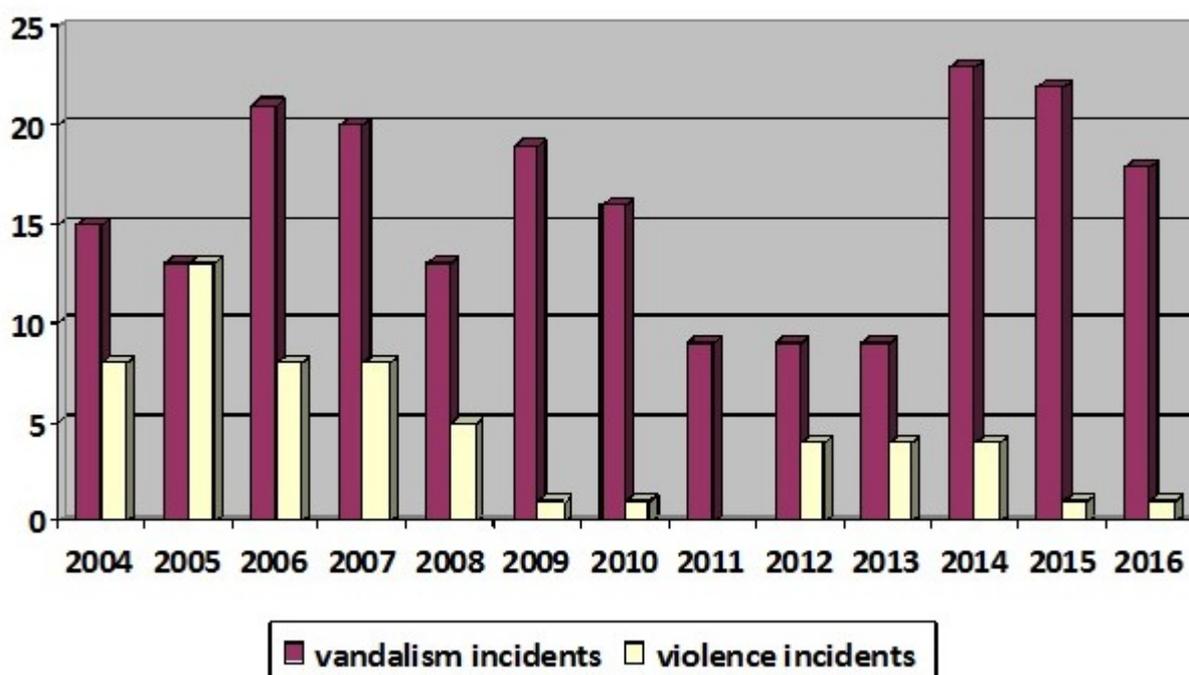# Antisemitism in Ukraine, 2016

Preliminary report

By Vyacheslav Likhachev

Antisemitic Hate Crimes

Statistic data

Antisemitic attacks

According to data collected by the monitoring program, **one case of presumably antisemitic violent crime was recorded in 2016.**

Since the beginning of systematic monitoring, the number of recorded victims of violent antisemitic attacks is as follows:

8 victims in 2004, 13 in 2005, 8 in 2006, 8 in 2007, 5 in 2008, 1 in 2009, 1 in 2010, none in 2011, 4 in 2012 (three incidents), 4 in 2014, also 4 in 2014 and 1 in 2015.

As can be seen, the number of violent antisemitic crimes peaked in 2005, and a notable decline has set in since 2007. In recent years, the number of such incidents remains at a stable low. Besides quantity, 2005-2007 was also the time when the most dangerous, life-threatening street attacks took place.

● **On the evening of August 24**, the Israeli journalist Yitzchak Hildesheimer was attacked in Kharkiv, on Sumskaya street. Hildesheimer was present at Ukraine's 25th anniversary celebration. According to the journalist, he was attacked from behind by a young man. When the journalist turned around, his attacker raised his right hand in a Nazi salute. The journalist was wearing a *kippah*, and he believes that was the likely reason for the attack.[1]

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[1] http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/818/749.html?hp=1

Antisemitic Vandalism (Arson, etc.)

