

The Rise of Antisemitism in Europe after October 7, 2023

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Since Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, 2023, there has been an unprecedented upsurge in antisemitism throughout Europe. Organised demonstrations and protests against Israel and Jews appeared in many places on the same day as the attacks and before any Israeli response to the attacks, pointing to an already existing structure of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish organisations active at universities and other places.

This paper aims to consider the underlying reasons for this upsurge and investigate the mechanisms that made it possible, and in such a short time. This research will also advance several proposals on how national and European political actors can combat this wave of racist, antisemitic attacks.

Background

Hamas's attack on October 7, 2023, triggered a tsunami of antisemitic incidents in Europe (and in other places such as in the US, Canada and Australia). These incidents – including physical attacks, harassment and demonstrations outside Jewish schools, synagogues and community centres – have continued after the ceasefire agreement in October 2025.

This rise in antisemitism throughout Europe and elsewhere, and in such a short time, has come in many shapes and forms – online as well as physical – and shows how widespread and ingrained this particular form of racism is.

In December 2024, the University of Uppsala – the oldest in Sweden – decided to change the name of the *Hugo Valentin Centrum at the Faculty of History and Philosophy* to the *Uppsala Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies*. This decision was fiercely criticised¹, but the name nonetheless became official on January 1, 2025.

Hugo Valentin was a well-renowned professor at the University of Uppsala and one of the first to write about the Holocaust. The Centre is the only academic Institution in Sweden named after a Jew. Critics pointed out that the name-change – coming at a time of rising antisemitism – clearly diminished the Jewish connection of the Centre

¹ <https://www.unt.se/debatt/artikel/andringen-underminerar-judiskt-perspektiv-pa-forintelsen/r0qppmkj>; <https://www.dn.se/ledare/nathan-shachar-uppsala-universitet-skammer-ut-sig-vagar-inte-kopplas-till-sveriges-mest-kanda/>; <https://www.barometern.se/ledare/vanhedrande-namnbyte-uppsala-universitet/>

and that it was a cowardly attempt of the University to distance itself from a well-known Jewish academic in the midst of rising antisemitic attacks stemming from within the University. That this happened the same year as Sweden celebrated 250 years of Jewish life made the optics of the whole affair even worse.

As part of the celebration of 250 years of Jewish life in Sweden, a Jewish film-festival in the southern city of Malmö was planned for October 2025, but the organisers were turned away from every movie theatre and public place in the whole of Skåne (the province of which Malmö is the largest city) and had to cancel². The excuses used to turn down the festival ran from security issues to “lack of space”³.

Another feature of the rising antisemitism are the many ways in which the Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions (BDS) movement⁴ has latched onto the war, to pursue its goals of making all things Israeli, including Jews if there is any Israeli connection, toxic. A recent initiative is the ‘AFZ’, which stands for ‘Apartheid Free Zone’. Israel has been singled out as an apartheid state since the Soviet Union started attacking Israel in the wake of the Six-Day War in 1967⁵, and it fits neatly into the kind of antisemitic attacks that the BDS movement use. In Stockholm, the movie theatre ‘Folkets bio’ proudly announced in January 2026 – shortly before Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27 – that it now saw itself as being AFZ, openly arguing for boycotting and sanctioning everything connected to Israel and Jews with a connection to Israel, and being part of a European-wide movement whereby Jews and their possible connections to Israel where to be discriminated against. Thus, some 80 years after the Holocaust, the self-appointed ‘progressives’ in Europe see no problem in using the same tools the Nazis once did.

2025, in the same year Europe celebrated the 80th anniversary of end of WWII, saw a continued and sharp increase in violent antisemitic attacks, it is important to note that this trend began before October 7, 2023. This is shown in for instance the first report from the J7 – Large Communities’ Task Force Against Antisemitism,⁶ a taskforce

² After considerable pressure and criticism from even the Government, a new venue was found to host the festival in April 2026.

