a faulty definition of antisemitism on universities*.⁶² Feldman argued that the IHRA definition is confusing and divisive and forcing its adoption will not help protect Jewish students and staff. This was refuted on the following day by both CST's Director of Policy and the Chief Executive of the Antisemitism Policy Trust, who countered that the definition was both "useful" and "effective".⁶³

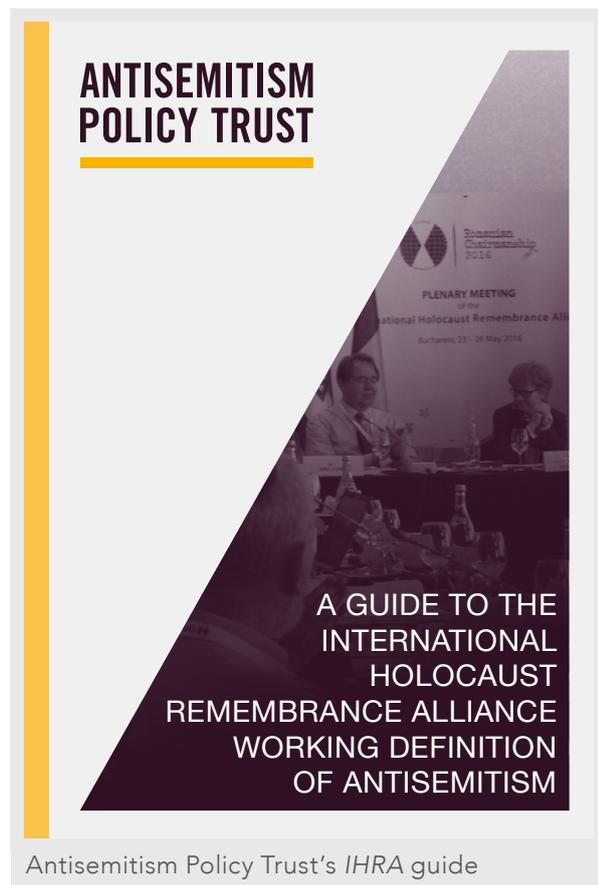
61 [Palestinian rights and the IHRA definition of antisemitism](#), *The Guardian*, 29 November 2020

62 [The government should not impose a faulty definition of antisemitism on universities](#), *The Guardian*, 2 December 2020

63 [The IHRA antisemitism definition is a useful guide, not a legal tool](#), *The Guardian*, 3 December 2020

In December, Kate Green MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Education, wrote an article entitled, *By adopting IHRA, universities would show leadership on tackling antisemitism*.⁶⁴ She wrote:

"I understand the importance of freedom of speech and thought in our universities. However, freedom of expression does not mean freedom to abuse. Any university with concerns should look to their peers, world-leading institutions which have adopted the definition, recognising it is not a barrier to free speech but a framework in which to recognise and react promptly to antisemitism, in any form, whenever it may occur."



64 [By adopting IHRA, universities would show leadership on tackling antisemitism](#), *The Jewish Chronicle*, 7 December 2020

CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND ANTISEMITISM

COVID-19 and conspiracy theories

In addition to the global public health crisis, conspiracy theories have also proliferated during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes anti-lockdown, anti-vaccination and anti-5G conspiracies. QAnon adherents in the UK have also become enmeshed within this ecosystem.⁶⁵ QAnon is the conspiracy theory that President Trump is waging a secret war against a satanic, paedophile network. Although it originated in the US, QAnon supporters around the world have put their own national slants on it. In general, conspiracy theories tend to be most popular among those who lack trust in systems of government and consider their political systems to be broken or corrupted.

COVID-19 theories are numerous, varied and fluid, ranging from the belief that the virus is a Chinese biological weapon; that Bill Gates and others planned the outbreak ("*plandemic*") for financial gain; that 5G towers caused or spread the virus, and that the rollout of 5G in Wuhan coincided with the outbreak; that governments are seeking to control the minds of their populations; and many others.