The label "vandalism" is applied in this report for two categories: physical damage, such as broken windows and arson attempts, done to buildings that are part of the Jewish infrastructure (synagogues and community centers), tombstones in Jewish cemeteries and Holocaust memorials, and antisemitic and/or neo-Nazi graffiti on similar objects, which are evidence of ideological motivation.

18 cases of antisemitic vandalism were recorded in 2016. A detailed description of these incidents can be read above, in the chronicle of vandalism.

The number of recorded incidents of antisemitic vandalism since the beginning of the monitoring is as follows: 15 cases in 2004, 13 in 2005, 21 in 2006, 20 in 2007, 13 in 2008, 16 in 2010, 9 cases each in 2011, 2012, and 2013, 23 cases in 2014 and 22 in 2015.

Thus, in 2015-2016 there has been a slight reduction in the number of acts of antisemitic vandalism in comparison to the 'peak' year of 2014.

● **On January 13**, unknown persons made yet another arson attempt on the *ohel* (a prayer pavillion stationed on the grave of a *tsaddik*) of the *tsaddik* Gillel Boruch Liechtenstein, who had been the Head Rabbi of Kolomiya in the 19th century. The *tsaddik's* grave is also located in Kolomiya, Ivano-Frankivsk region. The attempt was unsuccessful, as the incendiary mixture did not ignite. This was the third attempt over the course of half a year. Before undertaking the arson attempt, the criminals took down four surveillance cameras on the premises of the cemetery.[2]

Previous arson attempts took place on September 19 and November 4, 2015, respectively. On December 26, 2015, a group of vandals used a crow bar to break approximately 40 tombstones.

The Jewish community was attempting to improve the Memorial cemetery, with its work taking place on the premises of a local park. The conflict around the cemetery has been ongoing since September 2015, when the community began its work and attempted to block transit through the park. Since then, Jewish objects in the Memorial Cemetery have been vandalized multiple times.

● **On the night of March 7**, unknown vandals set fire to a wreath laid at the "Menorah" memorial in Babiy Yar (Kyiv), which was placed the day before by the Israeli Minister of Justice Ayelet Shaked. [3]

● On **March 24**, in Kolomiya, local community head Yakov Zalischeker found all four of his car tires punctured after participating in a live television show on the conflict between the Jewish community and the local population.[4]

● **On April 15**, yet another act of vandalism against the "Mourning Mother" memorial to victims of Nazism was discovered in Poltava.

The unknown vandal painted a swastika in yellow paint on the memorial, wrote "Death to kikes," and crossed out the "We remember you in our hearts" inscription.[5]

The memorial had already been desecrated in a similar manner in November 2015. It had also been vandalized in 2001, 2010, 2013, and 2014.

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[2] http://eajc.org/page16/news53643.html

[3] The information was provided by the Director of the Ukrainian Jewish Committee Eduard Dolinsky, with a reference to Boris Glazunov, the Babiy Yar Preserve director (see: https://www.facebook.com/eduard.dolinsky/posts/1125875714111162).

[4] http://www.versii.if.ua/novunu/skandal-u-kolomiyi-glavi-yevreyskoyi-obshhini-mista-porizali-kolesa-avtomobilya-foto/

[5] http://eajc.org/page16/news54250.html

The "Mourning Mother" memorial was placed in Pushkarevsky Park in 1967. During the occupation, approximately 15 thousand Jews and thousands of other civilians, resistance members, and Soviet prisoners of war were shot in that park.

● On the evening on **May 4** in Kyiv, near the monument to the victims of the Holocaust "Menorah" in the National Historical Memorial Park "Babiy Yar," a group of teenagers burned an Israeli flag.[6]

On May 5 (by the Jewish calendar – that is, from the evening of May 4), Israel celebrated the National Day of Remembrance of the Holocaust (Yom Hashoah).

