



Summary

Anti-Semitism Report: Summary

In 2015, SIG and GRA registered 14 anti-Semitic incidents in German-speaking Switzerland. This is significantly less than in 2014: in that year 66 incidents were registered. As in previous years, in 2015 the actual quantity of anti-Semitic hatred on the internet was not recorded; however there was a noticeable tendency towards less anti-Semitic hatred than in the previous year.

As in 2014, two anti-Semitically motivated physical attacks were registered in the reporting year. On one occasion, Jewish adolescents were physically attacked in Zurich by adolescents of the same age - in the second case, it was neo-Nazis who also attacked a Jew in Zurich. However, this drop in the number of registered incidents should not be taken as a sign of any corresponding reduction in the level of anti-Semitic sentiment.

The study "Living Together in Switzerland", conducted on behalf of the centre for anti-racism and published early in 2015, reveals that the spread of anti-Semitic sentiment across the broad spectrum of society is, at around 10% of the Swiss population, relatively stable. This sentiment often remains hidden and emerges in surges, sparked off by 'trigger events' such as conflict between Israel and Palestinians. This was particularly apparent in 2014. While the Israeli military deployment in Gaza was a response to rocket attacks on Israel, the number of anti-Semitic incidents accelerated, only to drop quickly again afterwards. A further point to make is that criticism of Israel's policies is not regarded explicitly as a form of "anti-Semitic incident", whereas statements such as "all Jews should be gassed" are.

In 2015, there was no military escalation with Israeli involvement such as in 2014 and also no other trigger events. This could well be the main reason for the lower number of registered incidents. As in previous years, the actual number of incidents is most probably higher, because many incidents go unreported.

In autumn 2015, there were numerous knife attacks by Palestinians on Jewish Israelis in Israel. This also led to anti-Semitic comments in Switzerland, for example on Facebook, which glorified the perpetrators as heroes. However, there was no heightened activity, as in 2014 during the Gaza War, when Facebook hatred-mongers whipped each other up and tried to outdo each other.

In 2014, SIG and GRA brought 25 criminal charges against individuals making hate statements about Jews on Facebook. In the cases where it was possible to unmask the perpetrators, they were found to have breached the anti-racism penal code. However, many cases against unidentifiable Facebook hatred-mongers had to be abandoned. Also, other institutions and private individuals brought dozens of other charges. SIG and GRA do not know the outcomes of these proceedings.

It cannot be ruled out that these charges and media reports about them in 2014 led to fewer and less drastic hate statements against Jews on Swiss Facebook pages in 2015 than in previous years. In summer 2015, hate statements on the net became a broad subject of media attention in connection with the refugee crisis. This debate, too, could have led to the sensitization of many people. Today, it may well be true that more people than in the past are aware that racist and anti-Semitic hatred in the internet can be a criminal offence.

The fact that 2015 also saw not only written and verbal attacks but also physical assaults on Jews shows that anti-Semitic sentiment can still lead to physical violence on occasion. Such as, in summer 2015, more than 20 neo-Nazis turned up in Zurich-Wiedikon and attacked an orthodox Jew. They insulted him, spat at him, and jostled him. This may well have had a more serious outcome, but for the energetic interventions of passers-by and the police. Another incident took place at a football pitch in Zurich. Young footballers from a Jewish football association were insulted anti-Semitically, jostled and finally beaten by other young people. The perpetrators only left their victims in peace when passers-by got involved. The perpetrators then fled the scene unidentified.