# Social Media and the Jewish People

Can Social Media Platforms Restrain the Spread of Hate?

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Antisemitism has been on the rise in most countries around the world in recent decades, aided by the onset of social media platforms, which have become a haven for expressing virtual anti-Jewish hate and a means to instigate or display real-world harm against Jewish people. The major mainstream social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok have made attempts to restrain antisemitism on their platforms through content moderation (monitoring and removing posts) and transparency reports yet have been inconsistent or only partially successful due to the amount of online posting and platform algorithms that perpetuate hateful posts. Conflicts between Israel and the Palestinians have exacerbated already hateful content on social media. As mainstream social media companies try to reign in antisemitic posts, some extremists with antisemitic views have turned to alternative platforms with fewer restrictions and policies. Since social media companies have been slow to act against hate on their platforms, governments, civil organizations, and watchdog technology companies are trying to keep them accountable.

- One in four people worldwide, or 1.09 billion people, have antisemitic views.
- In January 2024, there were more than 5 billion active social media users worldwide (62.3 percent of the world population).
- Sixty-two percent of American Jews reported seeing or hearing antisemitism online or on social media in the past year.
- Younger U.S. adults (83 percent of those under age 30) are more likely than older adults (65 percent) to say they saw or heard antisemitism online or on social media.

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### Antisemitic Incidents

In 2018, a man with four guns stormed his way into the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, shooting eleven Jewish worshippers and injuring six. In 2022, another gunman entered Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas, taking four people hostage. Between December 1 and December 12, 2022 alone, there were 22 antisemitic incidents in the United States, including a swastika graffitied in the bathroom of a middle school in Chicago, Illinois; a father and son wearing kippot (Jewish head coverings) shot at with a BB gun in Staten Island, New York; and a group of boys chased by someone with a taser gun, yelling "Run, Jews! Get out of here!"[1] These are a minute sample of real-world antisemitic incidents just in the United States in the past five years.

[1] Maayan Jaffe-Hoffman, "Kanye West, Social Media, Extremism: The Rise of Antisemitism in the US," *Jerusalem Post*, December 30, 2022, https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-726089.

The rest of the world isn't faring much better. In 2020 in Brazil, men attacked a Jewish man, broke his teeth and tore his kippah while yelling, "Hitler should have killed more Jews;" in Austria a Jewish teen wearing a star of David was attacked; and gravestones were vandalized in Hungary and other European countries.[2] After the brutal Hamas attacks on Israelis on October 7, antisemitic incidents have surged even more globally.

Antisemitism, called the oldest hatred, has existed for thousands of years. Jewish people, expelled numerous times from their homeland in the Middle East, have been subjected to discrimination, violent treatment, and annihilation wherever they have lived. These threats can arise from both ends of the political spectrum, from those who hold far-right ideologies, which view Jewish people as global manipulators to those on the far-left who target Jewish people worldwide as part of their critique of the State of Israel.

Most Jewish organizations tracking antisemitic incidents globally are reporting an increase of in-person and online acts, especially since the start of the Israel-Hamas war. In the United States, there were 2,031 antisemitic incidents between October 7 and December 7, 2023, which is an increase from 465 incidents during the same two-month period in 2022.[3] These incidents include physical assault, vandalism, verbal or written harassment, and rallies with hate rhetoric and support for terrorism against the State of Israel. On college campuses during this time period, there were 400 antisemitic incidents, compared to 33 incidents during that same period in 2022. More than half of the total incidents were related to the Israel-Hamas war.[4] These campus numbers more than doubled by February 2024, according to Hillel International, the largest Jewish college campus organization.[5]

Outside of the United States, Canada noticed a slight decrease (1.1 percent) in antisemitic incidents (2,769) in 2022 from the prior year, when it had 2,799. Still, 2022 saw the second highest total incident rate since B'nai Brith Canada, a Canadian advocacy group, started tracking forty-one years ago, as well as a doubling of incidents in the past five years, according to its 2022 annual audit of antisemitic incidents.[6] Australia has seen a 3.5 percent increase of incidents in 2023 from 478 in 2022 to 495 in 2023[7]; France has seen antisemitic acts quadruple from 436 incidents to 1,676, the worst on record since 2012, and intensifying following Hamas' October 7 attacks.[8]

