



# GUIDELINES FOR IDENTIFYING & MONITORING ANTISEMITISM ONLINE & OFFLINE

*(SHORT VERSION)\**



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## I. ROOTS OF THE WORD ANTISEMITISM

The term antisemitism was coined in the 1870s by Wilhelm Marr, a German political agitator and journalist during the time when new pseudo-scientific theories of racial superiority and inferiority emerged. The term was created specifically to define the hatred of Jews as a “race”, as opposed to a religion (as it used to be with anti-Judaism). However, the term “antisemitism” has never been used to refer to a related people (Arabs) or languages (Semitic). Arguments that include non-Jews in the term “antisemitic” are irrelevant because a “Semitic race” never existed except in the imagination of racists.

The term “semitic” literally refers to a group of languages that largely originated in the area known today as the Middle East and includes Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic and the languages of Ethiopia and Eritrea, among others. The phenomenon of ‘semitism’, in itself, does not exist. Antisemitism is therefore not directed, as the word might suggest, against “Semitism.” The term was conceived to describe an anti-Jewish movement and anti-Jewish ideas. The word “antisemitism” usually appears in American publications spelled with a hyphen and a capital letter ‘S’ : « anti-Semitism », whereas in British English, it is spelled as one word with a lowercase ‘s’ : « antisemitism ». The question of a hyphen is important because its use implies that the words semitism or semite are actually meaningful, when in fact they do not exist.

What distinguishes the hostility against Jews as opposed to all other forms of intolerance is its duration, intensity, persistence and elasticity. Antisemitism is in fact a social polymorph that is not minimized by its continuous re-invention in hatred.<sup>1</sup>

## II. WORKING DEFINITIONS / TERMINOLOGY

### JUDAISM

Known as the first monotheistic religion, Judaism finds its laws and principles in the Tanach: the three part religious book comprised of the Torah (i.e. the Five Books of Moses), Nevi'im (the Books of the Prophets), and Ketuvim (the Writings). According to the Jewish tradition, Judaism began with the covenant made between God and Abraham, the first Jew, around 2000 BCE – making it one of the world's oldest continually practiced religions. As a result it has influenced other newer monotheistic religions such as Christianity, Islam, and the Baha'i Faith. Jewish religious practice has

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1 Source: 50 Questions on Antisemitism published by the Anne Frank House (ed.), 2005, p. 49.

evolved over centuries to reflect life lived in a diaspora but the core belief in one God and the religious injunction to do good remains unchanged.

### ZIONISM

Zion is the biblical name for Jerusalem and the Land of Israel. More specifically, Zion is the hill upon which the Temple of Jerusalem was built. Zionism is a Jewish national-political movement founded in 1896 by Austrian Journalist Theodor Herzl aiming to re-establish a Jewish homeland in the Holy Land. Jewish immigration from Europe had been increasing steadily in the early 20th century, particularly after the support expressed by the British government in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 for the establishment of a “national home” for the Jewish people. After the genocide of 6 million European Jews in the Shoah, the British Mandate of Palestine was divided into two parts, one of which became the independent state of Israel in 1948.

### ANTISEMITISM

A widely accepted working definition has been defined by the European Union Monitoring Centre (EUMC): “Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and / or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities”. In addition, such manifestations could also target the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity.<sup>2</sup>

### ANTI-ZIONISM

The origin of the word comes from the refusal, in principle, to accept the existence of a Jewish State, independent of the Palestinian question. It included amongst its supporters, before the founding of Israel, many Jews, although this changed after the Shoah when the need for a safe haven for Jews was made clearly apparent.

Anti-Zionism refers to criticism of Israel that questions Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state. This form of antisemitism has been fed from the extreme right and the extreme left. In recent times, therefore, it has come to exist as an uncensored, almost “politically correct” form of antisemitism.

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2 Source: the coordination forum for countering anti-Semitism website, accessed on July 10, 2015 <http://www.antisemitism.org.il/eng/Working%20Definition%20of%20Antisemitism>

### III. EXAMPLES OF ANTISEMITISM

Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for “why things go wrong”. It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.

**Contemporary examples in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, include, but are not limited to:**

- Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
- Making false, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews or the power of Jews as a collective
- Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jews during World War II (the Shoah).
- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.

NB: Criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic (e.g. criticism regarding the settlement policies, the Wall, rights of minorities within Israel, speeches of its representatives, etc.).

**Antisemitic acts are criminal** when they are so defined by law (for example, denial of the Shoah or distribution of antisemitic materials in some countries).

**Criminal acts are antisemitic** when the targets of attacks, whether they are people or property – such as buildings, schools, places of worship and cemeteries – are selected because they are, or are perceived to be, Jewish or linked to Jews.

**Antisemitic discrimination** is the denial to Jews of opportunities or services available to others and is illegal in many countries.

### IV. DRAWING THE LINE

In today’s world many antisemitic incidents occur in reaction to events in the Middle East, and there has been a notable rise in antisemitic incidents at times when conflict with Israel escalates – for example during the 2014 war against Hamas in Gaza. When Jewish people are attacked on the street in reaction to this type of event, this is a clear example of antisemitism. But some of the actions of the Israeli

government are worthy of criticism (as are actions of all governments at certain times) and the distinction between legitimate criticism and when criticism of Israel becomes a veil for antisemitism is not always clear. Understanding terminology and the origins of common stereotypes about Jews is helpful for discerning the difference..

**Checklist of factors that tend to indicate legitimate criticism of Israel:**

- ✓ The criticism is directed at specific policies of Israel, rather than at the very legitimacy of the state.
- ✓ The degree and level of criticism vary with changes in Israel policies.
- ✓ The criticism is comparative and contextual.
- ✓ The criticism is political, military, economic, and so forth, rather than ethnic or religious.
- ✓ The criticism is similar to criticism being raised by mainstream Israeli dissidents.
- ✓ The criticism is levelled by people who have a history of levelling comparable criticisms at other nations with comparable or worse records.
- ✓ The criticism is designed to bring about positive changes in Israeli policies.
- ✓ The criticism is part of a more general and comparative criticism of all other nations.
- ✓ The criticism is based on objective facts rather than name calling or polemics.
- ✓ The critic subjects his or her favourite nation to comparable criticism for comparable faults.

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