³ <https://skanesfolkblad.se/biografer-fornekar-sakerhet-som-skal-till-installd-judisk-filmfestival/>

⁴ BDS is a Palestinian-led global movement launched in 2005, which aims to cap all economic exchanges with Israel.

⁵ Accusing Israel of being an ‘Apartheid’ state is also one of the oldest antisemitic tropes still in use.

⁶ <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/2025-05/j7-annual-report-on-Antisemitism-2025.pdf>

created in 2023 by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) as a reaction to the rise in antisemitic attacks. The taskforce looks at the seven countries with the largest Jewish communities outside Israel of which three are European; France, Germany and the UK. All three have witnessed an increase that rose sharply after October 7, 2023, pointing to a trend that runs through this report and explains much of the rise in antisemitism since then; namely, that these trends were already present in our societies when Hamas attacked.

During the period from October to December 2023, it was reported that incidents with antisemitic motives increased by 500% in the UK, by 400% in Germany, by 813% in the Netherlands and by 430% in the USA⁷. The absolute largest increase came from the political left and from Muslim and Arab sources. Of note is that most of these reported incidents came *after* the Hamas attack. And although the extreme right also saw the attacks as a chance to vent their antisemitism, the overwhelming increase in antisemitic attacks is to be found on the political left⁸.

Of some concern should also be the confluence between left- and right-wing antisemitism in the wake of the Hamas atrocities. A case in point is Italy. Research and polling after the large anti-Israeli demonstrations in September 2025, showed that majority of people agreed with the statement that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza⁹, and another study concluded that fully 15% said it was legitimate to attack Jewish people¹⁰. A major feature of these polls and support for boycotting Israel, attack Jews and condone Hamas violence is that it is spread across the political spectrum, a clear indication of how widespread and normalised antisemitism has become.

On October 8, 2023, the day after the Hamas attack, hundreds of people gathered in Times Square in New York to celebrate Hamas's invasion of Israel. The crowd gathered under the square's giant, illuminated American flag and chanted 'Zionism must go' and jeered Jewish, pro-Israeli counterprotesters.

⁷ <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/far-right-october-7>

⁸ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-global-surge-of-antisemitism-france-stands-out-with-near-quadrupling-of-cases/>

⁹ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/with-gaza-a-rallying-cry-in-italy-a-growing-number-justify-hostility-against-its-jews/>

¹⁰ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/poll-finds-15-of-italians-see-attacks-on-jewish-people-as-justifiable/>

Placards at the demonstration read, for example, 'Zionism is genocide', 'Colonialism is violence' and 'Antizionism ≠ Antisemitism'. Other placards accused Israel of "white supremacy" and apartheid and condemned American funding of Israel. This was in New York in 2023 and has since been common at demonstrations in Europe as well. But the slogans used originated in the Soviet Union and go back to the 1960's, when the Soviets broke with Israel (after supporting the socialist Zionists for a long time when they were seen as an ally against imperialist Britain). It was the Soviets who began accusing Israel of 'fascism' and 'apartheid' and equating the Palestinians with other liberation movements such as the Viet Cong (in Vietnam) and the FLN (in Algeria). Making that analogy made it easier for that part of the Left to support Palestinian movements such as the PFLP and DFLP, for example. Terrorist movements that had 'people', 'front' and 'liberation' in their names, sounded 'politically correct' to these leftist ears.

A report published in January 2026¹¹ shows that 20 Jews were murdered in 2025 in antisemitic attacks. Another 815 severe antisemitic attacks took place, and 4000 anti-Israeli demonstrations took place that often included purely antisemitic slogans, of which 365 were classified as posing severe or extreme risk for Jewish communities. Online, the picture is equally bleak with 124 million antisemitic posts on X. The number of attacks went down compared with 2024, but the number of deaths rose compared with 2024.

The report also highlighted the extreme rise overall in antisemitic attacks since October 7, 2023 and of the 5 countries with the largest number of incidents, two were European, the UK and France.

The data also showed a clear correlation between spikes in violence and incitement and developments in the war between Israel and Hamas.

