

# ce: A Country Report

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Antisemitism Globally

## Introduction

Despite the presence of a relatively small community of about 5,000 Jews, anti-Semitism remains an ongoing concern in Greek society. A large percentage of Greeks harbor anti-Semitic attitudes and stereotypes, according to a series of recent opinion polls. Anti-Semitic incidents, though few in number, are reported throughout the country.

Fortunately, anti-Semitism in Greece does not have a violent character and there have been no reported physical attacks in recent years. Its manifestations include vandalism – usually dozens of incidents each year – as well as hate speech, Holocaust trivialization and conspiracy theories in the mainstream press, on social media and on the internet.

The neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party, the financial crisis and recent nationalist surges have fueled anti-Semitism in contemporary Greek society, and violent events in the Middle East often trigger spikes in anti-Semitism.

Over the past five years, successive Greek governments as well as state institutions and many opinion-makers have shown increasing awareness of the problem. As a result, Greece is becoming a more tolerant and inclusive society with a solid commitment to democratic values.

Recent strategic cooperation between Greece and Israel has added to the Greek government's determination to combat anti-Semitism. Many Greek government agencies, educational institutions and media outlets have increased their efforts, working side-by-side with the Greek Jewish community.

ADL has regularly interacted with the Greek government and Greek Jewish community on these issues, with the high-profile meetings between ADL CEO Jonathan Greenblatt and Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras in 2016 and between former ADL National Director Abraham Foxman and Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras in 2014.

This report provides a comprehensive look at contemporary anti-Semitism in Greece, including government efforts to address anti-Semitism, examples of typical anti-Semitic incidents, and additional survey data from non-ADL sources on anti-Semitic attitudes.

## Background

Jews have lived in Greece for more than two millennia, and the arrival of the Sephardic Jews fleeing the Spanish Inquisition invigorated the community five centuries ago. Before the Second World War, there were some 80,000 Jews in 28 communities across the country. During the Holocaust, more than 65,000 Jews were murdered by the Nazis, most belong to the prominent Jewish community of Thessaloniki.

Today the number of Jews is about 5,000 nationwide, with communities in eight cities. There are 15 synagogues and many Jewish cemeteries around the country, some in places where there are, no longer, organized Jewish communities. In recent years, Holocaust monuments have been inaugurated in more than 15 cities.

In ADL's 2014 Global 100 survey of anti-Semitic attitudes, Greece occupied the unenviable position of having the highest score in the world (outside the Middle East). Among Greeks, 69% of the population agreed with a majority of anti-Semitic stereotypes tested. The follow-up 2015 Global 100 poll confirmed this finding with a score of 67%.

When the polls were published, the Greek government protested that the findings were somehow flawed. The Central Council of Jewish Communities of Greece (KIS), however, showcased the findings on their homepage. On visits to Athens, ADL staff heard stories from KIS leadership about frequent anti-Semitic slights and social discrimination.

