



Osservatorio
antisemitismo

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ANTENNA ANTISEMITISMO
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Report on anti-Semitism in Italy in 2015, summary

June 15, 2016

In 2015 the Observatory on Anti-Semitism of the Jewish Contemporary Documentation Center Foundation - CDEC, a nonprofit social utility organization (ONLUS), recorded some ninety episodes of anti-Semitism, representing an increase over the years 2012 and 2013 but similar in quantity to records from 2014. One indicator that did continue to grow from 2014 to 2015 is web-based anti-Semitism, a trend observed both in Europe and generally around the world.

Information on these episodes has been gathered from the individuals involved in the incidents (victims), communications by Jewish communities or other organizations, public sources (newspapers, radio, web, etc.), and studies and analyses by institutions and organizations in Europe and elsewhere in the world.

The Observatory's Anti-Semitism Antenna provides a means for gathering information from victims or witnesses of episodes of anti-Semitism who call the toll-free number.

Anti-Jewish prejudice in the form of opinions and words is not confined to any one social, cultural or political class but cuts across all such boundaries. Anti-Semitic discourse finds expression in various milieux, not necessarily extremist, depending on the paradigm they draw on: conspiracy theory, Holocaust denial (negationism), demonization of Israel.

Hostile anti-Jewish actions are the hallmark of extremist political groups (right, left, Islamist).

Principal episodes of anti-Semitism in Italy grouped by type for analytical purposes

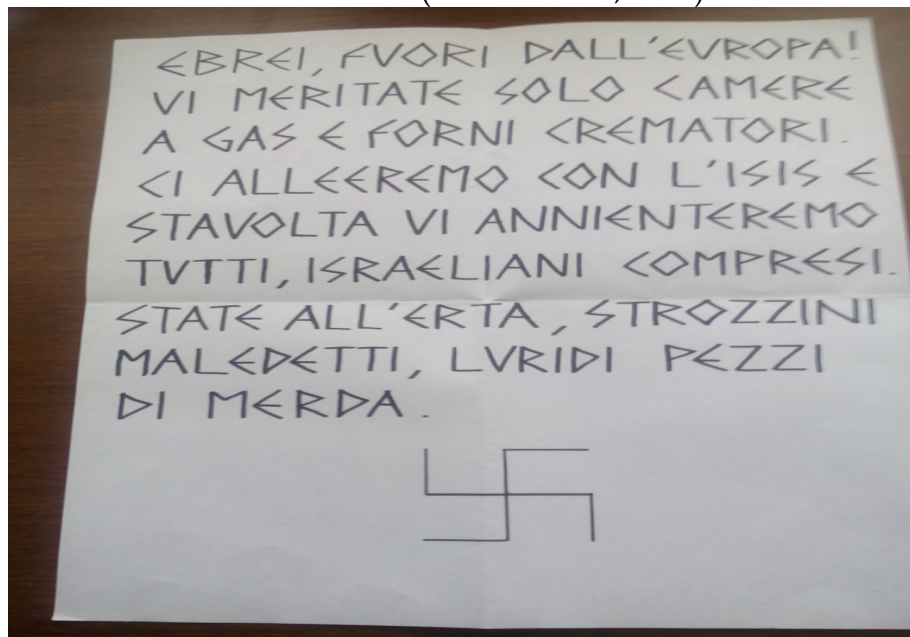
- Anti-Semitism on the web (35)
- Caricatures, graffiti, graphics, writing, cartoons (19)
- Defamation and insults (15)
- Vandalism (6)
- Anti-Semitism in daily or periodical print media or on television (4)
- Personal threats (4)
- Discrimination (2)
- Physical attacks on people (1)
- Extreme violence against people (1)

We shall begin by reporting the most serious cases – fortunately few – of physical attacks against Jews.