Antisemitism has also played a core part of coronavirus conspiracies. CST's 2020 report *Coronavirus and the Plague of Antisemitism* documents how antisemitic conspiracy theories spread across social media as soon as news emerged of the viral outbreak across the world.⁶⁶ COVID-19 related antisemitic posts, comments and memes have fallen broadly into five different (often contradictory) categories:

1. The virus is fake and a Jewish conspiracy: Whether it's a terrorist attack, an economic crash or a global pandemic, the kneejerk response of conspiracy theorists is to assume

the 'official' story is untrue. This pandemic is no different, with many alleging a fake Jewish conspiracy.

2. The virus is real but a Jewish conspiracy: An alternative angle for conspiracy theorists is to accept that COVID-19 really exists but assume that it has been deliberately created and spread for malevolent purposes.
3. Jews are the primary spreaders of the virus: Genuine media stories about the impact of COVID-19 on Jewish communities have encouraged antisemites to assume that Jews are the primary spreaders of the virus. Having initially nicknamed coronavirus the "*Wu Flu*" (referring to Wuhan as the geographical origin of the virus), some of these online haters have now dubbed it the "*Jew Flu*".
4. Celebrating Jewish deaths due to the virus: Amongst hardcore antisemites and extreme right-wing circles, news that Jewish people are dying from COVID-19 in disproportionately high numbers has brought sickening celebration.
5. Weaponising the virus to target Jews: The final step is to try to use coronavirus to kill Jews. This is the logical conclusion of this pattern of hate and they have even given it a sick new name – the "*Holocough*".

The association of Jews with disease and infection is not original. It draws on a long history and deep-rooted antisemitic tropes that go back as far as the 1340s, when Jews were blamed for spreading the Black Death throughout Europe. These libels would later influence Nazi propaganda. These antisemitic tropes are now being remodelled and repurposed for a modern-day audience, with many of the same themes and ideas applied to the current coronavirus pandemic.

⁶⁵ [QAnon in the UK](#), HopeNotHate, 22 October 2020

⁶⁶ [Coronavirus and the plague of antisemitism](#), CST, 8 April 2020

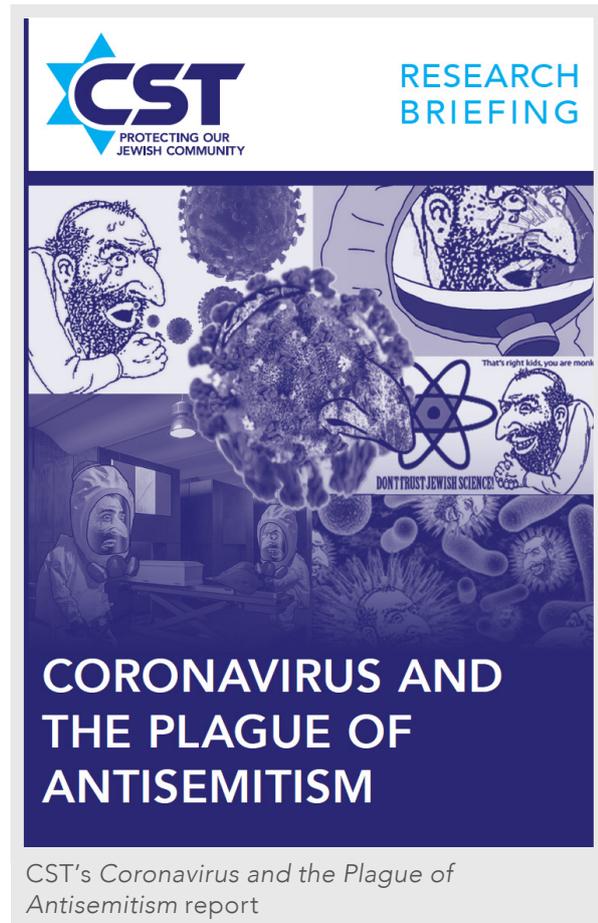
The historian Christopher Andrew has warned that Western governments often dismiss obsessive conspiracy theories as irrelevant: “All fanatics are necessarily conspiracy theorists... the most dangerous fanatics, despite their conspiracy theories, are calculating and often dangerously effective”.⁶⁷ Conspiracy theories, however irrational, can inform and motivate political violence and hate crimes on the part of those who believe them.