## Anti-Semitic Attitudes: Data from Opinion Surveys

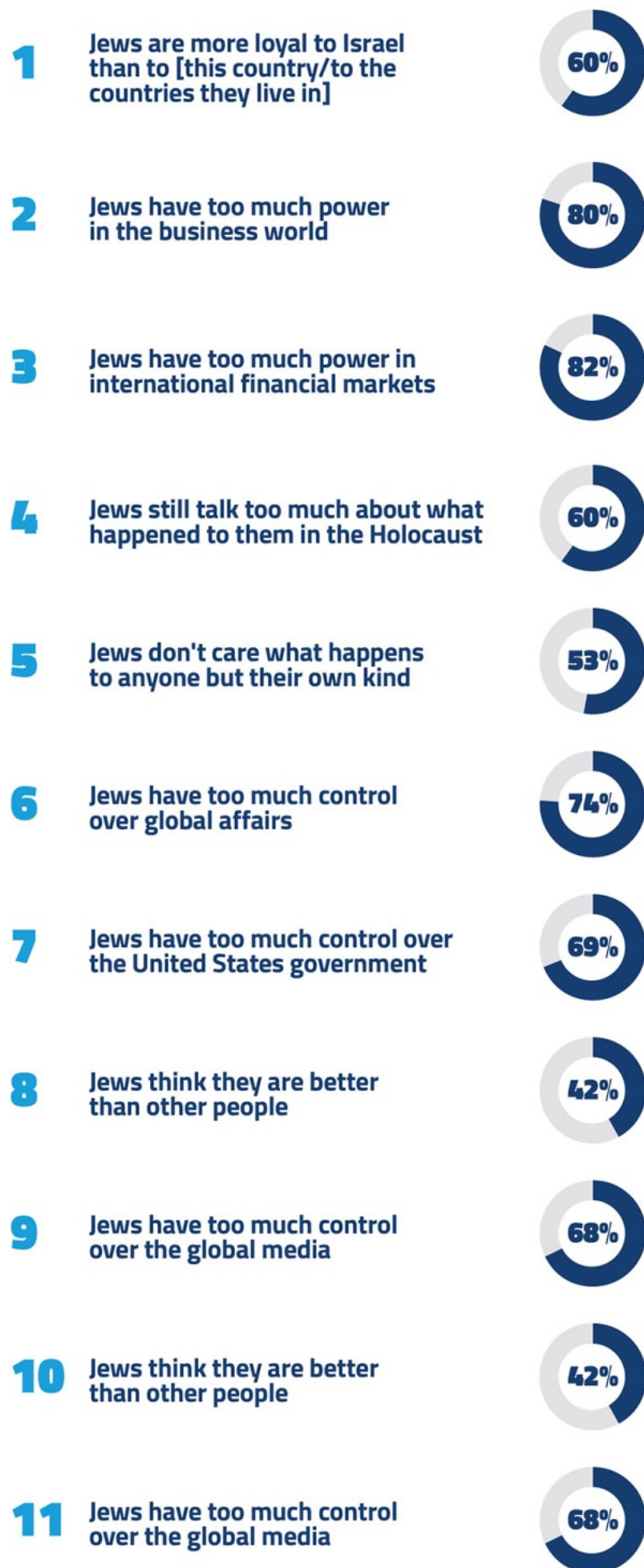
Before 2014, questions on anti-Semitism in Greece had been included in opinion polls, but in an inconsistent and isolated fashion. These polls hinted to the existence of widespread stereotypes among Greek public opinion. ADL's Global 100 poll was the first detailed study of anti-Semitic attitudes in Greece. The global poll also allowed Greece's results to be compared to the results in 100 countries around the world. Outside of the Middle East, Greece had the highest score with 69% of the population harboring anti-Semitic attitudes.<sup>1</sup>

### Greece Score Comparison - ADL Global 100 Survey



Greece scored highest in the world (outside of the Middle East).

# Greece Index Scores - ADL Global 100 Survey



The follow-up Global 100 poll in 2015 found a similar result of 67% of the population harbor anti-Semitic attitudes.<sup>2</sup>

Independent studies by four Greek researchers, conducted in 2014 and 2015, found similarly high figures. In those studies, 65% of the population agreed that Jews exploit the Holocaust, and about the same number believed that Israel persecutes Palestinians in the same way that the Nazis persecuted Jews.<sup>3</sup>

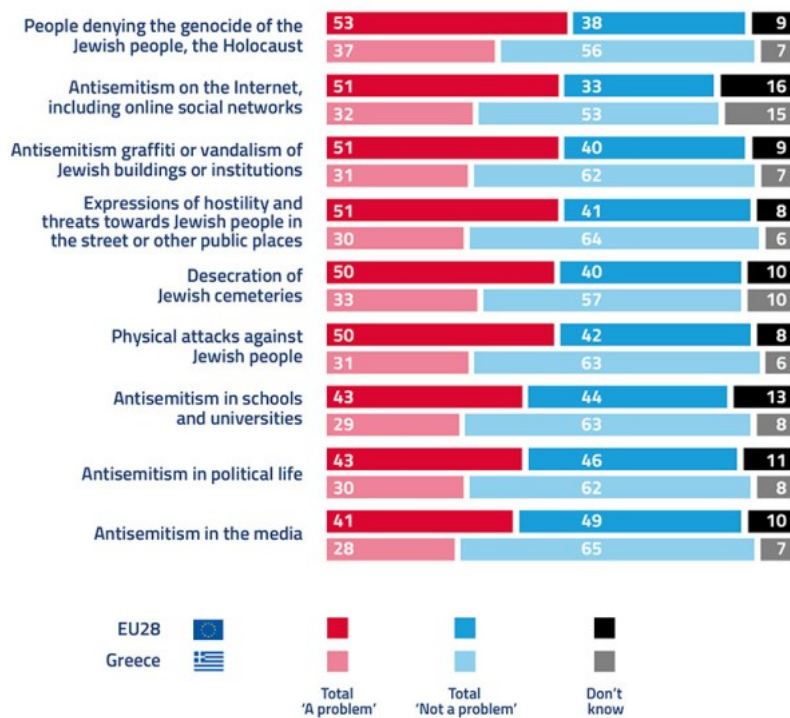
A January 2017 study by the same researchers showed considerable improvement on these numbers. The percentage of those who believe that Jews exploited the Holocaust went down to 45%. Other findings were shocking: only 60% of respondents believed that the Holocaust was a negative development, while 20% thought it was a positive one.<sup>4</sup>

In December 2018, the European Union conducted a survey of the general population on perceptions of anti-Semitism, knowledge about the Jewish community, and influence of the Middle East conflict on attitudes toward Jews. In Greece, 68% of the population believed anti-Semitism was “not a problem,” compared to 24% who said it was a problem. In the EU as a whole, 43% responded that anti-Semitism was “not a problem” and 50% that it was “a problem.”