● **On June 23** (possibly **22**), unknown vandals desecrated a memorial to ghetto victims in Lviv. The memorial and surrounding slabs with names were covered in green paint.[7]

● **On July 24**, at around 10 PM, unknown vandals desecrated the *ohel* (prayer pavillion on top of a tomb) over the grave of the Hasid *tsaddik* Rabbi Aryeh-Leib, located in Shpola city (Cherkassy region). The antisemites broke the locks and threw a bottle with incendiary mixture inside the building. Another bottle was attached to the door of the tomb.

Rabbi Aryeh-Leib, also known as the "Grandfather of Shpoli," lived in the late 18th-early 19th century and was known for his charitable and other social activities. The new *ohel* building was constructed in 2014 with the financial support of the known businessman and patron German Zaharyayev.[8]

● **On the night of August 18**, unknown vandals desecrated the synagogue in Kolomiya.

According to the head of the local community, Yakov Zalischeker, the identity of the vandals remains unknown at this point. The incident was reported to the police.

Damage to the local Jewish cemetery has also been reported on the night of **August 19th**.[9]

Cases of antisemitic vandalism have become more common in Kolomiya over the last year, with the damage aimed largely at objects belonging to the Memorial Jewish Cemetery.

● **On September 9**, an act of vandalism was discovered in Chernivtsi. Unknown vandals broke a memorial plaque with the names of benefactors located on the wall of Beit Kadishin ("house of forgiveness," an abandoned building of the Jewish Funeral Society) at the Jewish cemetery. According to existing information, the act of vandalism took place on **September 3 or 4**. Plans are now being made to restore the building, and appropriate documentation is being written. The Jewish community is planning to open a memorial Museum of the Catastrophe of Bukovina Jewry, a branch of the Museum of History and Culture of Bukovina Jewry.[10]

● On **September 11**, an act of vandalism was discovered in Kyiv's Babiy Yar. Unidentified vandals drew a swastika and a crossed out Magen David at the "Joint" memorial, which was erected to commemorate 60 years since the shootings and to testify to an intent to build the "Heritage" community center.[11]

● On **September 22**, vandals desecrated the Holocaust memorial in Zasulye village (Lubenskiy region of Poltavskaya oblast, Ukraine).

According to the report of the Chief Directorate of the National Police of Ukraine in

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[6] http://eajc.org/page16/news54394.html

[7] https://www.facebook.com/nazzzalex/posts/10154281907832421

[8] http://eajc.org/page16/news54918.html

[9] http://eajc.org/page16/news55139.html

[10] https://www.facebook.com/nmrmg/posts/689238884576210

[11] https://www.facebook.com/nmrmg/posts/690234114476687

Poltavskaya oblast, the act of vandalism took place between 8AM and 7PM. The unidentified antisemites drew neo-Nazi symbols in black paint: the Celtic cross, the wolfsangel, and 1488.[12] Moreover, plantlets around the monument were also damaged.

Criminal proceedings were instigated according to Article 296 ("hooliganism") of the Ukrainian Criminal Code.[13]

● On **September 25**, unknown vandals once again desecrated the *ohel* of the Hasid tsaddik Rabbi Aryeh-Leib, located in Shpola city. According to our information, this time the act of vandalism was not a solitary one. The woman who reported the previous act of vandalism towards the grave of Aryeh-Leib (July 2016) to the police also found the graves of her family desecrated.[14]

● **On October 6**, at approximately 4:30 PM a group of teenagers tore down an Israeli flag from the front of a building located at 10 Lipskaya street, Kyiv. The building houses the "Jerusalem" restaurant and was decorated with the flag for its opening day, which coincided with the Jewish religious new year. External security cameras caught footage of a teenager who climbed the parapet, tore off the flag of Israel, and ran away with it to a group that was waiting nearby. The restaurant management filed a statement with the police, and the hooligan and his friend (both born in 1999) were soon arrested. They are being charged with Article 186 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code ("Robbery").