Conspiracy theories were evident in 332 of the 1,668 antisemitic incidents reported to CST in 2020.⁶⁸ While most of these related to the conspiracy theory of global Jewish power, CST recorded 41 incidents that involved reference to the pandemic alongside antisemitic rhetoric. These include conspiracy theories about alleged Jewish involvement in creating and spreading COVID-19; in creating and spreading the myth of COVID-19 for financial, political and generally malevolent gain; and in creating a vaccine for their exclusive use or to be sold at huge profits.

Since April 2020, the UK has seen numerous anti-lockdown protests that are often fuelled by lockdown and anti-vaccine conspiracy theories. These events have not been explicitly antisemitic and do not focus on Jewish communities, but they have included speakers, participants and themes that promote such views.

The professional conspiracist David Icke has spoken at several protests in London, giving another national platform to promote his worldview. In 2020, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube closed Icke’s accounts due to COVID-19 misinformation.^{69, 70, 71} By then, he had some 2 million followers on social media. For

years, Icke has spread “new age” antisemitic conspiracy theories about “Rothschild Zionists” controlling the world, driving global conflict through NATO and seeking World War III. Icke also cites the antisemitic hoax *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in several of his books, quoting them extensively but renaming them the ‘Illuminati Protocols’ to distance himself from their explicit antisemitism.



⁶⁷ [Intelligence analysis needs to look backwards before looking forward](#), *History & Policy*, 1 June 2004

⁶⁸ [Antisemitic Incidents Report 2020](#), CST, February 2021

⁶⁹ [Coronavirus: David Icke kicked off Facebook](#), *BBC*, 1 May 2020

⁷⁰ [YouTube deletes conspiracy theorist David Icke's channel](#), *The Guardian*, 2 May 2020

⁷¹ [Twitter bans David Icke over Covid misinformation](#), *BBC*, 4 November 2020

Antisemitic conspiracy theories spread after the death of George Floyd

On 25 May 2020, George Floyd was killed by Minneapolis police officers, who held him down and knelt on his neck for more than nine minutes. In the aftermath, there was an outpouring of grief and a call for racial equality and justice for people of colour. It also brought out the obligatory conspiracy theories to try to explain away what took place or shift the blame.

One conspiracy theory that spread around the world was articulated by the actor Maxine Peake, who said in an interview on 25 June, *"The tactics used by the police in America, kneeling on George Floyd's neck, that was learnt from seminars with Israeli secret services"*.⁷² The implication was that Israel is somehow partly, if not fully, responsible for the death of George Floyd. It's a classic conspiracy theory, insofar as it takes two totally unrelated events, in this case the killing of George Floyd and the relationship between American and Israeli police and tries to link them in a way that diverts onto Jews (or in this case, the Jewish state) responsibility for something negative that has happened. This is how antisemitism works: at its heart antisemitism is a constant striving to place Jews and/or Israel at the centre of all that is wrong in the world, be it wars, economic downturns, terror attacks or in this case the murder of a black man at the hands of American police. Even something as enormous as racism in America, and as specific and long-standing as American policing of minorities, gets twisted to fit this conspiracy thinking.

Rebecca Long-Bailey, the Shadow Education Secretary, tweeted a link to Peake's interview, with a supportive comment that did not make reference to Peake's conspiracy theory. Shortly afterwards, Labour leader Keir Starmer, who correctly identified it as an *"antisemitic conspiracy theory"*, removed Long-Bailey from

her party role.⁷³ Long-Bailey later wrote: *"I explained to the leader's office that I would never have intended to retweet or endorse anything that could cause hurt to anyone. I know how painful the issue of antisemitism has been for the Jewish community and I have been part of the efforts to eradicate it from our party."*⁷⁴

There were a number of articles in left-wing and pro-Palestinian media outlets highlighting the relationship between American and Israeli police, but the implication of Israel in the killing of George Floyd was also popular with elements of the antisemitic far right, who claimed it was part of a Jewish plot to divide America and encourage attacks on white Americans.

Keep Talking report and Mayday podcast

In February 2020, CST and the anti-racist organisation Hope not Hate released a joint report entitled *Inside Keep Talking: The conspiracy theory group uniting the far left and far right*.⁷⁵ It showed that hateful conspiracy theories have permeated the far left as well as the far right, and brought both together. The conspiracy theories on display at the group spread across ideologies, connect political movements that were previously opposed to one another, and embed the view that the world is shaped and controlled by hidden hands. And more often than not that hidden hand is identified as Jewish.