Separately, a study presented by UNESCO on Holocaust Remembrance Day¹² (January 27, 2026), showed antisemitism present in three quarters of European classrooms with alarmingly high rates of Holocaust denial and physical attacks on Jewish students.

¹¹ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Mx77ldIm7NKAGwZlYEzvXFKfnOtkb1nZ/view?usp=sharing>

¹² <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-survey-finds-antisemitism-present-three-quarters-eu-classrooms>

The picture emerging since October 7, 2023, clearly show two major reasons for this unprecedented rise in antisemitic attacks.

First is the fact that these notions and attitudes were already present (as stated above), and secondly, that the kind of antisemitism dominated today has been normalised to an extent never really seen before in post-Second World War Europe.

Two examples (from the UK and Sweden) of how this has penetrated deep into public institutions suffice.

In November 2025, the West Midland Police banned Israeli fans from a soccer-game between Aston Villa and Maccabi Tel Aviv. The reason given – that there was a severe risk that Maccabi fans would be violent – turned out to be completely false. The ban was based on false intelligence (used to justify the ban) and then the Chief Constable lied about the reasons for the ban¹³. The severe criticism forced the Chief Constable to resign, but the fact remains that a major Police Force in the UK were able to ban Israeli Jews from entering the country based on made-up and false intelligence. The investigation also showed that Muslim activists wanted to arm themselves to hinder a Jewish presence, but the police hid those facts as well.

As in many other countries, pro-Palestinian demonstrations – replete with antisemitism – is a regular occurrence in Sweden. And in the capital Stockholm these demonstrations have disrupted the local bus-traffic. From February 2026, these weekly demonstrations are ending at the Raoul Wallenberg square, named after the famous Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Jews in Hungary at the end of WWII. He was in all likelihood killed by the Soviets after having been imprisoned by Soviet forces when they took Budapest in January 1945.

The square is adjacent to the large Stockholm Synagogue, which have been a key node for Jewish life in the capital since its inauguration in 1870. A decision by the Police in Stockholm at the beginning of February 2026, gave permission for pro-Palestinian demonstrations to occupy the square every Saturday between 3pm and 5pm until May 2, thereby disrupting Jews coming and going to the Synagogue on Shabbat. The decision has been appealed against but the fact that the Police could

¹³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvgn984j9d7o>; <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/crime/article/craig-guildford-retire-rejoin-west-midlands-police-7rbd8mfmk>

agree to such a blatant attempt to make Swedish Jews life *more* difficult and *more* insecure at a time of rising antisemitism, is disturbing.

A Surge of Antisemitism

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”¹⁴

In the aftermath of October 7th, media reporting on the attack and the war that followed very often became an echo of what Hamas wanted to highlight – in many respects an uncritical embrace of Hamas’s narrative. This obviously had consequences for the reporting on the war itself, where basic facts and knowledge of warfare and the laws of war were often completely overshadowed by propaganda.

Another effect of these trends is that antisemitism has become normalised. Expressions and crude slurs have become commonplace at many pro-Palestinian demonstrations across Europe. Several studies, for example in the United Kingdom, show that even institutions such as the NHS (National Health Service) have seen a significant increase in antisemitism among doctors and other hospital staff¹⁵.

Also, the rise of all kinds of antisemitic attacks for the past 2 years does have an echo of Europe in the 1930’s. Therefore, there are reasons to look back at Nazism and Fascism in Europe. The methods used by the demonstrations and protests against Israel and in favour of Hamas (Incidentally, overall, there have been a lot more people demonstrating *for* Hamas than *against* it) can be directly linked to those employed in Europe during the 1920’s and 1930’s. This was particularly obvious at some of our universities, for example: mob rule that disrupts political and academic discussions; threatening and illegal behaviour by demonstrators; vandalism and the destruction of property belonging to researchers deemed to ‘support Israel’; all woven into a web of antisemitism.