- The most serious case occurred in Milan on the evening of November 12, in front of the kosher restaurant Carmel near the Jewish school. A 40-year-old Jewish man was seriously injured, suffering 10 stab wounds. The attacker was a man wearing a hood, member of a micro neo-Nazi organization, who fled the scene. The victim, Nathan Graff, attacked from behind, owes his life to his physical prowess and the intervention of an Israeli student.
- Another case of physical aggression was reported by a woman, A. P., who lives in Rome. She said that her son had been insulted and beaten on several occasions by schoolmates because of his Jewish origins. The woman had reported the incidents to the school principal but it appears that the school administrators chose to ignore these repeated acts of anti-Semitism. The woman said she had also reported the episodes to the authorities and taken her son to San Giovanni Hospital in Rome to certify the acts of aggression. (March 26, 2015)

Threats and verbal abuse show growth both in number and vehemence, as exemplified in the incidents described below:

- In Rome, three young men (of Arab origins) in hoodies worn low over their faces stopped in front of a shoe store on Via della Vite, just a stone's throw from Piazza di Spagna. They spat on the ground and threatened the owner with the words "*Piece-of-shit Jew. We'll be back*" before running off. The three may have understood that the store belongs to a Jew because of the mezuzah at the entrance. Frightened, the man barely managed to call the Carabinieri before fainting. (February 25, 2015)
- In Naples, a man got out of his car and accosted A. L., a Jewish woman, at the gate to her home as she was returning, shouting "*You will all end up in the ovens, it's too bad they didn't kill you all!*" A. L. witnessed the persecution of the Jews during the years of Fascism and for over twenty years has talked about it in public venues, particularly in schools. (March 24, 2015)
- In Padua, M. R. reports receiving an anonymous threatening letter and says he filed a complaint at the police station against an unknown perpetrator. The letter was written using runic-style characters and concluded with a swastika. The text read: "*Jews out of Europe! All you deserve is gas chambers and crematoriums. We will ally with ISIS and this time we will annihilate every last one of you, including the Israelis. Watch out, you accursed shylocks, filthy pieces of shit.*" The victim is the non-Jewish son of a Jew who converted to Catholicism. (December 30, 2015)



As regards insults, the Antenna on Anti-Semitism received a number of reports of publicly uttered anti-Semitic comments. What is striking about them is their renewed vehemence and the underlying legitimization of anti-Semitic verbal statements, i.e. up until a few years ago, while some people certainly harbored thoughts nurtured by a long and deep-

seated tradition of anti-Jewish prejudice and stereotypes, they would not express them in public, they were not considered admissible. Now it appears that they are.

- In Milan, M. P. reports that prior to a water aerobics lesson at the Bacone municipal pool, there was a discussion of a shooting that had just occurred in the Milan courthouse. *“At a certain point, one of the women in the class exclaimed, ‘This guy manages to enter the court building with a pistol and nobody stops him while in Stresa there are fifty police officers defending those piece-of-shit Jews!’ She repeated it twice to make sure we got the point. No one said anything. Shocked and appalled, neither did I. The lesson was about to begin and I let it slide. But then as I was leaving the locker room I said to her, ‘Bye-bye from a piece-of-shit Jew.’ Pandemonium, the usual excuses that she didn’t have anything against me, she was talking about a specific case (?), that she didn’t mean to offend me, etc. Except for one woman, who timidly said she agreed with me, all the others either kept quiet or defended the woman by making me out to be a hothead.”* (April 9, 2015)

Graffiti and posters

Writings on walls are one of the earliest forms of public communication, and for many years, prior to advent of the Internet, they were perhaps the principal and most widespread vehicle for anti-Semitic expression in Italy.

- A few days after the death of Elio Toaff (April 19, 2015), Chief Rabbi emeritus of Rome, at the age of 99, wall writings were observed in various parts of the city by the neo-Nazi organization Militia: *“Today Toaff tomorrow Pacifici!”* (near the Coliseum); *“Toaff, we’ll be dancing on your grave!”* (Via del Colosseo, at the intersection with Via Cavour); *“The Fuhrer is grateful for the birthday present...bye-bye Toaff!”* (Piazza Indipendenza); *“Toaff...one less pig”* (Via Gallia); *“The worms await you, Toaff you sleazebag”* (Via dei Normanni). At the Olympic village they wrote *“Happy birthday Adolf Hitler! Your present is one less Jew”* in reference to the coincidence that the leader of the Nazis was born on April 20, 1889 and that Toaff, who had fought with the Partisans, died on April 19. (April 21, 2015). On Facebook, individuals and groups inclining toward the radical right posted a host of comments, many of them mocking, trivializing and brutally anti-Semitic (*“one less pig”, “piece of shit”, etc.*). (April 22, 2015)

Publishing houses and books with anti-Semitic content

Publishing houses that issue anti-Semitic materials are becoming increasingly active and prolific, especially those associated with the radical right. Every year new titles are added to their catalogues, mainly classics in anti-Semitic ideology, works by Nazi theorists, and pre-Vatican II Catholic, anti-Zionist, conspiracy theory and negationist apologetics.

