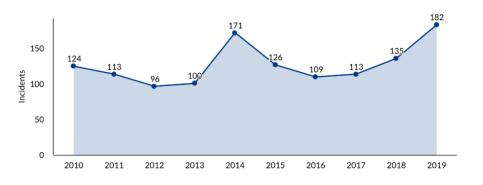# Monitor of Antisemitic Incidents in the Netherlands in 2019
Summary Report

"I will not let them scare me," said the owner of the kosher restaurant HaCarmel in Amsterdam, where a suspicious package was placed at the door in early January. This was not the first incident involving this restaurant, whose windows were previously smashed in an attack in late 2017. The security of Jewish institutions has greatly increased in recent years. This time the threat fortunately turned out to be 'just' a fake bomb.

Should Jews fear for their security in the Netherlands? And in Europe? Should they fear for their safety because they are Jewish? The world saw several violent incidents against Jews in 2019, such as the attack on a synagogue in the German city of Halle during Yom Kippur prayer and the attack during Hanukkah in the American state of New Jersey.

Although the Netherlands was spared such tragedies in 2019, we cannot say that it was a quiet year as far as antisemitism is concerned. CIDI's incident report of 2019 includes **182 antisemitic incidents**, excluding incidents of online hate speech[1]. This is the **highest number of incidents registered by CIDI** since the first report of its kind published in 1982.

This number is a 35% increase since 2018. The previous record number of incidents was registered in 2014, when Israel conducted a large-scale military operation against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, which resulted in a sharp peak in antisemitic abuse in the summer. In 2019, no such action took place, but the frequency of incidents was high and fairly constant regardless.

Total number of antisemitic incidents registered by CIDI, 2010 onwards

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[1] CIDI also receives reports of incidents abroad and reports of incidents that we cannot classify as antisemitic, often due to a lack of evidence. However, research shows that many incidents remain unreported. For this reason, the CIDI Monitor is not an absolute representation of the situation in the Netherlands, but because we have used the same methodology over the years, the Monitor is a reliable metric that accurately reflects fluctuations and trends, and thus highlights problems (and successes).

Antisemitism online

In addition to 182 incidents, CIDI recorded 127 examples of antisemitic hate speech on social media. The dividing line between racism online and 'in real life' is becoming increasingly blurred. In the recent years, CIDI has witnessed a shift in antisemitic activity to the digital sphere. The assumption that this is an improvement is a dangerous one, however.
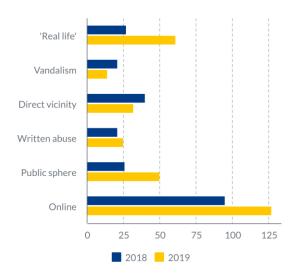
For the past three years, CIDI has been registering online antisemitism in addition to our traditional monitor. Incidents in the online domain are dealt with separately in this monitor, because it is impossible for us to track them systematically, which prevents us from estimating the full extent of the situation[2]. CIDI regularly and increasingly receives reports of antisemitism on social media, but we do not seek out online antisemitism ourselves. We advise the people who report, and take actions such as legal steps, ensuring removal and more. This requires a considerable amount of our daily attention.

What constitutes an incident?

An incident is an occurrence of an antisemitic act, which may be a repeated event. For instance, when the same person verbally abuses a number of people because of their (alleged) Jewish identity in the same way, this is counted as one incident, even when there are multiple victims. This prevents a biased measurement of antisemitic occurrences. However, it also means that large-scale incidents contribute the same to totals as less significant ones.

A Closer Look at the figures

The incidents have been divided into categories. In the category *Real Life* we recorded a doubling in the number of antisemitic incidents. These concern antisemitic interactions in person. We recorded 61 'real life' incidents in 2019, compared to 27 in 2018, an increase of 126 percent. Verbal abuse has never been more frequent than in 2019. It is the highest number of antisemitic verbal abuse ever measured.

Incidents by category, 2018-2019

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[2] CIDI does not record online antisemitic hate speech in a comprehensive manner. The vast number of such expressions simply makes this impossible. In order to grasp the scope of the problem better, CIDI is currently collaborating with international research agency Kantar in a study of antisemitic hate on social media.

