



Antisemitism 101

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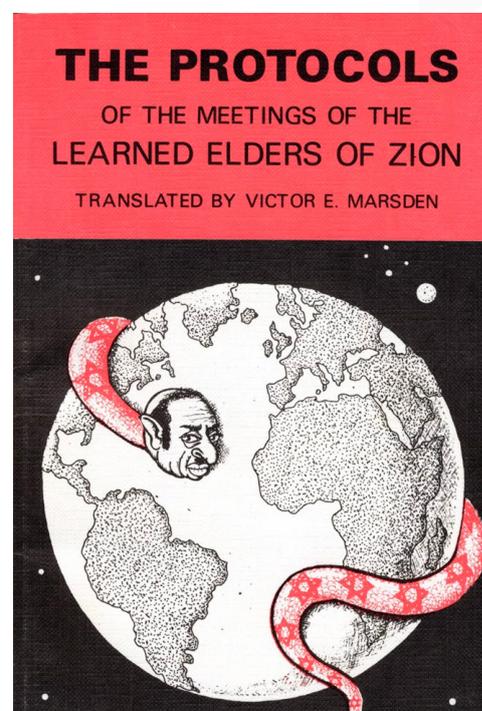
Antisemitism 101

What is antisemitism?

Simply put, antisemitism is hatred, discrimination and prejudice towards and against Jews, in other words anti-Jewish racism.¹ In 2016, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) adopted a Working Definition of antisemitism, which has also been formally adopted by the Government and all other major political parties in the United Kingdom. It states that:

'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.'²

Antisemitism works in a slightly unusual way, in that it both 'punches up' as well as 'punching down'. Racism tends to treat its targets as primitive, animalistic, lowly, inhumane and worthless - and this is certainly true of antisemitism, which often presents Jews as degenerate and genetically defective. That's the punching down. However, antisemitism also tends to also portray Jews as cunning, all-powerful liars and manipulators who control world politics, the banks, and global media - therefore also 'punching up'. In this racist world view, every individual Jew is falsely viewed as working as part of a global plot, a collective, and cannot be trusted.



1. <https://www.cst.org.uk/antisemitism/definitions>

2. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/uk-governments-adoption-of-the-ihra-definition-of-antisemitism/>

When did **antisemitism start**? Did it start with the Holocaust?

No, antisemitism did not begin with the Nazis and did not end in 1945, even though people sometimes assume this to be the case. Antisemitism has widely been described as 'The Longest Hatred', with roots in the Roman era and the antisemitic allegation that the Jewish people were collectively responsible for the death of Jesus Christ.³ Over millennia, anti-Jewish ideas and hostilities have taken many forms, each reflecting key aspects of society throughout history. Jews have been blamed for many world and social ills, including the Black Death, capitalism, communism, inciting revolution and wars. History shows that increases in antisemitism often warn of growing extremism or division within society as a whole. Because of this, antisemitism has often been referred to as 'the canary in the coalmine'.



How bad is **antisemitism today in the UK**?

Racist attacks and incidents against Jews are sadly a regular occurrence, with verbal abuse against Jewish people in public places being the single largest category of such antisemitism. As an extension of 'public places', social media platforms are increasingly growing arenas for the spread of antisemitism and antisemitic conspiracy theories, such as the notion that Jews are responsible for Covid-19.

According to data collated by the police and the Community Security Trust (CST), a Jewish security organisation, antisemitic hate crimes and incident levels show unprecedented highs in successive years between 2016 to 2019. In 2019, there were 1,433 recorded antisemitic incidents

3. <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Web-2020-What-is-Antisemitism.pdf>

of abusive behaviour, and 157 recorded cases of physical assault - the highest ever recorded.⁴

Generally speaking, opinion polling about Jews, including the most detailed ever such study conducted by the CST and the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, suggests that less than 10% of the British public could reasonably be called antisemitic. Nevertheless, the research showed that antisemitic attitudes were found in some 30% of the British public, meaning that, in general, Jewish people have a one in three chance of encountering antisemitic sentiments.⁵

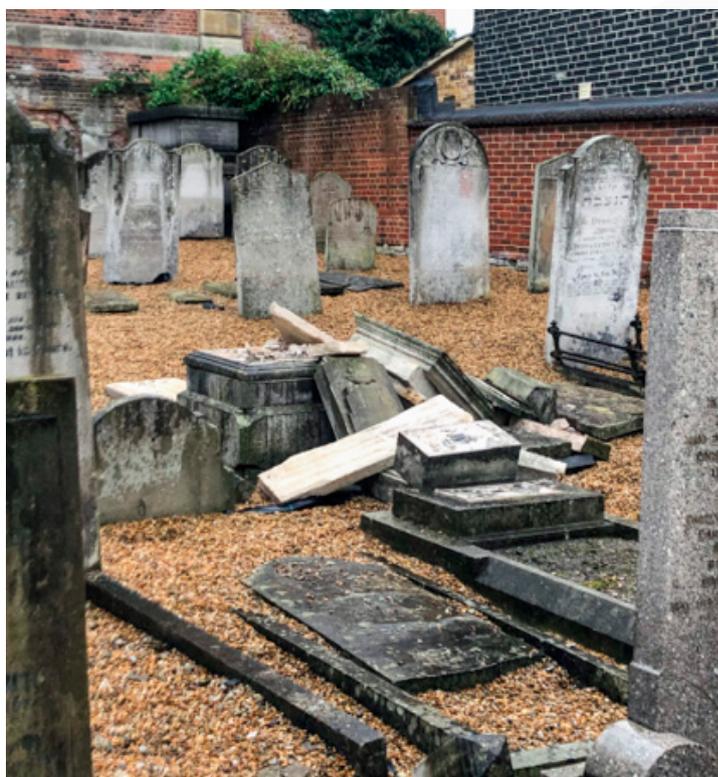
What about **Israel and Zionism?**

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Historically, antisemitism has persistently included allegations of Jewish conspiracy, immorality, wealth, power and hostility to all others.

Today, these themes are far too often found within discourse about 'Zionists' or the 'Jewish lobby', with British Jews labelled as being foreign agents for Israel. Many of the antisemitic charges previously made against Jews are now repackaged and levelled against Zionists.⁶

4. <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/9/0/IncidentsReport2019.1580815723.pdf>

5. <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/a/c/Annual%20Review%202019-web.1583750042.pdf>

6. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/uk-governments-adoption-of-the-ihra-definition-of-antisemitism/>

Hold on ... why is it written as 'antisemitism' rather than 'anti-Semitism'?

Well, there is no such thing as 'semitism' to which you can be 'anti'. The word 'semitic' may refer to languages from the region of the Middle East, but not to an ideology or a viewpoint with which someone else may disagree. You can be anti-racist, anti-capitalist or anti-communist because you could be racist, capitalist or community - the same cannot be said for being 'Semitic'. Using the spelling 'anti-Semitism' lends this form of racism the air of being a legitimate position, and so for this reason, we recommending spelling it as 'antisemitism'.

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