The group met on the first Thursday of every month in London to discuss conspiracy theories ranging from the faking of the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks, to world domination by the Rothschilds. Other speeches discussed topics as varied as 'The Reality of Global Cooling' and 'Mind Control in James Bond Movies', but many speeches heard over the years highlighted how antisemitic conspiracy theories are central in uniting people whose world views otherwise

⁷² [Maxine Peake: 'People who couldn't vote Labour because of Corbyn? They voted Tory as far as I'm concerned'](#), *Independent*, 25 June 2020

⁷³ [Labour's Rebecca Long-Bailey sacked in anti-Semitism row](#), *BBC*, 25 June 2020

⁷⁴ [I know how painful antisemitism is and never intended my tweet to cause hurt](#), *The Guardian*, 29 June 2020

⁷⁵ [Inside Keep Talking](#), CST

seem to contradict each other. Many Keep Talking meetings centred on an alleged Jewish conspiracy of one sort or another: either explicitly, as in the case of Holocaust denial, or implicitly, as in the case of theories outlining Jewish influence as underlying reasons for terror and murder. At these meetings, conspiratorial antisemitic ideas allow both those on the left and right to converge under the guise of seeking supposedly hidden truths.

Attendees and speakers at Keep Talking meetings have included: Ian Fantom, co-founder of the group, along with Holocaust denier Nick Kollerstrom; James Thring, a veteran far right figure; Peter Gregson, who was suspended from the Labour Party and expelled from the GMB union for his views on the Holocaust; Gill Kaffash, former secretary of the Camden branch of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign; Elleanne Green, who was suspended by Labour after a Facebook group she founded – Palestine Live – was revealed to contain Holocaust denial; Stead Steadman, one of the organisers of the far right London Forum; antisemitic jazz musician Gilad Atzmon; Tony Gratrex, who previously headed the Bracknell Palestine Solidarity Campaign; Irish nationalist campaigner Jim Curran; Alison Chabloz, convicted for publishing videos of herself singing antisemitic songs denying the Holocaust; Israeli writer Miko Peled; retired Church of England vicar Stephen Sizer, who in 2015 was disciplined by the Church after posting an antisemitic conspiracy theory about 9/11 on Facebook; Piers Corbyn, older brother of Jeremy; and Vanessa Beeley, a member of the Working Group on Syria, Propaganda and Media, which promotes conspiracy theories claiming that the use

of chemical weapons to conduct massacres of Syrian civilians by President Assad's forces were faked by Western intelligence agencies and the White Helmets rescue workers.

The BBC Radio 4 podcast 'Intrigue: Mayday'⁷⁶ centred on the story of the White Helmets co-founder James Le Mesurier, who was found dead in an Istanbul street in November 2019. Le Mesurier and the White Helmets have been, and continue to be, the subject of a series of conspiracy theories from supporters of President Assad, whose aim is to control the narrative of the long-running Syrian war. The podcast includes a recording of Nick Kollerstrom giving a speech at the Keep Talking group. It also focusses on Vanessa Beeley, a regular at Keep Talking meetings and a prominent purveyor of conspiracy theories about the White Helmets and the war in Syria. According to the podcast, Beeley was radicalised by pro-Palestinian activism and a visit to Gaza and had posted antisemitic articles on her personal blog.

Antisemitism is not the central issue in the story of the podcast: the central issue is the denial of mass murder in Syria. But whenever conspiracy cranks gather, antisemitism will never be far away.



⁷⁶ [Mayday: How the White Helmets and James Le Mesurier got pulled into a deadly battle for truth](#), BBC, 27 February 2021

The Port Vale footballer and the Rothschild tweet

On 5th January 2020, Port Vale footballer Tom Pope sent an offensive tweet that cited the antisemitic conspiracy theory about the Rothschilds. Pope was asked on Twitter to “predict the WWIII result” after he scored in an FA Cup tie against Manchester City. Pope replied: “We invade Iran then Cuba then North Korea then the Rothchilds [sic] are crowned champions of every bank on the planet the end”.