One of the teenagers on the video had recognizable elements of skinhead style in his dress: his head was shaved, he was wearing high black military boots, light-colored jeans with cuffs rolled up high, and a light green bomber jacket. Both of the arrestees also have close cropped haircuts.[15]

● On **October 18**, an act of antisemitic vandalism was discovered in Kremenchug (Poltavskaya oblast). The vandals drew a swastika and the numbers 1488 (a cypher for a Nazi slogan) in white paint over a Holocaust memorial stone.

After the investigation group finished its work, the writing was cleaned off by public utility service providers.[16]

● **On November 19**, the front of the Central Synagogue in Chernivtsi (Ukraine), located on Lukyana Kobylitsy street, was defaced with paintings and writing in black paint. Unknown antisemites wrote "Death to kikes" and drew an Orthodox Christian cross.[17]

● In the morning of **November 28**, according to the report on the official page of the military and patriotic organization "Karpatskaya Sich" in Facebook, anonymous local "national revolutionaries" sent in a message about their activities.[18].

The message also includes a photographic report about the act. Unknown persons, whose face is not shown on the photos, attacked a Holocaust victim memorial near the building of the Zakarpattua Regional Philharmonic (former synagogue), poured red paint on it, and left approximately 100 antisemitic flyers. The flyers depict a pile of dead bodies with a a commissar standing over them (the commissar has a cartoonishly "Semitic" face), a Magen David, and the Soviet sickle and hammer. The writing on the flyers reads: "Remember who killed your

[12] https://www.facebook.com/nmrmg/posts/696603937173038

[13] http://eajc.org/page16/news55435.html

[14] https://www.facebook.com/nmrmg/posts/697912423708856

[15] http://eajc.org/page16/news55556.html

[16] http://eajc.org/page16/news55617.html

[17] http://eajc.org/page16/news55865.html

[18] https://www.facebook.com/karpatska.sich/posts/1560589040634785 (the post was later deleted; the monitoring experts have preserved a copy)

people!"[19]

The message sent to the "Karpatskaya Sich" organization says that the vandalism is an "act of vengeance" for the Holodomor, allegedly instigated by the Jews. The fourth Saturday of November (November 26 in 2016) is designated Holodomor Memorial Day. The Holodomor is officially recognized as genocide by the Parliament of Ukraine. The antisemites state that the red pain which was poured over the memorial "symbolizes the blood of millions of white people who suffered from the political games of the Jews, as was the case during the Holodomor."

The administration of the Facebook group "Karpatskaya Sich" also reports that this is not the first message of this kind that they have received over the years of their work. All comments on Facebook condemn the provocative act.

The official message[20] sent out on behalf of the "Karpatskaya Sich" organization, even though it explicitly notes that "this is not our work," also reads: "know that Ukraine has true Ukrainians, who know, remember, respect their history, and will avenge every soul that had been wronged and repressed by the Jewish-*Katsap* [derogatory term for Russians -transl.] NKVD."

Criminal proceedings have been opened with the preliminary qualification "hooliganism."

The Holocaust victim memorial was opened on October 9, 2016.

● **On December 5,** an act of vandalism towards a memorial to Holocaust victims in Mykolaiv came to light. The unknown vandals smeared the memorial stone with black paint [21].

The memorial was erected by the Jewish community in December 2011. In June 2013 it was passed into the city's communal ownership.

The memorial had been subject to many antisemitic attacks before. Acts of vandalism took place in September 2012, March, October and December 2013, in June and (twice) July 2014. None of these crimes has been solved.

● On the night of **December 20**, an aggressive group forced its way into the synagogue near the grave of Rabbi Nachman in Uman' (Cherkasy Oblast). They insulted the congregation and threw around pieces of pork, including a pig head with a swastika cut out on it. The antisemites also poured out two bottles of paint on the premises, which they brought specifically for that purpose, and used pepper spray.[22] Criminal proceedings have been opened, with the case preliminarily qualified according to Article 296, Part 2 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code ("hooliganism")[23].