On specific questions related to anti-Semitism, Greeks showed less concern than the EU average:

### More precisely, do you think that each of the following situation is a problem or not in Greece?

(%)



Other survey questions revealed that 79% of Greeks think their compatriots are not well informed about Jewish history, customs and practices. Half think the Holocaust is not taught sufficiently well in Greek schools. Almost 4 in 10 Greeks think conflicts in the Middle East have an influence on how Jews are perceived in Greece.

A January 2018 opinion survey showed that only 39% of Greeks had a positive connotation in association with Jews, down from 44% in December 2016. The 2018 survey also showed that 38% of Greeks had a negative connotation associated with Jews.<sup>5</sup>

These studies on the perception of Jews generated significant public debate in Greek and international media. A number of commentators decried these wide-spread beliefs among the Greek public, including the propensity to believe in conspiracy theories and called for reforms in the educational system to address these problems.

Left-wing commentators rejected accusations of anti-Semitism when phrased as criticism of Israel or of capitalism.<sup>6</sup> For example, the labor union affiliated with the Greek Communist party, PAME, claimed that it was not anti-Semitic when some of its members posted photos of dead Palestinians in the Holocaust monument in Thessaloniki.<sup>7</sup> Deputy Prime Minister Yannis Dragasakis rejected claims that using the Shylock metaphor, when criticizing capitalism, constituted anti-Semitism.

## Manifestations of Anti-Semitism

## Vandalism

Vandalism against Holocaust monuments and Jewish cemeteries are reported each year in various Greek cities. According to reports by KIS, over the past few years, such incidents have grown more frequent and this disturbing trend has continued through 2018.

In Athens, in May 2018, vandals desecrated the Jewish cemetery and in January the Holocaust monument.



In 2018, the Holocaust Monument in Thessaloniki was vandalized four times, twice in January, once in June and once in December.



Also in Thessaloniki, the monument for the destroyed Jewish cemetery on the University campus was desecrated in July 2018 and January 2019. A frequently vandalized banner with a cross, crescent, and Star of David (advertising a photo exhibition) was torn down and burned in January 2018. Four incidents of graffiti on the Holocaust monument in Komotini occurred in the span of four months.<sup>8</sup> The gate of the synagogue in Volos was vandalized in January 2018. In October, the Jewish cemetery in Trikala was vandalized while the Holocaust Memorial in Kastoria was sprayed with graffiti in December 2018.

In its most recent study, the Network for the Recording of Incidents of Racist Violence, a group of Greek NGOs working on issues of racism, LGBT and refugees, counted twelve anti-Semitic incidents in 2017.<sup>9</sup> These included eight cases of vandalism of Holocaust monuments, one against the Jewish cemetery of Athens and an anti-Semitic insult in the media against the head of the Jewish Community of Athens. The authors of the study noted an increase in anti-Semitic events compared to events in the previous year, while identifying an increasing trend for 2018: "In these incidents, the perpetrators drew Nazi signs or words and slogans which refer to the Holocaust and consequently contain treats against the Jewish community as a whole."

The 2017 Greek government report, entitled "Incidents against sites of religious significance in Greece," published by the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, identified 11 attacks against Jewish sites, including synagogues and Holocaust monuments, up from five attacks in 2016 and four attacks in 2015.<sup>10</sup> The report noted that these events have an anti-Semitic character "referring to certain motives and ideologies that led to the Holocaust and the murder of 6 million fellow human beings."

Most anti-Semitic incidents are met with strong condemnations from the government, mainstream political parties, local authorities and even the President of the Republic.<sup>11</sup> In addition, grassroots groups visited the desecrated sites in Athens and Thessaloniki to protest the vandalism that occurred there and express solidarity for the Jewish community. In a show of solidarity, the city of Athens contributed the marble for the restoration of broken cemetery stones.