In response, the tweet was deleted, the Football Association asked Port Vale for an explanation from Pope and the club conducted an internal investigation. Pope issued a statement on the club’s website which said: “Following the reaction to my response on Twitter about the Rothschilds, I was unaware of any link between the Rothschild family and the Jewish community. If I have caused offence to anyone, I’d like to apologise enormously as this was never my intention.”

In February, Pope was charged with an aggravated breach of FA rules on abusive speech. He was subsequently found guilty, banned for six games and fined £3,500.⁷⁷ The FA’s Regulatory Commission discovered that Pope had come to believe a number of antisemitic theories after he watched hundreds of conspiracy videos on YouTube about the 9/11 terrorist attacks. According to the Commission: “He explained that he found the videos convincing in predicting the invasions of four countries – Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Sudan. He believed, based on those videos, that the Rothschild banking business had funded the invasions of those eight countries so as to be able to take over their banks.”

The Commission found that, “the ordinary reasonable person knows very well that the Rothschild family have been used for centuries as a synecdoche for the Jewish people – maligning the family in discourse in order to malign all Jewish people”.

The Commission was also concerned that Pope continued to deny that his tweet conveyed an antisemitic message and that he had not seriously questioned the conspiracy theories.

⁷⁷ [Port Vale’s Tom Pope gets six-match ban and fine for antisemitic comments](#), *The Guardian*, 24 July 2020

Antisemitic social media rant by Wiley

On 24 July 2020, the grime artist Wiley posted on Twitter and Instagram an antisemitic tirade comprising hundreds of tweets and videos over a period of several hours. While not all his tweets were antisemitic, many drew on tropes of Jewish power and financial avarice, while denying the Jewish connection with Israel and potentially implying that Jews deserve to be shot.



CST recorded 23 incidents in which the perpetrator either attempted to justify Wiley's antisemitic ideas or targeted those who spoke out against them with further antisemitic abuse.⁷⁸ This episode demonstrated how hatred can be emboldened when a celebrity of high influence publicly exhibits their prejudices. Wiley's rant, which drew on tropes about Jewish power and money while comparing Jews to the Ku Klux Klan, encouraged some of his supporters to reveal their antisemitism. His rant appeared to offer a gateway for other antisemites to reveal their own prejudice.

The two social media companies came in for heavy criticism for the way they dealt with Wiley's tirade. Twitter failed to act for several hours, at which point they removed only a handful of his tweets and imposed a temporary lock on his account, which left the rest of his antisemitic tweets available to view. Similarly, several antisemitic videos were left visible on Wiley's Instagram account (both accounts were eventually removed entirely). This response angered many users, which resulted in a 48-hour boycott of Twitter and Instagram. It was promoted with the hashtag #NoSafeSpaceForJewHate by campaigners against antisemitism and many others who joined in solidarity. They included Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, who wrote to both Twitter and Facebook to complain about their lack of response.



⁷⁸ CST Antisemitic Incidents Report 2020, CST

ISLAMIC RELIEF WORLDWIDE: Allegations of antisemitic social media posts by IRW trustees and directors

Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) is a large UK-registered charity that describes itself as an organisation that “currently delivers programmes that benefit vulnerable people in over 30 countries worldwide. Our work includes life-saving emergency relief and early recovery, as well as development programmes that protect communities and improve the lives of some of the poorest families on the planet.”⁷⁹ IRW is based in Birmingham and has an annual income of around £130m.

Between July and October 2020, three IRW trustees/directors resigned following allegations regarding antisemitic and extremist social media posts from a few years earlier. In July and August 2020, *The Times* revealed antisemitic and

extreme content on the Facebook pages of two of IRW’s trustees, all from 2014 and 2015. Neither trustee was on IRW’s board at the time of these posts. Yet on 22 August, these revelations led the entire board of IRW to resign, and a new board was elected.

The Times’ first story involved Heshmat Khalifa, who was then an IRW trustee and director, as well as a recent chairman of IR Australia and a director of IR branches in Germany and South Africa. Facebook posts in 2014 and 2015 on Khalifa’s page had described Jews as “the grandchildren of monkeys and pigs”.⁸⁰ Other posts in Arabic described Hamas as “the purest resistance movement in modern history”. Some posts also described Egyptian President Sisi,

who took power in 2013 after overthrowing the Muslim Brotherhood-led government, as a “pimp son of the Jews”, a “Zionist pig”, a “Zionist traitor” and a “Zionist criminal”.