¹ Riccardo Pacifici, president of the Jewish Community of Rome.

Such books generally receive little attention in the principal media but are widely reviewed and shared via numerous websites, social networks, forums and militant magazines.

All the publishing houses that publish anti-Semitic books have websites and/or profiles on the principal social networks (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter) and also collaborate with selected bookshops, often online, that sell their publications. It is currently quite easy to obtain these texts because they are available from the major online booksellers such as Amazon and IBS.

In 2015, twenty-two books were published with anti-Semitic content. Of them, ten are classics of anti-Semitic ideology and twelve are new works; twenty-one are non-fiction and one is fiction; nine are out of the Nazi mold, seven reflect traditionalist Catholic thinking, four are anti-Zionist, and only one is negationist because this vein of thinking tends to be developed more widely on the web.

Anti-Zionism

The Israeli-Palestine conflict fuels antipathy toward Jews. The reiterated representation of Israel as a “racist”, “apartheid” state generates resentment, indignation and hostility toward Jews, a sentiment that re-emerges with every new crisis in the Middle East. In 2015, in addition to recurring episodes – graffiti, red paint on the Israeli flag, anti-Zionist letters to the editor, publication of anti-Zionist essays – the most significant expressions of anti-Zionism in 2015 were: verbal attacks on Emanuele Fiano, the eighth edition of the Enrico Mattei master’s course, and the projection in various universities and municipal cinemas, sometimes with the sponsorship of the municipality, of the anti-Semitic documentary *Israele: IL CANCRO* [Israel: THE CANCER].

- An anti-Zionist, anti-Semitic campaign conducted by Fronte Palestina, an anti-Zionist movement close to the terrorist organization Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). On the occasion of the visit by Palestinian president Abu Mazen to Expo Milano 2015, Fronte Palestina promoted the mobilization campaign “No Expo – No Israel” and passed out a flyer “Appeal for mobilization: we continue the campaign No Expo – No Israel”, filled with anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic vitriol and attacks directed principally at Emanuele Fiano, member of the

Chamber of Deputies for the Italian Democratic Party (PD): *“the capitalist financial system finds the financial resources to fund the war economy of the world’s principal colonialist state: Israel. For nearly seventy years, this state, in the name of a Zionist, racist ideology, imposes an anti-Arab system of apartheid and colonialization on Palestinian lands. The most recent pseudo-elections have reappointed a paramilitary regime to the helm of this Zionist entity, supported by a fundamentalist and colonial political bloc, whose program is to annihilate the aspirations of the Arab-Palestinian people. We must continue and relaunch the campaign denouncing the Zionist presence in Italy and in the world. [...] This is absolutely the path to be taken because the Zionist plan to occupy space and power within Italy has not been defeated and has not ceased moving forward. This is clearly demonstrated by the attempt to present a candidate for mayor of Milan who is an openly declared Zionist, a supporter of Israel and the crimes it has committed over the decades: we are talking about the home affairs spokesman for the Partito Democratico (PD) appointed to reforms and member of the Chamber of Deputies, Emanuele Fiano. It is important to denounce and fight the policies of the PD, a party that is forging policy in Italy in favor of the banks and vested interests, in the service of imperialism and Zionism. In the guise of squadristi, the PD took to the streets on April 25 not to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Liberation, but to escort the Zionists. It thus came as no surprise to us that the agents of the PD escorted the Zionists in the Jewish Brigade like guards from a private security agency that escort armored cars. A ‘pretty sum’, Zionist capital, that is flooding the election campaign of this freemasonry, in which the presence of prominent exponents such as Emanuele Fiano acts as the protector of the ‘treasure’ like a bank director protects the vault.”* (July 24, 2015)