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[2] Jeff Diamant, "Anti-Jewish Harassment occurred in 94 Countries in 2020, Up from Earlier Years," *Pew Research Annual Study*, March 17, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/03/17/anti-jewish-harassment-occurred-in-94-countries-in-2020-up-from-earlier-years/.
[3] Anti-Defamation League, "Press Release: ADL Reports Unprecedented Rise in Antisemitic Incidents Post-Oct 7," December 11, 2023, https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/adl-reports-unprecedented-rise-antisemitic-incidents-post-oct-7.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Eliav Breuer, "College Campuses See Disturbing Rise of Antisemitism since October 7," *Jerusalem Post*, February 20, 2024, https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-787895.
[6] B'nai Brith Canada, "Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2022" (League for Human Rights, 2023): 4.
[7] Executive Council of Australian Jewry, "Report on Antisemitism in Australia 2023" (December 31, 2023): 6.
[8] France 24 Newswires "Anti-Semitic Acts Nearly Quadrupled Last Year in France, says Jewish Organisation," *France 24*, January 1, 2024, https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20240125-anti-semitic-acts-nearly-quadrupled-last-year-in-france-says-jewish-organisation.

The United Kingdom's Community Security Trust recorded a record high of 4,103 antisemitic incidents, a 66 percent increase post October 7, accentuating how the Hamas attacks contributed to this rise.[9] Thus, most countries keeping record have seen a rise in antisemitic incidents, with surges in number after the Hamas massacre on Israelis on October 7, 2023.

In 2016, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), an intergovernmental organization that addresses issues related to the Holocaust, adopted a working definition of antisemitism to serve as a common tool to combat in-person and online antisemitic hate and actions: "Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Historical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."[10] To date, forty-three countries have adopted this definition, which has helped bring attention to, educate, and track antisemitism.[11] Civil organizations and researchers use this definition as part of their process to track real-world and online antisemitic incidents.

With the creation of the modern State of Israel, there's been a shift from "traditional" antisemitism, which prevents Jewish people equal status in society, to "modern" antisemitism, which ostracizes Israel from an equal place among the nations of the world.[12] Strife between Israel and its neighbors, whether it be Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, or surrounding Arab countries cause and exacerbate the modern form of antisemitism. The IHRA definition helps follow this shift from traditional to modern antisemitism, according to Irwin Cotler, Canada's former justice minister and current antisemitism envoy.[13]

**Online Hate**

Antisemitism, Holocaust denial, and anti-Israel sentiment has become mainstream with the onset of communication through social media in the 1990s and its global reach in the mid-2000s. Social media platforms reach billions of people worldwide. In January 2024, there were more than 5 billion active social media users worldwide (62.3 percent of the world population).[14] The tech company Meta owns three of the most popular platforms: Facebook—the most used social media platform—with more than 3 billion monthly active users; Instagram, which has more than 2 billion active monthly users; and Messenger with 979 million. YouTube and What's App have more than 2 billion active monthly users. Other platforms that claim more than a billion monthly active users are TikTok and WeChat. Popular platforms with followers in the millions include Snapchat with 750 million monthly active users, X with 619 million monthly active users,

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[9] Jenni Frazer, "Hate 'Explosion' Sparked by Hamas Attacks as CST Records All-Time High Antisemitism Figures" *Jewish News*, February 15, 2024, https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/hate-explosion-sparked-by-hamas-attacks-as-cst-records-all-time-high-antisemitism-figures/.

[10] International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, "Working Definition of Antisemitism," accessed March 15, 2024, https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Maayan Jaffe-Hoffman, "Kanye West, Social Media, Extremism: The Rise of Antisemitism in the US," Jerusalem Post, December 30, 2022, https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-726089.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Simon Kemp, "Global 2024: Digital Overview Report," *Data Reportal*, January 31, 2024, https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report.