The number of antisemitic incidents in the category **Public Sphere** has almost doubled, an increase of 92 percent; 26 in 2018 versus 50 incidents in 2019. In the subcategory 'Sport', incidents have tripled from 5 to 16. Antisemitic chants by soccer fans accounted for the vast majority of the increase. Within the category 'Public Sphere', the subcategory 'Demonstrations' also grew explosively, from 5 to 18 incidents. The BDS demonstrations on Dam Square in Amsterdam turned out to be fertile ground for antisemitic expressions.

> ### What we cannot count
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> Providing evidence remains a major challenge when registering incidents. Two examples for illustration:
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> A family is convinced about the underlying antisemitic motives of a violent incident against them. As CIDI cannot confirm (nor disprove) this, we could not include the incident in the Monitor.
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> Auschwitz images were sold for decoration via the online shop *Bol.com*. A disgusting case, which took considerable effort to have it removed. This incident is not included in the Monitor either.

The number of written antisemitic abuse (letters, e-mail messages) rose to 25 incidents compared to 21 in 2018. Here, too, we observe a medium shift: what was once sent by letter and e-mail is now often expressed via social media.

Numbers alone do not tell the whole story. For instance, reports of **Far-Right** antisemitism have slightly decreased. However, such political antisemitism takes place overwhelmingly on the Internet, on discussion platforms and on social media. Besides, reporters of 'ordinary' incidents often do not know what the perpetrator's political views are.

A promising decline in the number of incidents can be seen in two categories: the number of incidents in the immediate vicinity (with neighbours, at school and at work) fell from 40 in 2018, to 28 in 2019. In the category of vandalism (destruction and graffiti), the number of registered incidents fell from 21 in 2018, to 14 in 2019. This contrasts with developments in other countries, where several desecrations of graves have been reported. Unfortunately, the year 2020 started with a grave desecration in the Dutch town Dordrecht. This might be "copycat" behaviour. Such phenomena of mutual influences are well-known.

Working Definition of Antisemitism and Criticism of Israel

In the past year, the discussion about the [IHRA's working definition of antisemitism](#) has flared up again. The European Parliament and many countries such as Germany and France have adopted this definition. The Dutch Parliament and some city councils (including Amsterdam) have also adopted the definition, as a non-legally binding instrument. In plain language, this means that the definition provides a reference for policymakers to determine whether a statement, behaviour, or situation is antisemitic in nature. Not everyone is happy with the definition, and this is mainly related to where the boundary lies between criticism of Israel and antisemitism, and to comparisons between events now and the Holocaust. CIDI firmly believes that the IHRA Working Definition is a useful instrument for recognizing and consciously dealing with antisemitism.

Recommendations

Antisemitism and racism should always be recognized, named and condemned as soon as they appear. Being alert to this should be everyone's task: in the street, at school, in discussion groups, on social media, in the halls of parliament and elsewhere.

Both repressive and preventive measures are needed for a safe society free of hatred and antisemitism.

- Train police, civil servants, teachers, etc. on awareness and sensitivity to antisemitism.
- Teach about Judaism and the Holocaust. Jews portraying only as victims and not as a vibrant culture is an obstacle to understanding.
- Train teachers and provide them with tools to fight conspiracy theories.
- Recognize and combat antisemitic abuse, regardless if the victim is Jewish.
- Provide insight into data on antisemitic crime; not only the number of incidents should be reported, but also the type of incidents and the perpetrators should be identified.
- Encourage reporting of antisemitic incidents and ensure fast, smooth procedures.
- Push social media companies to keep their platforms "clean".
- Promote digital citizenship and media literacy to curb and reduce online the spread of hatred.
- Track down offenders, even when hiding behind anonymous online accounts.
- Continuously improve the effectiveness of measures taken by social media companies to prevent and combat antisemitism.
- The recent initiative to combat racism in soccer is a welcome step. CIDI encourages implementing credible repressive measures as well as working on a supporter-friendly environment; use supporters' positive energy to promote tolerance and respect for diversity as a culture in the stadiums.