⁸⁰ [Islamic Relief leader quits as Times discovers antisemitic posts](#), *The Times*, 24 July 2020; [Muslim charity Islamic Relief feels the heat again](#), *The Times*, 24 July 2020

⁷⁹ <https://www.islamic-relief.org/where-we-work/>

Following these revelations, Khalifa resigned from IRW's Board of Trustees in July, and the following statement was issued:

"Following the publication of Heshmat Khalifa's social media posts in today's media, Islamic Relief reiterates its strong condemnation of the offensive views expressed within them. These have no place in our organisation. We are appalled by the hateful comments he made and unreservedly condemn all forms of discrimination, including anti-Semitism."⁸¹



In August 2020, a further *Times* investigation revealed that a second IRW trustee, Almoutaz Tayara, who at the time was also a trustee/director of IR Germany, appeared to have similarly posted extremist and antisemitic comments on his personal Facebook account in 2014-15. The posts on Tayara's account praised the Hamas leadership and others as "great men". One post praised the Hamas Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, a proscribed terrorist organisation under UK law, as follows:

"The al-Qassem heroes did not graduate from the military academies of the UK and the US, unlike the rulers and royals of the Arab world who, there, were nurtured on cowardice and allegiance to the foreigners — the UK and the US."⁸²

Another post on Tayara's account was of a caricature of US President Barack Obama wearing a blue tie featuring a white Star of David. Obama is shown with the Syrian president, Houthi rebel leader and Iranian supreme leader sitting on his lap, depicting Obama as being in cahoots with Jews/Israel in controlling these leaders.



Caricature posted by Almoutaz Tayara, *Times*

⁸¹ [Islamic Relief worldwide strongly condemns anti-semitic posts and removes trustee](#), Islamic Relief website, 24 July 2020

⁸² [Entire board resigns at Islamic Relief Worldwide](#), *The Times*, 22 August 2020

In early August 2020, after the IRW's board resignations, IRW's Board of Trustees recommended appointing an independent commission to review IRW's code of conduct and its process for vetting trustees/directors.⁸³ This was launched in September 2020 and chaired by Rt Hon Dominic Grieve QC, a former UK Attorney General, assisted by Sir Clive Jones CBE, a former chair of the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC).

During this process, however, in October 2020, a third IRW director, Tayeb Abdoun, resigned after admitting that he had posted antisemitic and offensive comments in 2015 via an undisclosed Facebook account.⁸⁴ On 13 October 2015, Abdoun posted an image of the Facebook thumbs-up sign holding a knife, alongside Arabic words stating, *"Lay the bodies of the Jews on the top of the mountains, so that no dog in Palestine must suffer hunger."*⁸⁵ This was posted on the same day as three Israelis were murdered in Jerusalem in a knife and gun attack.

In response, IRW issued another press release fully condemning Abdoun's posts and emphasising its ongoing Independent Commission:

"Regrettably one of our Directors has admitted to operating through an undisclosed social media account in which he posted anti-Semitic and other offensive and unacceptable comments in 2014. He has resigned with immediate effect, accepting that he has let IRW down and fallen below our expected standards. He has also expressed his deep regret for any offence caused to the Jewish community and for causing harm to our organisation and its reputation. Any hate speech, and within that any expression of anti-Semitism, is in violation of our

*code of conduct and against everything that Islamic Relief stands for."*⁸⁶

In January 2021, Dominic Grieve's independent commission published its report offering 19 recommendations to improve the charity's governance. While acknowledging the antisemitic and highly offensive nature of the previous IRW officials' social media posts, the commission described IRW as a *"highly effective charity"* and said that *"there is no evidence whatever that the reputational issues that have arisen over the conduct of trustees has had any link to the way IRW carries out its charitable work"*.⁸⁷

The same month, the Charity Commission for England and Wales concluded its own compliance case into IRW, concluding that the charity *"took swift action"* in response to the social media revelations and had implemented improvements to its internal recruitment and oversight procedures. A Charity Commission official commented as follows:

"The posts made by a number of now former senior leaders within Islamic Relief Worldwide on social media were clearly offensive, and risked damaging public trust in Islamic Relief Worldwide and charities more generally.