While no arrests have been made for incidents which occurred in 2018, in March 2018 the Greek Counter-Terrorism Police arrested 11 suspected members of violent neo-Nazi group “C18 Hellas” which claimed responsibility for vandalism attacks against Jewish sites in Greece in the past.<sup>12</sup>

## Politics

In recent years, mainstream political parties have adopted positive attitudes towards the Jewish community and the State of Israel, which creates a deterrent to anti-Semitic political speech. High-level representatives from the government and most political parties participate in Jewish community events and in annual commemorations of the Holocaust around the country. They also express clear support for the Greek Jewish community and stand together in solidarity with the Jewish community during instances of vandalism of Holocaust monuments or Jewish sites. In addition, all mainstream parties strongly support the deepening and broadening of Greek-Israeli ties and participate in many events and initiatives that strengthen relations between the two countries.

The President of the Republic, Prime Minister, Mayor, Municipal Council and most political leaders have expressed their backing for the creation of a Holocaust Memorial Museum in Thessaloniki. The government recently pledged generous financial support for the project, which is seen as a pivotal institution in the country to remember their victims of the Holocaust and to educate the public and younger generations about anti-Semitism and extremist ideologies.<sup>13</sup>

In 2017, two politicians who had previously expressed anti-Semitic opinions, offered unprecedented public apologies to the Jewish community. On Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27, 2017, Adonis Georgiadis, Vice President of New Democracy, Greece’s main opposition party, renounced his past anti-Semitic behavior and statements in a facebook post on his profile and apologized to the Greek Jewish community.<sup>14</sup> In September 2018, Georgiadis stressed that “friendship with Israel and combatting anti-Semitism are national goals.”<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, on July 5, 2017, Dimitris Kammenos, a Member of Parliament for the right-wing Independent Greeks party and junior coalition partner in the current government, published an apology on his Facebook page for anti-Semitic and racist comments which he had posted in the past on social media.<sup>16</sup> Due to these anti-Semitic references, Kammenos had been removed from a ministerial position in 2015, less than 24 hours after his appointment. After his recent apology, Kammenos was elected as one of the Vice Presidents of the Greek Parliament.

Thessaloniki Mayor Yannis Boutaris has been the target of anti-Semitic actions related to his support for the Jewish community. In January 2018, photos of Boutaris with anti-Semitic slogans appeared in the city.<sup>17</sup> In May, Boutaris was physically attacked by a mob at the end of a commemoration for the massacre of Black Sea Greeks by Turkey. Some of the slurs against him included “bloody Jew.”<sup>18</sup> Following the attack, in May and June, the Mayor of Argos, Dimitris Kambosos, posted videos with anti-Semitic statements against Boutaris, which led to his removal from the New Democracy main opposition party.<sup>19</sup>

The neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn consistently promotes anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial, racism and xenophobia in its newspaper and website. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have suspended their official accounts, but their network of blogs and affiliated social media accounts promote hateful messages. In parliament, the group often speaks out against the democratic regime and attacks Greek political leaders, media and minorities. Its leadership is currently on trial, accused of having formed a “criminal organization” and ordered the murder of a left-wing activist. The trial continues albeit at a slow pace, meanwhile, the indicted leaders were released from jail, having reached the maximum time for incarceration without conviction.

In the most recent elections (September 2015), Golden Dawn received 7% of the vote, electing 18 (out of 300) Members of Parliament, though three have since left the party. Golden Dawn also had three Members in the European Parliament (one has since left the party), having received nearly 10% of the vote in that election. The party first entered the Greek Parliament in May 2012, when it received 7% of the vote, mainly due to

the economic crisis. Current opinion polls indicate continuing support at the 7-10% population level. Prior to 2012, the number had never surpassed 0.3%.

The Greek Communist party, which won 6% of the vote in September 2015, gaining 15 seats in the Parliament, regularly condemns the policies of the State of Israel. On the party's website, Israel is described as a "state-killer."<sup>20</sup> The party's attacks against capitalism and banks sometimes involve anti-Semitic connotations.

Mainstream Greek political leaders have been increasingly active against anti-Semitism.

In the December 2018 meeting in Israel between Greek and Israeli Prime Ministers and the President of Cyprus, the three leaders issued a final declaration which, among other things, condemned anti-Semitism and all other forms of intolerance and pledged cooperation in the field of youth education, with the aim of eliminating stereotypes.<sup>21</sup>

In January 2017, the Speaker of the Greek Parliament, Nikolaos Voutsis, in an official visit to the Israeli Parliament, signed the Joint Inter-Parliamentary Declaration on combating anti-Semitism and other hate crimes.<sup>22</sup> In September 2017, Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias argued: "When I hear people say that 'the Jews are doing what was done to them,' when I hear them equate Israel with the Nazi crimes, I do not hear 'normal' criticism. What I hear is an ex post attempt to acquit those who committed the crime of the Holocaust."<sup>23</sup>

