



2018

Summary of the Report on Anti-Semitism

The Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities (SIG) recorded 42 anti-Semitic incidents (excluding online ones) in 2018. These included 1 assault, 11 incidents of verbal abuse and 5 of graffiti, but none of damage to property. The number of attacks online - i.e. on social media and in newspaper comment columns - recorded is 535. In addition to these, there is an unknown number of attacks that have not been reported.

The nature of these attacks is sub-divided into four categories: general anti-Semitism (148 attacks), Holocaust denial or trivialization (37), Israel-related anti-Semitism (170) and modern-day anti-Semitic conspiracy theories (222). The enormous boom in anti-Semitic conspiracy theories continues to thrive in today's world. The most varied and absurd theories are linked to this, but ultimately they all point to a supposed "Jewish world conspiracy" (cf. Section 2.1).

Over 90 per cent of the recorded online attacks are on the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter. This trend coincides with the general findings on hate speech on social media. There are far fewer anti-Semitic postings in the comment columns on the websites of Swiss newspapers. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that most of these comments are checked before being published (cf. Section 2.2).

So-called "triggers", events or incidents that for a limited period of time result in a massive increase in numbers of anti-Semitic attacks, play a central role in the spread of anti-Semitic attacks. In particular, many of the anti-Semitic attacks on the Internet are triggered by a specific incident or the media's reporting of it. Internationally, these are primarily events in the Middle East. In Switzerland, the media coverage of the trial of the far right extremist Kevin G., an article in 'Blick' newspaper on Muslim anti-Semitism, the attack on a group of Jews by a man armed with a knife, and the debate over Orthodox Jewish holiday-makers were particular catalysts for an above-average number of anti-Semitic comments and posts (cf. Section 2.4).

The most serious incidents in 2018 were (cf. Section 3):

- The assault on a group of Orthodox Jews by a man armed with a knife;
- In May, a man who was clearly identifiable as a Jew and his son were verbally threatened on their way to the Synagogue. The perpetrator ran behind them both, making threats, including: "I'm going to slit your throat";
- In July, two Jewish women with their children were insulted in the middle of the street. There were having a conversation with a charity fund raiser when a woman who was passing by called out: "All Jews are misers!";
- SIG has received various documents containing borderline or explicitly anti-Semitic statements. Jews were insulted in the most sickening manner in one letter, which also demanded the release of two jailed Holocaust deniers, Ursula Haverbeck and Horst Mahler;
- During the demonstration organized by the Swiss Nationalist Party (PNOS) in Basel on November 24, the PNOS member for Basel Tobias Steiger delivered a speech on the Migration Pact. This was riddled with openly anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. Steiger posted a recording of the speech on YouTube and Facebook;
- In July, two swastikas were drawn on a bathroom wall in the Jewish retirement home SIKNA in Zurich;
- A couple from Zurich returned home from vacation in September to find that someone had written "A Jew lives here" on their garage door.

Contact

Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities SIG

Gotthardstrasse 65 | Postfach 2105 | 8027 Zurich
+41(0)43 305 07 77 | info@swissjews.ch
www.swissjews.ch

GRA Foundation Against Racism and Anti-Semitism

Postfach | CH-8027 Zurich | +41(0)58 666 89 66
infogra@gra.ch | www.gra.ch

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