Other incidents

This section includes cases whose antisemitic motivation is unconfirmed and news reports which turned out to be false after a fact check. These incidents, of course, are not included in the overall statistic of antisemitic hate crimes.

● **On the Friday evening of May 27**, a local resident of Medzhibizh (Khmelnitskyi region) came up to the synagogue after the prayer and requested a meeting with the rabbi. Rabbi Israel Meir Gabai invited the man to his cabinet, where the man asked to be given a job of some sort in the synagogue. The rabbi replied that he cannot discuss such matters during the Shabbat and asked the man to come another day. The visitor became angry, grabbed a pair of scissors and struck the rabbi with them several times, inflicting a few cuts and cutting off a piece of his beard. The rabbi resisted

[19] http://eajc.org/page16/news55942.html

[20] https://www.facebook.com/TarasDeiak28/posts/674810152697500 (the post was later deleted; the monitoring experts have preserved a copy).

[21] http://eajc.org/page16/news56089.html

[22] http://eajc.org/page16/news56153.html

[23] https://ch.npu.gov.ua/uk/publish/article/213668

the attacker and knocked him down. Upon hearing the noise, other people came running, and the aggressive visitor was bound and handed over to the police. The police released the visitor after compiling a protocol.

According to present information, it is hard to state that the attack was antisemitic in character. The rabbi called his attacker "psychologically unstable".[24]

● **Early in the morning of October 7**, a man of "Jewish nationality" (according to the police) was found unconscious near the Zhytomyr train station. The man had been beaten and suffered several knife wounds, cerebro-cranial injury, a broken nose and lost teeth. The police provided first aid, and then the man, whose state was critical was hospitalized. The victim underwent several operations in Zhytomyr and Kyiv, and then was airlifted to Israel, where he underwent another operation. The patient's condition remains critical: he is still in a coma.

No money or documents were found on the victim's body, and the police believe that he was mugged. Criminal proceedings were opened, and preliminary assessment qualified the case according to Article 187, Part 4 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code ("brigandism in respect of gross and especially gross amounts, or committed by an organized group, or accompanied with infliction of grievous bodily injury").

The victim is a well-known Chabad-Lubavitch rabbi, Mordechai Menachem Mendel Deutsch, a citizen of Israel and France, who came to Zhytomyr to resolve family matters.[25]

Head Rabbi of Zhytomyr and Western Ukraine Shlomo Wilhelm made a statement after the incident in which he stressed that currently available information does not support the idea of the attack being antisemitic.[26]

On October 16, the National Police arrested four suspects: two men (aged 21 and 40) and two teenage girls (13 and 16 respectively).[27]

● **On Wednesday, November 16**, the website of the Israeli Seventh news channel (INN) ran a story on an antisemitic incident that had allegedly taken place in the city of Dnipro (Ukraine).[28] According to the story, two young men attacked a Jew in the center of the city, near the "Menorah" community center. First they insulted the victim and then knocked him to the ground to beat him. The beating was stopped by other Jews, who heard the noise from inside the community center and ran out to check. The INN website specifically stresses that criminal proceedings were opened only a week later, even though the victim had filed a statement immediately. The text also confuses the Ukrainian Security Service with the Ukrainian National Police.

Several Russian language news sites, in particular IzRus, also reproduced the story.[29]

As it turns out, the Dnipro Jews had only learned of the "antisemitic incident" from the Israeli news. Oleg Rostovtsev, who is a member of the Managing Board of the Dnipro Jewish community, a councillor to the mayor, and a well-known journalist notes that neither the Security Services, nor the police, nor the Menorah's security guards, nor the Jewish community have heard of the incident. The Head Rabbi of Dnipo and Dnipropetrovsk Oblast Shmuel Kaminetsky, who was mentioned by name in the INN storyline as one of those who helped the victim, also refuted that the incident ever took place.[30] The INN website removed the article that same day, and IzRus issued a retraction.[31]