Pinterest with 482 million, and Telegram, with 800 million active monthly users, Reddit with 850 million, and LinkedIn with 310 million active monthly users.[15]

In 2008, a new term, called antisemitism 2.0, was invented at The Global Forum for Combating Antisemitism in Jerusalem to characterize how antisemitism has been normalized in society through social media.[16] All Jewish organizations combatting antisemitism agree social media platforms have provided the largest new venue to host antisemitism. From 2016 to 2020 antisemitic posts skyrocketed on social media.[17] B'nai Brith Canada stated that 74.3 percent of the 2022 incidents in its annual audit occurred online.[18]

Sixty-two percent of American Jews reported seeing or hearing antisemitism online or on social media in the past year, according to the American Jewish Committee's State of Antisemitism in America 2023 report.[19] Thirty-nine percent of (or 4 in 10) U.S. adults personally witnessed antisemitism last year, with 68 percent seeing it online or on social media. Younger U.S. adults (83 percent of those under age 30) are more likely than older adults (65 percent) to say they saw or heard antisemitism online or on social media.[20]

Jewish leaders would like to see condemnation and legislation to combat anti-Jewish hatred online and offline. U.S Ambassador and Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, Deborah Lipstadt, refrains from putting the sole blame on social media for the recent rise in antisemitism. "I'm not sure we have an internet or social media problem, said Lipstadt, we have an antisemitism problem."[21] The Anti-Defamation League agrees about global antisemitism: It has reported that one in four people worldwide, or 1.09 billion people, have antisemitic views.[22] The FBI hate crimes statistics reveal in 2019 Jewish people were victims of 60 percent of religiously motivated hate crimes.[23] For Lipstadt, social media can be used malevolently or for good.[24] Without taking away free speech, she would like anti-Jewish hate to be condemned more often.

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[15] Ibid.
[16] André Oboler, "Solving Antisemitic Hate speech in Social Media through a Global Approach to Local Action" in *Confronting Antisemitism in Modern Media, the Legal and Political Worlds Volume 5,* ed. Armin Lange et al (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021): 343, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110671964-02
[17] Mark Weitzman, "Antisemitism in Social Media and on the Web," in *Cambridge Companion to Antisemitism* Part III: The Modern Era (Cambride: Cambridge University Press, 2022): 488. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1079/99781108637725.032.
[18] B'nai Brith Canada, "Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2022" (North York, Ontario: League for Human Rights, 2023): 4.
[19] American Jewish Committee, "State of Antisemitism in America 2023 Report," accessed https://www.ajc.org/AntisemitismReport2023#prioritybox.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Cambdyn Bruce, "Leaders Warn Social Media 'a Ticking Time Bomb' for Antisemitism" *The Hill,* December 14, 2022, https://thehill.com/policy/international/3774968-leaders-warn-social-media-a-ticking-timebomb-for-antisemitism/.
[22] Anti-Defamation League, "Global 100 Report," https://global100.adl.org/map.
[23] Mark Weitzman. "Antisemitism in Social Media and on the Web," in *Cambridge Companion to Antisemitism Part III: The Modern Era* (Cambridge University Press, 2022):
[24] Cambdyn Bruce, "Leaders Warn Social Media 'a Ticking Time Bomb' for Antisemitism," *The Hill*, December 14, 2022, https://thehill.com/policy/international/3774968-leaders-warn-social-media-a-ticking-timebomb-for-antisemitism/.

Hate and antisemitism on social media transcends borders and it will take a group effort of social media companies, researchers, governments, and civil organizations to fight against.[25]

## THE PROBLEM: THE INABILITY FOR SOCIAL MEDIA TO MODERATE CONTENT

Jewish people around the world are currently experiencing a rise in antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment in person and online, with social media platforms championing the spread of this kind of hatred to a global audience. Modern antisemitism through social media is expressed through social media posts in the form of comments, memes, GIFs, and reactions (likes/dislikes), and can appear through direct or coded language. Those combating online antisemitism and anti-Israel hate want transparency from social media companies for those trying to evaluate hate content and for them to show commitment to user safety and security, as well as offer systems to address hate, harassment, and antisemitism. The Anti-Defamation League's Center for Technology and Society evaluated the transparency of nine of the largest social media companies in the world: Meta (Facebook/Instagram), YouTube, TikTok, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Reddit, Pinterest, and X, and Twitch (interactive livestreaming service). The Center found that more harassment occurred on Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok, and YouTube in its annual surveys.[26]