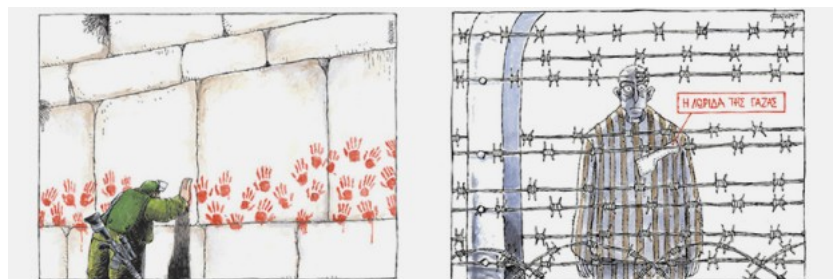
In March 2018, Minister of Justice, Stavros Kontonis, addressed the 6th Global Forum for Combating Antisemitism in Jerusalem.<sup>24</sup> The same month, Greek Member of the European Parliament, Militadis Kyrkos, speaking at an event of the European Parliament's Working Group on Antisemitism, made a clear distinction between legitimate criticism of any democratic government and anti-Semitism, stressing: "BDS has bridged the gap between legitimate criticism of Israel and turned it into attacks on the collective of Jews, on the Jewish state and specifically into attacks on businesses, academics and even students."<sup>25</sup> In June 2018, the head of the main opposition party New Democracy, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, spoke at the American Jewish Committee's Global Forum in Jerusalem, condemning old and recent manifestations of anti-Semitism.<sup>26</sup> In July 2018, Greece co-sponsored a joint statement at the UN Human Rights Council against anti-Semitism.<sup>27</sup>

## Media

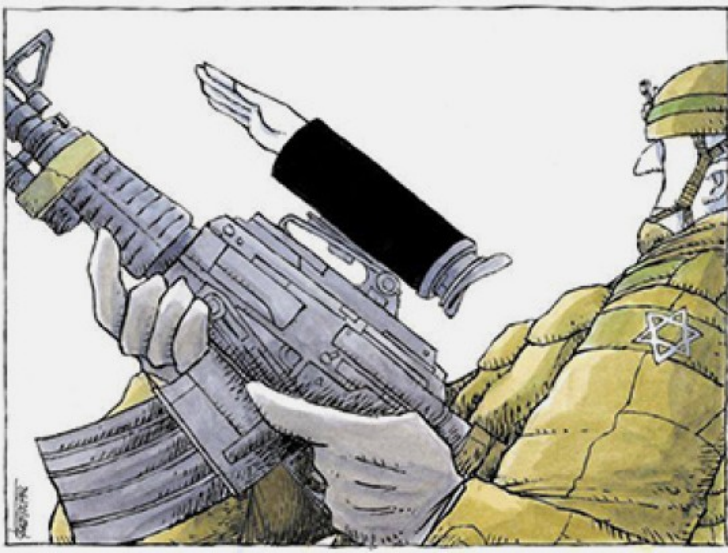
Over the past few years, the mainstream press has reduced tolerance for anti-Semitic content and more positive stories are appearing, which highlight Jewish heritage in Greece, Jewish culture, the memory of the Holocaust and the advantages of the Greek-Israeli relationship. The media has adopted a very strong stance against Golden Dawn and its extreme anti-Semitic discourse.

Occasionally, mainstream news outlets publish political cartoons that trivialize the Holocaust and compare Israelis to Nazis, especially during clashes in the Middle East. These cartoons draw strong protests from the Greek Jewish community and generate broad public debate.

For example, cartoonist Michalis Kountouris, published three such cartoons in April and May 2018 in the newspaper *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, which has a left orientation and is a strong critic of anti-Semitism and extremism in the country. These cartoons depicted an Israeli soldier leaving bloody hand marks on the Western Wall, a concentration camp inmate behind barbed wire indicating the Gaza Strip sign and an Israeli soldier whose weapon makes a Nazi salute.



Greek Jewish journalists Victor Eliezer<sup>28</sup> and Jean Cohen<sup>29</sup> protested strongly, arguing that equalizing Israeli policies to Nazi practices and trivializing the Holocaust constitutes anti-Semitism. The cartoons were also criticized by the Israeli ambassador in Athens<sup>30</sup> and a journalist who works for the same newspaper.<sup>31</sup> The Greek Cartoonists Association stood by the cartoonist and dismissed the criticism as "character assassination."<sup>32</sup>



Another cartoon published in the same newspaper in July 2018 depicted the entrance to the Auschwitz death camp with the message “the 12-hour [work day] sets you free,” to protest plans for a 12-hour work day in Austria. The Greek Jewish community responded yet again, arguing that such images “are an insult to people who still live amongst us and for whom the gate of Auschwitz was their personal hell on a daily basis. This is shameful, at least show respect to these people.”<sup>33</sup>