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[24] http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/322967; http://www.7kanal.co.il/News/News.aspx/185017#.V1AnML6Vvz9

[25] http://eajc.org/page16/news55549.html

[26] http://eajc.org/page16/news55584.html

[27] http://eajc.org/page16/news55608.html

[28] http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/333588

[29] http://izrus.co.il/diasporaIL/article/2016-11-16/33480.html

[30] http://eajc.org/page16/news55549.html

[31] http://izrus.co.il/diasporaIL/article/2016-11-16/33486.html

Public Manifestations of Antisemitism: Hate Speech

● On **February 3**, during a discussion on sales of alcohol at night, Deputy Mayor of the Lutsk City Administration Serhiy Grigorenko (head of the regional "Batkivschina" party branch) stated that the so-called *rozlivaiki* (from the Ukrainian "to pour"; alcohol sales outlet which ignore the established rules) are acting as the "newest kikes," who were tavern owners and thus, according to the deputy mayor, were responsible for turning Ukrainians into drunks.

On the next day, **February 4**, the politician apologized, stating that he had no intent to insult the Jewish people, and admitted that he needs to refrain from such statements in the future.

On **February 8**, the Presidium of the Political Council of the All-Ukrainian Union "Batkivschina" party decided to expel Serhiy Grigorenko from its ranks. The reason for expulsion and, respectively, discharge from office, were his antisemitic statements.

The decision of the Political Council, signed by Yuliya Tymoshenko, reads: "The All-Ukrainian Union 'Batkivschina' party again states that any kind of incitement of interethnic hatred and antisemitism in Ukraine is inadmissible."[32]

● On **February 20**, MP Roman Semenuha announced the exit of the "Samopomich" party from the parliamentary coalition. Semenuha noted in the statement that "the kaganate of oligarchs has taken complete control of Ukraine."[33]

The MP described the decision to move to the opposition as a "cleansing": "...it's one of those cases where you definitely know you've acted according to your conscience. There was no point in continuing to stay, nobody would have understood [had we done so]... It's like washing on Maundy Thursday." [known as "Clean Thursday" in Slavic folk custom -transl.]

Contemporary post-Soviet antisemitic discourse widely harbors a mythology consisting of pseudo-historic interpretations of the Khazar Kaganate as a state ruled by the Jews, whose government had been ruthless, extortionate and directed against the people. Popular chauvinist literature exhibits an entire collection of code words and terms referencing this mythology. In this context, such phrases as "the oligarch kaganate," which needs to be washed off with the rest of the sins on Maundy Thursday, might be an antisemitic statement, though not necessarily a conscious one.

● On **February 20-21**, a number of political groups who protested against current government policy held events on Maidan Nezalezhnosti (central Independence Square of Kyiv). The rally featured antisemitic speeches.

A number of commemorative events took place on February 20 in the center of Kyiv, which were dedicated to the second anniversary of the tragic events of 2014, in particular - to the shooting of the Heavenly Hundred, which took place immediately before the Revolution of Dignity succeeded. During these mass commemorative events, representatives of fringe national-radical groups tried to start a riot, which was accompanied by damage to the offices of two Russian commercial banks. Participants of the riots called themselves fighters from "Kohanivsky's battallion"; however, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, headed by Mykola Kohanivsky, refused to acknowledge the hooligans as their own.

On that same day, a small-scale rally was held on the Maidan, which included antisemitic speeches. In particular, an unknown rhetor read poetry that ended in a triple "Death to kikes!"

On the evening of February 20, representatives of the Coalition of Participants of the Orange Revolution (CUPR) and the Revolutional Right Forces (RPS) put up tents on the Maidan and announced that the "Third Maidan," a continuous protest campaign, had begun. During the night, RPS representatives held a press conference on the premises of the Kozachiy hotel, where they announced their demands, including the end of the Minsk Protocol.