- Anti-Semitism against Emanuele Fiano. A page on Facebook urges people to boycott Radio Popolare after it broadcast an interview with Emanuele Fiano, deputy of the PD: *“Emanuele Fiano is a Zionist,”* writes the author, Francesco Giordano, previously sentenced to 21 years in prison for the killing of Walter Tobagi, and a supporter of the Palestinian cause, *“representing the right wing of the PD, a racist (immigration detention) party of warmongers.”* Another user subscribing to the initiative wrote: *“To further his career [Fiano] would wash himself with soap made from his relatives.”* (July 31, 2015)

Anti-Zionist or prejudicially anti-Israeli discourses are aired in various milieux, not all necessarily extremist. They include broad segments of the Movimento 5 Stelle (who often express their anti-Zionism in the terms of conspiracy theorists), the SEL [Ecology and Freedom Party of the Left], members of the PD aligned with the pro-Palestinian factions, and individuals from various political groupings with a Catholic background.

Particularly significant are statements by former Prime Minister and former President of the European Commission Romano Prodi in a long interview with the newspaper *Il Fatto* on December 1st: *“The Israeli-Palestine conflict is the mother and origin of all wars, but as long as Netanyahu is leading the government in Israel peace is impossible.”*

The BDS

The Boycott-Divest-Sanction (BDS) movement is promoted in Italy by hundreds of associations and small parties and movements having affinities with the radical left, Islamic-Palestinian extremists, and the progressive segments of Christian churches who find their cultural base in Liberation theology.

The BDS in Italy has remained circumscribed within extremist and militant milieux. The most active supporters of a boycott against Israel are individuals (e.g. the professors Iain Chambers, Wasim Dahmash, Enrico Bartolomei, Diana Carminati, Angelo D'Orsi, Giorgio Forti, Domenico Losurdo, Vincenzo Tradardi, and Gianni Vattimo, and the political activist Luisa Morgantini), extremist Islamic and Palestinian organizations (UCOII, ABSPP, Informazione Palestina, Forum Palestina, Palestina Rossa), and Catholic groups inspired by liberation theology and for years engaged in bitter anti-Zionist criticism.

In academia, professors, researchers, doctoral students and undergraduates at the L'Orientale university of Naples have championed forms of BDS (by signing anti-Zionist petitions and occupying university facilities in a display of support for the Palestinians, etc.).

Many political parties in Italy present in Parliament are opposed to BDS, although it does have the sympathies of broad swaths of the Movimento 5 Stelle and SEL.

Islamist anti-Semitism

In Italy, not many episodes of anti-Semitism motivated by Islamist ideology have surfaced through public sources. In most cases they are sermons against the Jews or Zionists by Islamist imams, or else anti-Semitic invective and threats from members of jihadi organizations or their sympathizers.

The trend in Italy did not change in 2015, although there was a slight rise in the number of reported cases, perhaps as a result of greater attention to Islamic radicalism by law enforcement and the mass media following upon the serious jihadi attacks that took a heavy toll in Europe and in Israel during the year.

In mid-November the Special Operations Group (Raggruppamento Operativo Speciale - ROS) of Bolzano arrested a number of presumed terrorists of Middle-Eastern origin who had been proselytizing and planning terrorist attacks. During covert surveillance activities, one of the detainees was heard to say: *“It is good to die for Allah. No matter what I do for Allah I will not have done enough. I will not be at peace until I have killed some Jews.”*

Websites

The past fifteen years have witnessed continual growth in anti-Semitic websites in Italy. There were perhaps forty of these sites in 2007; in 2015 these numbers had swelled to some two hundred and their growth continues unabated.

The online spaces presenting the most explicit, rich, articulated and extremist anti-Semitic documentation are those associated with neo-Nazi and/or traditionalist Catholic ideologies. Paradigmatic here are Holy War, and the Italian sections of the white supremacist website Stormfront and of Radio Islam.