*There is no place for anti-Semitism or any other form of racism in charity, which is a precious national asset, that we must work together to protect and promote. We welcome the improvements the charity has made to its governance so far and will continue to monitor its progress."*⁸⁸

83 [Former Attorney General, Dominic Grieve QC, appointed Chair of Islamic Relief's independent commission on trustee vetting and conduct](#), Islamic Relief website, 16 September 2020

84 [Communiqué de presse Novembre 2020](#), Islamic Relief Suisse website, November 2020

85 [Steuermillionen für Antisemiten – die Deza-Chefin relativiert](#), Tages Anzeiger, 13 November 2020; [Islamic aid director resigns after getting called out for antisemitism](#), The Jerusalem Post, 15 November 2020

86 [Director Steps Down as Islamic Relief Condemns Breaches of Code of Conduct](#), Islamic Relief website, 14 October 2020

87 [Independent Commission Report into Governance and Vetting within Islamic Relief](#), Islamic Relief website, 14 January 2021; [Report clears Muslim charity of institutional antisemitism](#), The Guardian, 29 January 2021

88 [Regulator oversees governance improvements after senior figures in development charity post anti-Semitic and offensive social media comments](#), Charity Commission website, 20 January 2021

Nonetheless, IRW continues to face challenges abroad, partly as a consequence of these offensive social media posts. In December 2020, the US State Department's Office of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, under the outgoing Trump Administration, issued a press release condemning the antisemitic and extremist social media posts. The statement said that, "We encourage all government bodies currently examining IRW activities and their relationship with IRW." In January 2021, USAID reportedly challenged IRW to supply reports on its governance reform and face compliance procedures.⁸⁹

Concurrently, in December 2020, the German Bundestag issued a statement highlighting concerns⁹⁰ and the German federal government reportedly denied IR Germany funding in response to the antisemitism controversies.⁹¹ In January 2021, a Dutch government minister also announced the decision to stop providing government funds to the IRW.⁹²

Meanwhile, in April 2021, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), which initially distanced itself from IRW after the antisemitism revelations, completed its own investigation into IRW and IR Sweden. Sida concluded that the charity handled the incidents responsibly, implemented new measures to prevent any recurrences and remains an effective humanitarian aid body.⁹³

89 [Islamic Relief Worldwide faces US scrutiny over Muslim Brotherhood ties](#), *The National* (UAE), 20 January 2021

90 [Zuwendungen an "Islamic Relief Deutschland"](#), German Bundestag, 3 December 2020

91 [Independent Commission Report into Governance and Vetting within Islamic Relief](#), Islamic Relief website, 14 January 2021

92 [Beantwoording Kamervragen over subsidie-aanvraag Islamic Relief](#), Netherlands National Government website, 19 January 2021; [Kaag: geen Nederlands belastinggeld voor islamclub](#), *De Telegraaf*, 19 January 2021

93 [Sidas utredning av Islamic Relief klar](#), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) website, 15 April 2021; [Sida tar avstånd från uttalanden av företrädare för Islamic Relief](#), Sida website, 25 August 2020

SOCIAL MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENTS ABOUT ANTISEMITISM

Facebook ban on Holocaust denial

In October 2020, Facebook announced that they had updated their hate speech policy to “prohibit any content that denies or distorts the Holocaust.”⁹⁴ They noted that online hate speech and antisemitism globally is rising and there is an alarming level of ignorance about the Holocaust. They quoted from a survey of adults in the US aged 18-39, where almost 25% said they believed the Holocaust was a myth, had been exaggerated or they weren’t sure.

According to Facebook, from late 2020, if people searched on its platform for terms associated with the Holocaust or its denial they would be directed to credible information.