Fringe newspapers with an extreme right orientation, such as *Makeleio* and *Eleftheri Ora*, frequently host full-page headlines with extreme anti-Semitic messages and conspiracy theories. For example, in a front-page story, on June 25, 2018, *Makeleio* alleged that the Greek political leaders are puppets of Israel and the Jews.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, on August 7, 2018, *Eleftheri Ora* alleged that Zionism was behind the deadly fires in Athens during the summer of 2018.<sup>35</sup> In 2017, these two newspapers published and republished slanderous allegations against the President of the Jewish Community of Athens, Minos Moissis, that contained anti-Semitic attacks. The allegations were related to the financial crisis and alleged operations of his company, implying that the “Jews” (in this case represented by Mr. Moissis) are responsible for the “looting of property of the Greek people.”<sup>36</sup>

*Makeleio's* readership is considerable. On a typical day selected at random, *Makeleio* sold 6,000 copies across the country, *Eleftheri Ora* sold 2,500 copies and the largest selling newspaper, *Ta Nea*, sold 13,000 copies.<sup>37</sup> In addition, with all newspapers hanging on newsstands in the city centers, such titles attract the attention of many passersby.

### Greek Orthodox Church

The leadership of the Greek Orthodox Church supports inter-religious dialogue and tolerance and a number of Metropolitan bishops have taken initiatives to counter anti-Semitism. A regular dialogue between Greek Orthodox and Jewish representatives has taken place since 1977. Metropolitan Bishop of Demetria Ignatios, who participated in the March of the Living in Auschwitz-Birkenau in 2016, is one of the most outspoken church figures in support of tolerance and coexistence.<sup>38</sup>



In June 2017, following General Secretary of Religious Affairs George Kalantzis' visit to Yad Vashem Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem in which her was escorted by Vice President of the Central Board of Jewish Communities Victor Eliezer, it was decided that the Interorthodox Center of the Greek Orthodox Church, the educational organization of the Church of Greece that is responsible for inter-religious dialogue would hold educational programs for Greek Orthodox priests. During the 2017-2018 schoolyear, the Interorthodox Center held an educational program entitled "Getting to know and teaching about Judaism through the coexistence of Christians and Jews in Greece." In May 2018, teachers and students presented the educational activities that they performed in their institutions, which included group research, texts, video, drawings, creative writing, educational visits, theater plays and other actions.<sup>39</sup> In October, a delegation headed by the Center's Director visited Israel and participated at an educational seminar at Yad Vashem.<sup>40</sup> During the 2018-2019 school year, the center is implementing an educational program entitled "The responsibility for the memory and the responsibility for the future," which includes studying the Holocaust and visiting the synagogue of Athens and the Jewish Museum of Greece.<sup>41</sup>

Some bishops, however, have engaged in anti-Semitic hate speech, with Metropolitan Bishop of Piraeus Seraphim as the most notorious example. In his sermons, writings and interviews, Seraphim regularly attacks Jews and "Zionists," with anti-Jewish screeds, anti-Semitic stereotypes and conspiracy theories. In a 2017 interview, he accused the Jews of promoting homosexuality and disintegrating societies.<sup>42</sup> In 2018, he wrote that Zionism seeks world domination.<sup>43</sup> In March 2017, Metropolitan Bishop of Thessaloniki Anthimos met with the leader of Golden Dawn Nikos Michaloliakos and his wife MP Eleni Zaroulia in his office in Thessaloniki, drawing the ire of the Greek Jewish community.<sup>44</sup>

Anti-Semitic messages have been propagated by fringe church groups. Monks of the Esfigmenou Monastery of Mount Athos carried a banner saying, "Jewish Masonry wages war against Greece and against Orthodoxy," during a protest in Thessaloniki in February 2017.<sup>45</sup> In their demonstrations, supporters of the same monastery carry banners against "International Zionism" and the "New World Order" and claim that alleged government plans to introduce a digital ID for all citizens are part of a Zionist plan.