These three websites have been built around an explicit, aggressive anti-Semitism. They represent a sort of enormous anti-Semitic archive where one can find all the themes leveraged in anti-Jewish polemics. They have hundreds of anti-Jewish cartoons and photomontages, many laic and religious anti-Semitic texts, documents accusing the Jews of practicing ritual homicide, anti-Semitic songs and screen savers, black lists, audio, video and anti-Semitic and negationist documentaries, some self-produced.

HolyWar and Stormfront Italia have been blacked out in Italy by the police force but can still be accessed via proxy servers, requiring only that users download and install a free user-friendly program that allows them to navigate in an anonymous manner.

Another website providing a platform for this ideology is Maurizio Blondet’s blog “Blondet & Friends”, which contains a wealth of pungent anti-Semitic documentation (principally in the conspiracy theory vein) but lacks the aggressive graphics of HolyWar and Stormfront. The blog is presented as a sort of free online newspaper that is updated on a daily basis with original articles of anti-Semitic inspiration, often written by Blondet

himself. The blog has a very popular Facebook page with thousands of followers and Blondet's articles are often shared on websites and social networks.

Nearly all Italian anti-Semitic websites, including the more radical ones such as Radio Islam and HolyWar, define themselves as "anti-Zionist", "anti-racist", "politically incorrect", "hated by the right and by the left", and "inconvenient".

Radio Islam è un'associazione apolitica, che agisce per promuovere maggiori e migliori relazioni tra l'"occidente" e il mondo arabo e islamico.

Radio Islam è contro tutti i tipi e forme di razzismo, contro ogni discriminazione basata sul colore della pelle, la fede religiosa e il gruppo etnico. Perciò Radio Islam è contro il razzismo ebraico verso i non-ebrei e gli obiettivi del sionismo internazionale.

Il sionismo internazionale, oggi, costituisce l'ultima ideologia razzista ancora vivente e lo stato sionista d'Israele l'ultimo luogo rimasto di "apartheid" nel mondo.

Israele costituisce, per la sua sola esistenza, una completa provocazione ad ogni principio, regola e legge internazionale, e il razzismo ebraico una violazione di ogni etica e morale conosciuta dall'uomo.

Anti-Semitism on Facebook

Between April and September 2015, the CDEC Observatory on Anti-Semitism monitored 156 Italian Facebook profiles: 72 representing groups and 84 representing individuals. The groups and individual objects of analysis were chosen on the basis of their aggressiveness and violence. All profiles were analyzed and a total of 2,288 posts were collected and stored: 948 from groups and 1,340 from individuals.

The 72 groups express various aspects of anti-Semitism. They contain conspiracy theories mixed with negationism, negationism mixed with racist humor, accusations of blood libel combined with anti-Zionism, etc.

The administrators of these groups often have one or more reserve profiles that they use when the Facebook administrators intervene to close the principal one.

The forms of expression used on these Facebook pages are generally characterized by extremely aggressive graphics and words and the propensity to insult, couched in the language of extreme hate speech. They tend to transcend boundaries to the point of dehumanizing their targets and justifying violence against them: "*crush these sewer rats*", "*eliminate them without pity*". The tone is both aggressive and paranoid.

In addition to posting and sharing explicitly anti-Semitic comments and images, the groups and individuals upload conspiracy theory and negationist documentaries, Nazi videos, anti-Semitic cartoons and video games, and anti-Semitic propaganda such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

The anti-Semitic propaganda documents posted on the pages of groups and individuals draw on three veins from the anti-Semitism archive: classic anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial/trivialization (negationism), new anti-Semitism (linked to Israel and Zionism).

Most of the documentation published in the period March-September 2015 on the selected Facebook pages uses arguments drawing on classic anti-Semitism (blood libel, myth of specific Jewish cruelty, racism, conspiracy theory, etc.) and particularly on the conspiracy theories inspired by the bogus *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (often linked or published online).

The iconographic sources refer to the classic physiognomy (Jews with hooked noses, big teeth, claw-like hands, etc.), i.e. stereotypes making monsters of Jews that have their roots deep in anti-Semitic ideology (from the early 19th century to the 1930s) and indeed Nazi-Fascist cartoons (adapted and contextualized) are often republished.