These methods have proven effective in many places, including Sweden, where the institutions involved would rather back down than stand up for the fundamental

¹⁴ <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-Antisemitism>

¹⁵ <https://www.thetimes.com/article/7c061f7f-45d0-43ef-a304-ca3e81991569?shareToken=f1ef9cd87a4505d93f5d9cd2bae87d00>

structures that underpin our democracy. This applies above all to free speech, whether it concerns a politician speaking, an academic exchange, or an open discussion. It also naturally applies to how demonstrators are treated.

For the mob that vandalises offices, threatens citizens, and disrupts conversations it does not approve of, power and violence take precedence over the rule of law. What these demonstrators and activists represent is contempt for democracy. This is not about persuasion, but about drowning out opposing voices and intimidating others into submission.

The seriousness of the problem is underscored by the fact that demonstrations are often illegal (i.e., lack permits) and that direct threats—against Jews in particular—are openly expressed, yet tolerated. This tolerance is evident in the fact that demonstrators are sometimes accompanied by police who neither intervene against the demonstrations themselves nor ensure that threats directed at Jews have any legal consequences. In practice, this means that certain groups of citizens do not need to worry about violating the law.

Another reason to recall Nazism and fascism is that Hamas (and other Islamist movements) share the same ambition of exterminating Jews. The openly expressed antisemitism – here clearly distinguished from criticism of Israel or its government – at demonstrations and on social media shows that more than 80 years after WWII, and the betrayal of Europe's Jews by European democracies at Munich 1938, antisemitism remains alive and well in many places.

The parallels with Germany and Austria in the 1920's and 1930's are thus there for everyone to see. At the many demonstrations where speakers are shouted down and meetings and events disrupted by activists, it was easy to see that these methods are by no means new and were successfully employed by nationalist fascist and Nazi students to force Jews out of universities in Vienna, Berlin and elsewhere in Austria and Germany when Nazism took hold¹⁶.

¹⁶ <https://www.fokus.se/opinion/bo-rothstein-vagen-till-pobelvaldet/>; <https://www.fokus.se/kultur/sten-widmalm-demonstranterna-utfardar-fotoforbud-for-andra/>; <https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/sverige/kontoret-vandaliserat-fick-hitler-mustasch/>; <https://www.aliceteodorescu.se/p/radikaliseringen-ett-hot-mot-den>

This constitutes explicitly racist and antisemitic behaviour, in which Jews are attacked and held collectively responsible for Israeli government policy. There is no equivalent phenomenon in other conflicts. For example, there are no violent demonstrations demanding that Russia cease to exist because it invaded Ukraine.

These phenomena can be observed in several parts of Europe. At some European universities, all cooperation with Israeli researchers and academics has been suspended following, in some cases, violent actions by pro-Palestinian activists¹⁷. Israeli universities and academic institutions – as well as individual Israelis – are thus boycotted for actions attributed to the state of Israel.

Also, anti-Semitic attacks increased exponentially after October 7, 2023. In Sweden for example, the number of hate crimes (that were reported; the figure may therefore be higher) increased by 450% in just a couple of months compared to the fall of 2022. As in other countries where similar increases have occurred, what the Swedish Research Institute Segerstedtinstitutet¹⁸ calls an Israelisation of antisemitism has occurred for several years. This means that the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has influenced the expression of antisemitism to a greater extent than before. That is, antisemitism is often dressed up in words such as antizionism.

A further dimension of the rapid and, at times, violent antisemitism witnessed since October 7, 2023 is the influence of so-called 'woke' ideology within Western universities. This ideological framework posits that Western society is permeated by structural racism and rigid hierarchies of power, categorising individuals as oppressors or victims, powerful or powerless, white or non-white. Within this schema, Jews are frequently placed in the category of white, powerful oppressors (a quick trip to Israel to have a look at the Israelis, would suffice to cure this stupidity). As a result, hostility toward Jews—including the justification of violence, rape, and murder, particularly when Jews are associated with Israel—can be framed as morally legitimate.