Mark Zuckerberg, founder and CEO of Facebook, described the reason for the change:

“I’ve struggled with the tension between standing for free expression and the harm caused by minimizing or denying the horror of the Holocaust. My own thinking has evolved as I’ve seen data showing an increase in anti-Semitic violence, as have our wider policies on

hate speech. Drawing the right lines between what is and isn’t acceptable speech isn’t straightforward, but with the current state of the world, I believe this is the right balance.”⁹⁵

To get to this position, Facebook had, and continue to have, discussions with groups around the world, including CST, the World Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee and the Simon Wiesenthal Centre. CST responded to the ban by saying:

“CST has called for many years for Holocaust denial and distortion to be banned by Facebook from all its platforms, so we welcome today’s announcement and we are proud of the role we have played in making it happen, along with other key partners. Holocaust denial is not just a wrong opinion about history: It is an antisemitic conspiracy designed to incite hatred of Jewish people, and this ban is an important step in our fight against antisemitism and its modern enablers. As ever, the real benefit of this move will only be felt through proper, consistent enforcement, and we look forward to working with Facebook in ensuring that this is done.”



Mark Zuckerberg ✓

12 October 2020 · 🌐

Today we're updating our hate speech policy to ban Holocaust denial.

We've long taken down posts that praise hate crimes or mass murder, including the Holocaust. But with rising anti-Semitism, we're expanding our policy to prohibit any content that denies or distorts the Holocaust as well. If people search for the Holocaust on Facebook, we'll start directing you to authoritative sources to get accurate information.

I've struggled with the tension between standing for free expression and the harm caused by minimizing or denying the horror of the Holocaust. My own thinking has evolved as I've seen data showing an increase in anti-Semitic violence, as have our wider policies on hate speech. Drawing the right lines between what is and isn't acceptable speech isn't straightforward, but with the current state of the world, I believe this is the right balance.

⁹⁴ [Removing Holocaust Denial Content, Facebook Newsroom](#), 12 October 2020

⁹⁵ [Facebook post by Mark Zuckerberg about Holocaust denial ban on Facebook platform](#), 12 October 2020

Facebook ban on stereotypes about Jews

In August 2020, Facebook updated the hate speech section of its Community Standards to include harmful stereotypes. According to the updated section, users would no longer be able to post *“Content targeting a person or group of people...on the basis of their aforementioned protected characteristic(s) or immigration status with...Designated dehumanising comparisons, generalisations or behavioural statements (in written or visual form) that include [partial list]: Jewish people and rats, Jewish people running the world or controlling major institutions such as media networks, the economy or the government, denying or distorting information about the Holocaust”*.⁹⁶

According to Facebook’s VP of content policy, Monika Bickert, the depictions represent examples of *“implicit speech”* that *“has historically been used to disparage, intimidate, or exclude people based on protected characteristics like race or religion”*.⁹⁷ Bickert said that Facebook had been working on revising this policy for about nine months and consulted 60 outside organisations and experts. The ban on Jewish stereotypes would be enforced immediately.

- Designated dehumanising comparisons, generalisations or behavioural statements (in written or visual form) that include:
 - Black people and apes or ape-like creatures.
 - Black people and farm equipment.
 - Caricatures of Black people in the form of blackface.
 - Jewish people and rats.
 - Jewish people running the world or controlling major institutions such as media networks, the economy or the government.
 - Denying or distorting information about the Holocaust.
 - Muslim people and pigs.
 - Muslim person and sexual relations with goats or pigs.
 - Mexican people and worm-like creatures.
 - Women as household objects or referring to women as property or "objects".
 - Transgender or non-binary people referred to as "it".

⁹⁶ [Facebook Community Standards Hate Speech Policy](#)

⁹⁷ [Facebook bans blackface and certain anti-Semitic conspiracy theories](#), Vox, 11 August 2020

CST'S MISSION

- To work at all times for the physical protection and defence of British Jews.
- To represent British Jews on issues of racism, antisemitism, extremism, policing and security.
- To promote good relations between British Jews and the rest of British society by working towards the elimination of racism, and antisemitism in particular.
- To facilitate Jewish life by protecting Jews from the dangers of antisemitism, and antisemitic terrorism in particular.
- To help those who are victims of antisemitic hatred, harassment or bias.
- To promote research into racism, antisemitism and extremism; and to use this research for the benefit of both the Jewish community and society in general.
- To speak responsibly at all times, without exaggeration or political favour, on antisemitism and associated issues.



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