The posted photos show Jews with grotesque features or presented in line with a logic of propaganda aiming to emphasize and ridicule physical defects. Jews are demonized also via the classic mechanisms of teratomorphism and zoomorphism urging readers to “crush this kind of sewer rat”. Often Jews/Zionists are termed “big noses” who live in “Nosonia”.

Here are a number of words and phrases excerpted from the page of the anti-Zionist Facebook group “Vittorio Arrigoni” :

“Nazi-Zionism”, “Nazis”, “beasts of Satan”, “demons”, “devil’s spawn”, “beasts”, “animals”, “root of evil”, “they are the most ruthless terrorists who rule the world”, “Israel a people of terrorist murderers”, “Nazi-Zionist state”, “Zionazis go back to the sewer”, “Zionist beasts”, “repugnant monsters”, “Hitler’s grandchildren”, “Zionist criminals are worse than Nazism or Fascism”, “Jews, your Nazi torturers taught you well, may you suffer all you are doing to the Palestinian people, one-hundred-fold!!!”, “you do not deserve to be called humans”, “the true Nazis”, “Zionists cancer to be extirpated”, “Nazi Jews”, “when are we finally going to get rid of these Nazis”.

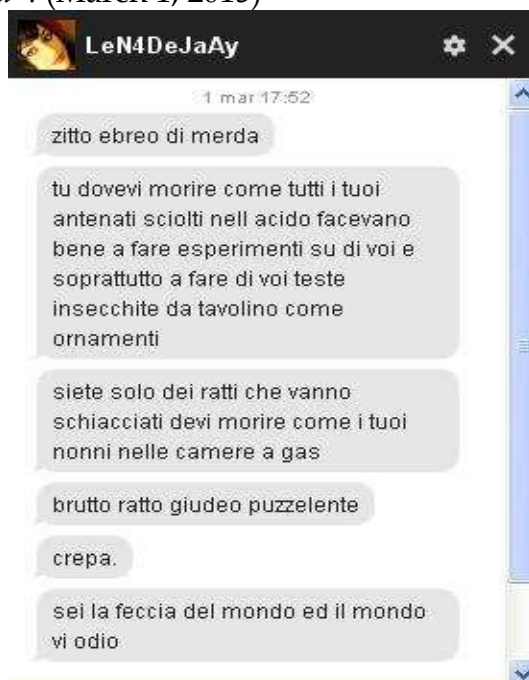
Example of online anti-Semitism

- **“the Jews are a race to be exterminated”**: A Jewish woman received a message on Facebook: *“the Jews are a race to be exterminated”* for their behavior toward the Palestinians. (January 27, 2015)



- **“It’s raining it’s pouring the Jew’s stopped snoring”**: A user posted this on Facebook: *“It’s raining it’s pouring / The Jew’s stopped snoring / The Jew in the stall / The ovens are all on and the Fascists are / reborn!!! hooray”*. The comment is reported to Facebook administrators who decide to leave it online because *“it doesn’t violate community standards”*. (January 28, 2015)
- **Anti-Semitic message on the social network “Chatta.it”**: After posting a comment defending the State of Israel, a user of the platform Chatta.it received the following message: *“shut up you piece-of-shit Jew, you should have died like all your ancestors dissolved in acid. They were right to use you for experiments, and especially to make you*

into shrunken heads to adorn the end tables. You are just rats to be crushed. You have to die like your grandparents in the gas chambers, ugly stinking Jewish rat, die, you are the scum of the earth, I hate you". (March 1, 2015)



- **“The gas chambers, history’s greatest lie. Tribute to Robert Faurisson”, new negationist documentary uploaded to YouTube:** On May 26, 2015 the user “europadelsud” (alias of Salvatore Brosal, member of the “Movimento dei forconi e del 9 dicembre” [association of farmers and livestock raisers]) uploaded a 7 minute 57 second self-produced negationist documentary to YouTube titled “The gas chambers, history’s greatest lie. Tribute to Robert Faurisson”. The documentary describes the Shoah as a hoax staged by the Jews to extort money and keep the world in checkmate. It was posted and shared on various websites and social networks. The documentary immediately generated comments from YouTube users in anti-Semitic posts. (May 26, 2015)