These ideological constructs have been instilled in multiple cohorts of students at institutions that have embraced this worldview, reinforced by billions of dollars in funding from Middle Eastern states where antisemitism is deeply entrenched (see

¹⁷ <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/2024-05-31/ty-article/belgiums-ghent-university-severs-ties-with-all-israeli-universities/0000018f-ce8b-d117-a7ef-ffffeaa00000>

¹⁸ <https://www.gu.se/en/segerstedt-Institute>

below). Given that this ideological environment legitimises hostility toward those deemed to hold the 'wrong' views or possess the 'wrong' identity, it is perhaps unsurprising that pro-Palestinian demonstrations have been saturated with antisemitic slogans and calls for violence.

There are other explanations for this situation as well, and perhaps a major reason can be found in the way that Europe saw itself in the aftermath of WWII. Since then, it is fair to say that Europe took the prevailing peace since the end of WWII and mistook it for normality.

This period of some 80 years, with prolonged peace, saw Europe go through an unprecedented era of prosperity, economic growth and political integration (resulting in today's EU for instance). And with the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, it seemed like war and armed conflict truly belonged to a by-gone era.

As of today of course, we now know that this was not the case, and with war returning to Europe and the economic situation in several European countries worsening, security has fractured and insecurity returning.

And something parallel, or analogous, has happened to the Jews of Europe. The post-WWII period meant, for the Jews surviving the Holocaust, a slow but steady rebuilding. A rebuilding of structures, integration (both cultural and otherwise) and the absence of systematic persecution. Add more full-blown religious, social and cultural freedom and it is perhaps no wonder that this period seemed long enough to suggest that antisemitism was finally gone and that the experience of the Holocaust would have shaken Europe enough to make sure that it would not return.

But here as well, the mistake was to confuse a temporary condition for permanent normality.

After October 7, 2023, it has been shown that the antisemitism we thought was gone, merely took a pause. It is not a complete reversal of course, but the onslaught of antisemitism -often dressed up as antizionism – has made European Jewry more resembling a tolerated, conditioned minority and not the completely integrated minority we thought we had. Thus, antisemitism has not 'returned'. It has merely adapted (as it always has in European history) and found new language.

Thus, it is no coincidence that the steep rise in hostility toward Jews happens at the same time as Europe experiences a fracturing of stability. So, when that equilibrium fractures, what had been temporarily contained (antisemitism) resurfaces.

It is therefore not surprising, perhaps, that the rise in hostility toward Jews occurs precisely as Europe experiences the fragility of its order. Minorities become, as always, the surface onto which broader fears are projected: loss of control, decline, the end of certainties. History teaches that for antisemitism to surface back, it does not necessarily require great moral crises, it is enough that stability taken for granted comes to an end.

At this junction it is important again to remind us that the kind of antisemitism dressed up as antizionism is not new. Various, mainly left-wing parties and activists, have for decades thrown the accusation against Israel, and the Jews supportive of Israel, as being guilty of 'genocide', 'apartheid' and Israel to be deserved to be dismantled, i.e., another Holocaust.

And here with the term antizionism, lies one of the most powerful and effective ways in which to rally the political left and turn it against Israel and Jews. It has become a way to stand against 'the West', from racism over colonialism to genocide. To oppose Israel – and the Jews who back her – have, since the October 7 massacres become a way to express moral purity. It's a situation where facts are not deemed important when measured against the moral righteousness of the issue. Genocide and apartheid have precise definitions in international law for example, but in today's highly charged political atmosphere where emotions take centre-stage, these terms function less as judicial analytical terms, and more as moral verdicts. In the case of Israel and antisemitism, these terms are used to replace analysis with moral and ideological certainty.

Antizionism today has become a catchword for this moral rectitude and has built a conceptual framework rooted in often classical antisemitic patterns, whereby Jews are no longer seen as a minority but as part of ruling elite – powerful and privileged and thus complicit in oppression. This shift relies on a language heavily influenced by the aforementioned 'woke' ideology whereby Jews in western European society are reimagined as the opposite of what they were historically, an oppressed minority, to be viewed as a symbol of power and privilege. On the political left – and carried over from

the Soviet Union as showed above – that has meant that Israel – and extending to Jews more generally – is a ‘colonial’ country where ‘apartheid’ rule.