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[32] http://eajc.org/page16/news53772.html

[33] http://lb.ua/news/2016/02/20/328428_nardep_samopomoshchi_vihode.html

On February 21, CUPR and RPS announced they would be holding a "veche" ("people's council", imitating the Maidan. -transl.). This event, whose audience consisted of paid attendees and a scant handful of passersby, also featured antisemitic speeches. For example, one of the speakers said that only gallows could make the Jewish national character right. Another speaker called for electing the government according to "a principle of ethnic proportionality [...], and then we will stop being *goyim*, cattle." Notably, one of the speakers directly said that "an agent of Moscow can be recognized by his 'Down with the kikes!'" However, another speaker refuted him and insisted that he's no agent of Moscow, but nonetheless inists that the main enemy are the "kikes who have taken power." "Who is our main enemy?" he asked of the audience, and then himself replied: "The kike!"[34]

Notably, these same political groups held rally on November 22, 2015, on the first anniversary of the Maidan. Again, they called their rally a "veche", and it also had antisemitic speeches.

CUPR was created in 2005 and became infamous as a group that took on spin work and participated in protests on a paid basis, for example, to slow down the work of Kyiv builders so that they could be blackmailed later. RPS is a new political group, whose creation was only announced in November 2015. It includes a number of small groups that splintered off from the Right Sector, participants of the racist group White Hammer (also known for its criminal , hooligan and sub-legal commercial activity), a number of ultra-right activists, and volunteers with ambiguous reputations.

Most of the commenters and participants of the Revolution of Dignity, including nationalist groups, branded the participants as provocateurs and condemned the antisemitic statements. Among others, the Right Sector also condemned the antisemitic slurs.

● On **March 9**, a rally took place in Kyiv near the "Universitet" metro station. Participants waved nationalistic red and black flags and, according to passersby, shouted antisemitic slogans, such as "Out with the kikes! Get of of Ukraine, kikes!"[35]

● **On June 11**, a group of pilgrim Hasidim attacked the camera crew of the ICTV show "Criminal." The crew had been filming the detainment of one Israeli who had been drunk and shot at passersby with a BB gun from the safety of his balcony. Some of the Hasidim first attempted to impede the police and to block the car with the arrestee, and then attacked the journalists. The camera crew was forced to take shelter behind the metal gates of a nearby private house, and the Hasidim threw stones and empty bottles. The crew's cameraman was hurt in the incident[36].

The ICTV story which came out after the incident contained a number of borderline antisemitic statements, such as "most young Jews [who live in Uman - ed.] lead an amoral lifestyle."[37]

● **On July 3,** the Svyatovlsav March took place in Mariupol. This march was dedicated to a historic date invented wholesale by Russian nationalists: the defeat of Khazaria by Svyatoslav.[38] The Azov regiment, which is attempting to popularize the hero worship of Svyatoslav, was the chief organizer of the March.

Before the March, the antisemitic and neo-Pagan Slav Union placed lightboxes with pictures of Svyatoslav, a prince of ancient Rus, and the text «July 3 is the day on which Svyatoslav

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[34] http://eajc.org/page16/news53862.html

[35] Report of concerned citizens to the contact center "Service 201" ("Urgent help for Jews of Ukraine," a project of the United Jewish community of Ukraine).

[36] https://ch.npu.gov.ua/uk/publish/article/195545

[37] We note than even though the journalists′ resentment towards the Hasidim on Uman after this particular incidents is understandable, the program has also permitted similar statements earlier. For example, some previous storylines were titled "Uman is drowning in trash because of Hasidim" and "The Hasidim may bring dangerous infections."

[38] 3 июля как дату «дня победы Святослава над Хазарией» выдумали около десяти лет назад российские неонацисты в Краснодаре в силу сиюминутных тактических соображений. В последние два года эту абсурдную с исторической точки зрения мифологему подхватили и некоторые украинские ультраправые группировки.

triumphed over the Judaic Khazaria. I remember and I am proud![39]

Notably, the Slav Union had also put up similar billboards earlier, before the beginning of the Russian invasion.

[39] https://www.facebook.com/nmrmg/posts/648178352015597