There is a self-proclaimed "Father Kleomenis," who dresses in monk's clothing and posts a series of anti-Semitic videos on social media. In May 2017, Kleomenis and a group of people held a demonstration in front of the Greek Parliament in Athens, shouting "resist the plans of the Jewish Zionists" and "Jewish Zionists want to turn you into slaves."<sup>46</sup> In July 2017, he spit and threw eggs at the Holocaust monuments in Larissa and Thessaloniki, while shouting anti-Semitic slogans and denying the Holocaust. He continues to put up anti-Semitic banners and post videos with similar content.<sup>47</sup> The Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church issued an announcement disassociating itself from the "monk" and condemning his actions,<sup>48</sup> while the General Secretary of Religious Affairs George Kalantzis, as well as the General Secretary for Transparency and Human Rights Maria Giannakaki reacted swiftly by providing the Public Prosecutor of Larissa, the Racist Crimes Department of the Police and the Cyber Crime Police Department with relevant evidence.<sup>49</sup>

### **Anti-Semitism Issues that are Specific to Greece**

*Economic Crisis:* Many Greeks blame Germany for the economic crisis that has affected Greece in recent years. As a result, some commentators have described the Greeks as the "new Jews," persecuted by the Germans, who are often portrayed in Nazi uniforms or with concentration camps in the background. The President of the Jewish Community of Athens has been the target of slanderous anti-Semitic attacks by extreme-right newspapers and websites, on false accusations pertaining to the financial crisis. Jews in general continued to be identified with stereotypes of controlling world politics and financial institutions, and therefore are held responsible for the harsh economic measures in Greece. References to Shylock are common.

*"Jews do not pay taxes":* The slur that "Jews do not pay taxes" has been present since 2010 on blogs and websites, despite the Greek government's public denial of it in January 2015.<sup>50</sup> This theory alleges that Jews only pay taxes to Jewish communal organizations and not to the government, and that Jews are exempt from the tax obligations of ordinary citizens. The implication is that Christian citizens bear an unfair burden of paying more tax.

*Conspiracy Theories:* Conspiracy theories find fertile ground in Greece, where people often adopt simplistic explanations for complex global developments. A 2018 poll found that 80% of respondents believe that secret organizations in Greece or abroad consistently manipulate political and economic developments.<sup>51</sup> Studies have shown a direct correlation between such conspiracy theories and anti-Semitism, which in itself presupposes a similar way of thinking. Theories about Jewish control of the media and the banks are widespread across TV, press and social media. World events are explained as actions of mysterious and underground Jewish (or Zionist) centers. Purportedly, unpopular government decisions are assumed to be made by Greek politicians of Jewish background. The forgery of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion can be found in many bookstores, both physically and online, as well as on websites of churches and schools.

BDS: The BDS Movement is quite limited in Greece and it has not had any successes. The movement is promoted only by small pro-Palestinian groups and some left-wing activists. For example, during Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Thessaloniki in June 2017, pro-Palestinian groups urged "a popular struggle against fascism and Zionism" in Greece and encouraged the boycott "of all companies and institutions of the occupying state."<sup>52</sup> When Israeli President Reuven Rivlin was awarded an honorary PhD by the University of Piraeus in January 2018, left-wing protesters branded him as "persona non grata," responsible for "the murder of innocent Palestinian children."<sup>53</sup> In May 2018, BDS activists called on consumers not to buy Israeli products in Greek supermarkets.<sup>54</sup> In June, they protested a Nick Cave's concert in Athens since he had previously performed in Israel.<sup>55</sup> In August 2018, they claimed that Greece is buying drones from Israel, that were used "experimentally" against Palestinians and killed four children in Gaza.<sup>56</sup> That being said, in general, the BDS movement is not active on university campuses and Jewish students do not face problems related to BDS.

*Victimhood:* An important element that emerged from recent research on anti-Semitism in Greece is its connection to a national culture of victimhood, a sense that the Greek people have suffered more than other peoples. Narratives are often based on the victimhood of the Greek nation, in different tragic events of its long turbulent history. This sense of victimhood creates feelings of inferiority to, competition with and envy for other peoples, whose pain and suffering Greeks believe have been more widely recognized than their own. In one survey, over 70% of those polled agreed that, "Greeks have suffered more than the Jews." The study accompanying this poll showed a strong correlation between positive answers to this question and positive answers to questions about anti-Semitic stereotypes and beliefs.<sup>57</sup>



*"Macedonia" Name Protests:* For many years, Greece has opposed the use of the name "Macedonia" by Greece's northern neighbor, known for the past decades in international organizations as FYROM, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Fringe nationalist and violent individuals affiliated with far right-wing groups have incorporated anti-Semitic expressions and acts into their activities opposing a compromise on the "Macedonia" name issue.