In this (‘progressive’) discourse, Jews are labelled ‘colonialists’ and – of course! – ‘white’. Today, that term is not only a marker of race, but functions also as a marker of class, power and privilege.

When labelled ‘white’, Jews are no longer a minority and antisemitism is no longer seen as a threat and is often dismissed outright as a false accusation meant to shield Jews from criticism. This also make it easy to dismiss Holocaust memory and deny the importance of it, both for Jews and for Europe as a whole.

Jewish progress and success in societies are reinterpreted as stemming from ‘white privilege’ and not because of individual achievement. Jews, in the eyes of these progressives thus become identified with white, racist and capitalist society, associated with Islamophobia. Muslims in this discourse are demoted to a discriminated underclass of people deserving to ‘hit back’ at their Jewish oppressors. This can explain the complete lack of sympathy for the victims of Hamas attack and the gruesome violence perpetrated against them on October 7. Read as ‘resistance’ everything became ‘just’ and legitimate.

This conceptual move of making Jews ‘white’ is easily extended to Zionism. And if Jews really are ‘white’, follow that Israel really becomes an extension of ‘Western colonialism’. And once Israel is framed as a colonial project, its very legitimacy can be questioned.

And this inversion of facts goes even deeper. If Jews are Zionists and portrayed as European ‘settlers’ in the Middle East – regardless of factual history, real identities or origins – follows that Israel can be viewed as a ‘colonialist enterprise’ and therefore seen as illegitimate. The fact that many Israelis trace their origin to the Middle East becomes irrelevant.

This feature, with Jews as ‘white European colonialists’ make Israel into a racist project to be dismantled. Violence against Israel and Jews becomes ‘just’, seen as ‘resistance’ and therefore legitimate.

This way of looking at Israel, Jews and, by extension, antisemitism, mean that Jews everywhere can be viewed not as minority but as representatives of western

oppressors with a lot of (illegitimate) power. From this follows that any references to the Holocaust are dismissed as a way to evade responsibility for present oppression against Palestinians.

Since October 7, 2023, and Hamas massacres, Israelis and Jews everywhere, have been cast as collectively guilty of “oppression” and “genocide”. Jews outside of Israel are deemed guilty and responsible for acts by the Israeli Government. This worldview is perhaps most visible in the relativisation of the atrocities of October 7, 2023, and the acceptance, even celebration, of violence against Jews in general.

Pushing back against this revisionist and antisemitic trend should therefore be high on the agenda of European institutions and agencies. Not only by those who are tasked with combatting racism and antisemitism in general, but everybody with a stake in the kind of Europe we want to live in.

A Middle East Connection

There are two main ways in which the Middle East has influenced the rise of antisemitism in Europe since October 7, 2023.

One is the increase in immigration from the MENA region into Europe, which meant that some people came with existing perspectives on Israel and its population. It is important to note that this immigration does not in and of itself mean that everybody with a MENA background is antisemitic of course. But it does mean that the lack of pushback from European countries when these notions and ideas are aired, added to the ‘normalisation’ of antisemitic ideas.

It was an antisemitism fundamentally part of what individuals were exposed to from an early age. This ‘everyday’ antisemitism ranges from demonstrations and violence against passersby, to attacks on individual researchers, to threatening emails directed at institutions that have cooperation with Israelis. One of the more grotesque examples of this everyday antisemitism was the tearing down of posters put up to draw attention to the hostages that Hamas brought to Gaza after the attack on October 7, 2023.

The fact that it is precisely from the MENA area, where Islam dominates, that antisemitic attacks (both physical and verbal) are so markedly evident is also not a new phenomenon. Several European studies show that this has been the case for

several years and it coincides with the large immigration to Europe from MENA countries. What these studies also show is that there has been a shift in antisemitic attacks from right-wing extremism to a situation where most of the perpetrators are left-wing extremists and Muslims¹⁹. And in Sweden and Germany it has been shown that when it comes to the most serious form of antisemitism, namely threats and violence, perpetrators with a Muslim background dominate²⁰.