A combination of factors has contributed to a more recent rise in hatred against Jewish people. "This tsunami is hitting us in any number of directions, and it is incredibly troubling, said William Daroff, CEO of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. I believe there is a perfect storm of factors that have brought about this increase in hate," including the pandemic, populism, and political divisiveness.[27] Daroff explains Jewish people have been the scapegoats for millennia, but currently social media is amplifying the blame. "What might have been spewed from a hater 50 years ago … can now be spread with the click of a finger to millions of people, Daroff said."[28]

Social media platforms are not passively hosting antisemitic and hateful content, but are proactively promoting it through their algorithms and search functions that guide users, especially younger ones, to antisemitic tropes and conspiracies, particularly on Facebook, Instagram, and X.[29] One Anti-Defamation League and Tech Transparency Project study on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and X found three out of four social media platforms were pushing hateful content like Nazi propaganda, Holocaust denial, and white supremacist symbols

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[25] Sabine von Mering and Monika Hubscher, "There is a lot of Antisemitic Hate Speech on Social Media—and Algorithms are Partly to Blame," *The Conversation* (July 26, 2022), https://theconversation.com/there-is-a-lot-of-antisemitic-hate-speech-on-social-media-and-algorithms-are-partly-to-blame-185668.

[26] Anti-Defamation League Center for Technology and Society, "Online Hate and Harassment: The American Experience 2023," June 2023.

[27] Maayan Jaffe-Hoffman, "Kanye West, Social Media, Extremism: The Rise of Antisemitism in the US," *Jerusalem Post,* December 2020, https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-726089.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Jessica Guynn and Will Carless, "From Nazi Propaganda to Holocaust denial, Social Media is Pushing on Users: Study," *USA Today*, August 17, 2023, https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2023/08/17/antisemitism-on-social-media-rising/70605213007/.

to a fictional teen account on Instagram, which the study created. YouTube fared the best of all four platforms.[30]

Social media business models function best on divisive and hateful rhetoric, which attracts more users and posts. "Hate is 'sticky. Meaning it gets recommended unless humans step in to adjust the algorithm," said Matthew Williams, founder of HateLab, a global hub for information on hate speech and crime.[31] Content moderation, which helps detect and remove harmful posts, is only one means of addressing online hate, but has proven insufficient against powerful algorithms on the platforms. Algorithms register users' engagement such as likes, dislikes, shares, comments, and counter comments; and hateful antisemitic content triggers more engagement that fuels the algorithms.[32] Even when users call out antisemitism, for example on X, the algorithm will reward the response as a trending hashtag or topic.[33]

Due to the amount of hate speech online, it is often challenging to condemn and control, especially if platforms only rely on users reporting content without taking their own consistent proactive measures to track and remove content. In 2021, major social media platforms were not taking down content and X continues to host posts with extreme hate speech such as antisemitism, neo-Nazim, and white supremacism. One study found that X retained 86 percent of 300 such posts, like racist caricatures of Jewish people, denying the Holocaust or mocking victims of the Holocaust, or labeling Hitler as a hero "who will help secure a future for white children.[34] B'nai Brith Canada claims 95 percent of online hate posts go unchecked and that Canada has not adequately produced legislation to address online antisemitism.[35]

Only lately have governments started pushing social media companies toward more transparency and to take steps to moderate content and protect users. But most social media watchdogs find these companies still lacking in accountability and insufficiently enforcing their policies. Some users also find their understanding of antisemitic content differs from platform interpretations: "When I report blatant antisemitic posts, I am told that they meet Facebook community standards. I don't know where to turn. The hate has gotten worse, and Facebook doesn't even try," said a 67-year-old Jewish woman in an Anti-Defamation League 2023 survey.[36] Many platforms also don't provide all the information about the amount of hate content they remove, often keep their reports inaccessible, and offer vague data about their approaches to hate, harassment, and antisemitism. Additionally, transparency reports are difficult to verify by users or outside researchers.[37]