During largely peaceful demonstrations in Thessaloniki on the issue, some extremists desecrated the city's Holocaust memorial.<sup>58</sup> The same Holocaust monument was vandalized again during similar protests in June and December.<sup>59</sup> In September 2018, at another Macedonia demonstration, extremists displayed a series of anti-

Semitic banners with the slogans: "Talmud, Kabbalah, the Enemy of the Humanity," "Against New World Order" (with a red line erasing the Star of David), "Here Greece, Here Orthodoxy. Death to Zionism" and "Rothschild, your end is coming..."<sup>60</sup>



## Efforts to Counter Anti-Semitism

In recent years, Greece has taken many measures to fight the scourge of anti-Semitism. As part of the increased cooperation between Greece and Israel, the first ever meeting of high-ranking government officials took place in Athens in December 2018 discussing cooperation and exchange of good practices to combat anti-Semitism and other forms of racism.<sup>61</sup>

### Legislative Initiatives

In 2014, the Greek Parliament adopted a law to punish racist speech and denounce Holocaust denial.<sup>62</sup> The Greek Jewish community had long pushed for such legislation and had called upon all parties to show “zero tolerance to racist violence, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and the denial of the Holocaust.”<sup>63</sup> While many instances of anti-Semitic speech and Holocaust denial have occurred since the law was adopted, no one has been prosecuted.

### Strengthening the Memory of the Holocaust

In 2004, the Greek Parliament instituted January 27 as Holocaust Remembrance Day and since 2016, the parliament has held a special Holocaust commemoration session. A memorial to Greek Jewish parliamentarians who perished in the Holocaust also stands in the parliament.<sup>64</sup> The Greek Parliament has also decided to support a Greek pavilion at the Auschwitz Museum.

The Ministry of Education instructs all schools to commemorate Holocaust Remembrance Day.



Commemoration events also take place throughout the year. A memorial march is held in Thessaloniki on March 15, the anniversary of the departure of the first deportation train. The march is organized by the municipality, academic institutions, the Jewish community and other partner organizations. A citizens’ initiative in Thessaloniki in the last few years has managed to place Stolperstein – small metal blocks with names of victims of the Holocaust – in a few locations in the city. In addition, each year, commemoration events are held in a different Jewish community in the country, in cooperation with the embassy of the country that holds the presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

Such events have taken place in Larisa, Ioannina, Kavala, and, more recently in Trikala, where the synagogue is under renovation and a Holocaust monument was inaugurated.<sup>65</sup>





Construction works are expected to commence soon for a Holocaust Museum in Thessaloniki, which is envisioned to become a leading institution for the memory, education and research on the Holocaust, in the country and internationally.

Each year, a competition is held for students in public and private schools and is themed “The Holocaust and the Greek Jews.” The winning entries participate in an educational trip to Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum. This program is coordinated by the Jewish Museum of Greece, with the support of the Foundation for Youth and Lifelong Learning and under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. In April 2018, 82 Greek students and ten accompanying educators attended an extended educational program, participated in discussions on the crimes committed and were guided on the camp grounds.



The Ministry of Education, Jewish Museum of Greece, Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki and others organize seminars for educators on teaching about the Holocaust that take place throughout the year. In 2014, a memorandum of cooperation was signed between the Jewish Museum of Greece and the General Secretariat of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Education, while in 2017, another memorandum was signed between the Ministry of Education, the Jewish Museum of Greece and Yad Vashem.

President Prokopis Pavlopoulos announced that he has accepted the invitation to lead the March of the Living at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in 2019. In addition, Greece was unanimously chosen as IHRA Chair for the year 2021, proposing a very ambitious plan of activities.<sup>66</sup>

## Recommendations to Combat Anti-Semitism

### Security

- Adequate security should be ensured for Jewish institutions, including synagogues, schools, cemeteries, and monuments, with regular and visible police presence at sites that have seen repeated vandalism.



- Greater efforts must be made to arrest and prosecute those who commit anti-Semitic hate crimes.
- Law enforcement should be trained to identify and record anti-Semitic hate crimes.

## Political Actions

- Political leaders should demonstrate that anti-Semitic remarks and activities disqualify individuals from government service by precluding the appointment of extremists.
- The government and parliament should adopt the IHRA Definition of Anti-Semitism to determine which statements and acts constitute anti-Semitism and to promote the use of this definition in all sectors of government.
- Leaders should regularly condemn anti-Semitic incidents in order to convey that they are unacceptable in Greek society.

## Education

- Anti-bias education programs and public awareness initiatives should be expanded, including research and education activities on issues of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial in contemporary Greek society.
- Given the strong role that the Greek Orthodox Church plays in Greek society, inter-religious dialogue should include efforts to combat stereotypes and prejudices.
- Greek school books should be revised to include information on the historical Jewish presence in Greece, basic principles of Judaism, the rise of Nazism and Fascism in Europe, the Holocaust, issues of collaboration and rescue and contemporary manifestations of racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism.
- Jewish contributions to Greek society should be highlighted in appropriate educational settings, such as adding Jewish Studies chairs at universities like the University of Thessaloniki currently has.

## Endnotes

1. <http://global100.adl.org/#country/greece/2014>.
2. <http://global100.adl.org/#country/greece/2015>.
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