Another way influences from the Middle East are affecting Europe are activities from proscribed organisations – like Hamas and Hezbollah – in Europe. This is by no means a new phenomenon either, and the EU does not have a common policy towards all these movements and organisations, shown for example in the case of Hezbollah, which is still able to organise and work in EU-countries despite being proscribed by the US and some European countries. This lack of a common, more robust policy towards these organisations is a clear impediment in combating, not only antisemitism, but also other activities geared towards raising money and recruiting people. European security agencies have for several years repeatedly warned that Hamas – even though proscribed – still maintain logistical, recruitment and fundraising structures inside Europe. An example came in late January 2026 when the German Police arrested a Lebanese National on suspicion of being a Hamas member and planning attacks in Europe²¹.

The other major connection to the Middle East is the sometimes substantial economic donations from countries in the Middle East, to universities in Europe (and the US). Major donors are Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia²². The money from these sources is mainly to establish Middle East study centres and, naturally enough, this money comes with conditions on whom to hire and what kind of curricula to be used. This phenomenon might be more overt in the US, where more universities have received large grants from the countries in the Middle East, but it has had an effect in Europe too. Mainly this is since over the years, a rising number of students have been on the receiving end of getting a very anti-Israeli and prejudiced picture of Israel, Jews and the conflicts in the Middle East. Presumably this can, at least partly explain why our

¹⁹ Ruud Koopmans, Halvmånens Fall, Fri Tanke förlag 2025, p.238-243.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ https://x.com/dahrinoor2/status/2016391896684179765?s=48&t=C4ZZX3eAXBBaCywDi_WI1A

²² <https://themedialine.org/headlines/us-dept-of-education-reveals-universities-received-1-1-billion-from-qatar-harvard-tops-list-of-funding-from-countries-of-concern/>

universities – the beacons of reason, civilised debate and a pursuit of facts and not fiction – so swiftly became hotbeds of some of the worst forms of antisemitic attacks.

The speed and apparent coordination of these developments at American and European universities prompted questions about their origins. Most students did not participate in the protests, despite media portrayals suggesting otherwise, and reports emerged indicating the involvement of non-students. One consequence was that the U.S. Congress's education committee initiated an investigation into foreign funding of universities. Already in 2022, Qatar had been identified as the largest foreign donor to U.S. universities, followed by China, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia. The sums involved are substantial. Cornell University alone—the largest recipient of Middle Eastern funding—has received approximately USD 2 billion from Qatar over the past two decades. Between 2014 and 2019, U.S. universities received an estimated USD 5 billion from Middle Eastern sources.

Given that these funds originate largely from authoritarian theocracies, their impact cannot be ignored—particularly since much of the funding has been directed toward Middle Eastern studies. The antisemitism and anti-Israel rhetoric observed during campus demonstrations, including demands to sever all academic ties with Israel, are increasingly linked to the long-term influence exerted through this financial engagement.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

As this paper has shown, the sharp rise in antisemitic attacks since October 7, 2023, was the result of trends and prejudices already largely present in European societies at the time of the atrocities unleashed by Hamas.

The reasons for this are several; firstly, underlying antisemitic hatred never went away completely after the Second World War, even though it became '*mauvais ton*' to state it openly (except in certain hardcore right-wing company). But secondly, and more insidiously, from the late 1960's and early 1970's, communist and left-wing antizionism and harsh critiques of Israel emanating from the Soviet Union became common, and there was a fusion whereby antisemitism was renamed antizionism, making it both more common and politically digestible for larger categories of people, mainly on the left.

At the same time, several Palestinian movements and groups labelled themselves with catchwords like 'front', 'people' and 'liberation', ticking the boxes for what was politically *in vogue* during the last decades of the 20th Century.

On another level, the large grants bestowed on European (and American) universities from Arab countries such as Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia, mainly to establish Middle Eastern study centres, paved the way for severely tilted research that often crossed the line over to antisemitism, but calling it antizionism instead.

At this point it is important to stress the fact that antizionism is another name for antisemitism in its most basic notion, namely that it is a negation of the Jewish people to have a homeland²³. In the words of former French Premier Manuel Valls "*Antizionism is profoundly linked to Jew hatred*"²⁴, something also borne out by extensive research on antisemitism in Europe²⁵. The fact that so much of the antisemitic vitriol sprouted since October 7, 2023, have its base way back in European history makes for a sad conclusion of the situation at present. The research by, for instance Professor Monika Schwarz-Friesel (at the Technical University in Berlin) bears this out and she sums it up herself in the statement; *Humanity has learned nothing after Auschwitz*²⁶. She also, sadly, reached the conclusion that more education and information are not enough to turn this situation around. We've been doing this in Europe for many decades, but even so, the situation for our Jewish citizens is worse today than before Hamas attacks on October 7, 2023.

It also bears mentioning the antisemitic and anti-Israeli slogans and tropes, as mentioned above, and heard since already the afternoon of October 7, 2023, include – to a large extent – classic antisemitic accusations towards Jews during the centuries, whereby, for example, Jews and Israelis are blamed for the attacks on themselves, and that Jews in Europe (and the US) are blamed for what happens in the Middle East and for actions by the Israeli Government. The ease with which these age-old accusations against Jews are picked up by today's demonstrator's (and particularly

²³ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/anti-zionism-profoundly-linked-to-hatred-of-jews-former-french-pm-says-in-jerusalem/>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwI-X7mbWeA>

²⁴ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/anti-zionism-profoundly-linked-to-hatred-of-jews-former-french-pm-says-in-jerusalem/>

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwI-X7mbWeA>;
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13537121.2024.2394294?src=>;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIWL7pWuEHA>

²⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIWL7pWuEHA>

the self-proclaimed progressives) is a clear indication of how deep this has penetrated our societies and how vulnerable we are to an antisemitism many in Europe thought was gone. This is especially odious since today in 2026, there are fewer Jews in Europe than before WWII and the Holocaust.

Thus, to combat all these trends and the long-term damage it is doing (and has done already) several options are recommended. This cannot be a complete list however, and I hope that this study might be the beginning of a larger movement whereby the menace of antisemitism is met robustly and fiercely by our Union.

- A far more official and robust pushback against antisemitic attacks and discrimination against Jews, stretching from educational organisations, over local municipalities to the police and media outlets (as shown above in the report), must be present.
- Inclusion and adaptation of a common definition of antisemitism that clearly states that antizionism equals antisemitism.
- If the various hate-laws in EU-countries are to mean anything, they must be applied equally across the board. As shown above, in Sweden for example, no one has been charged with existing hate-crime laws even though on numerous occasions, people in pro-Hamas demonstrations have voiced slogans (verbally and on signs) that clearly cross the line into hate-crime territory.
- An overview of existing laws and regulations concerning public money to organisations and movements who are condoning and disseminating antisemitic propaganda and voicing support – verbally and financially – for terrorist groups like Hamas.
- A much better and more nuanced curriculum concerning antisemitism and conveying an understanding that this, today, mainly comes from the political left and various Islamic organisations.
- A more robust protection for Jewish institutions (like schools, synagogues, etc.) and a far better and tougher response towards people who harass, threaten and intimidate Jews or just people who are deemed pro-Jewish or pro-Israeli. No other minority in Europe faces the same threat-level as Jews do. To turn that around, boosting protection will not suffice, it must be seen as completely beyond the pale to harass and intimidate Jews, whatever the reason.

- The EU has some good and clear laws and regulations to combat antisemitism and all kinds of racism, but if those are not to be completely toothless, they must be enforced.
- Develop and include a common policy towards all the organisations and movements active in promoting antisemitism and engaging in physical antisemitic acts.

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