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[30] Anti-Defamation League Center for Technology and Society, "Online Hate and Harassment: The American Experience 2023," June 2023.
[31] Jessica Guynn and Will Carless, "From Nazi Propaganda to Holocaust Denial, Social Media is Pushing on Users: Study," *USA Today,* August 17, 2023, https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2023/08/17/antisemitism-on-social-media-rising/70605213007/.
[32] Sabine von Mering and Monika Hubscher, "There is a Lot of Antisemitic Hate Speech on Social Media and Algorithms are Partly to Blame," *The Conversation*, July 26, 2022, https://theconversation.com/there-is-a-lot-of-antisemitic-hate-speech-on-social-media-and-algorithms-are-partly-to-blame-185668.
[33] Peter Suciu, "Antisemitism remains all too rampant on Social Media, Study Says," *Forbes,* July 14, 2023, https://www.forbes.com/sites/petersuciu/2023/07/14/antisemitism-remains-all-too-rampant-on-social-media/?sh=20674b9e66ee.
[34] Center for Countering Digital Hate, "X Content Moderation Failure" (September, 2023): 5.
[35] B'nai Brith Canada, "Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2022," League for Human Rights, 2023): 43.
[36] Anti-Defamation League "Online Hate and Harassment: The American Experience 2023 (June 27, 2023).
[37] Ibid.

To identify antisemitism on social media, it must be measurable. But measuring the amount of antisemitism on social media can be difficult. Besides platforms insufficiently providing data on posts, antisemitic posts can be shared through private messaging, antisemitism can be hidden through coded images or phrases, and often hate-tracking organizations are searching for general hate speech instead of content just targeting Jewish people, according to Michael Bossetta, a researcher at Sweden's Lund University.[38] Codes phrases used by antisemites that are hard to detect include: "AH" (for Hitler), "88" for Heil Hitler, "cosmopolitans," "globalists," "Soros," "Rothschilds," "small hats," "the Tribe," "JQ or JP" for Jewish Question or Jewish Problem, or "ZOG" (Zionist Occupied Government)—all of these may not be picked up by technology trying to track antisemitism.

Bossetta thinks, while antisemitism is problematic on social media, compared to all that's transpiring on social media platforms, the amount of antisemitic content is relatively small—much under 1 percent of the total number of posts worldwide. For him, even on certain non-mainstream social media, like 4chan, only 3 percent of posts are identified as hateful toward Jewish people, and he says there are more people calling out antisemitism on platforms like X. [39] However, even one post on a platform like TikTok reaches a lot of users; one antisemitic song in a collection of videos about Jewish people killed at the Auschwitz concentration camp was seen more than 6.5 million views with the help of algorithms: "As specific videos gain momentum the algorithm then promotes them more widely across the platform. Hence the users intuitively asking each other to 'help this go viral'. The problems rest then on the content filtering," said Michael Priem, Chief Executive of Modern Impact, an advertising agency.[40] These videos were on TikTok for three days before being removed.

Even if the amount of Jewish hate may be somewhat small in comparison to all social media traffic, real world hate affects social media and social media displays and impacts real-world violence. Online hate can cross into real life. Twenty-two percent of American Jews who experienced antisemitism online or on social media say these incidents made them feel physically threatened, according to an American Jewish Committee 2023 report.[41] As mainstream social media platforms try to limit antisemitic and hate chatter by moderating content, many extremists have moved to alternative technology (alt-tech) social media platforms like Gab, 4chan, and Telegram, where some incidents of real-world harm, such as the Tree of Life shooting in Pittsburg was linked to online posting on Gab. Those who study the connection between online and real-world violence affirm the connection: "Modern antisemitism relies on social media more than anything else, says Gabriel Weimann, professor of communication and senior researcher at the IDC Herzliya's Institute for Counter Terrorism." He adds, "Rising cases of violence and physical antisemitic attacks have a lot to do with violent postings and incitement

[38] Michael Bossetta, "Antisemitism on social media platforms: Placing the Problem into Perspective," in eds. M Hubsher and S. von Mering, *Antisemitism on Social Media* (Lund University, 2022): 3.
[39] Ibid., 8.
[40] Joe Tidy, "TikTok Algorithm promoted Anti-Semitic Death Camp Meme," *BBC*, July 7, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-53327890.
[41] American Jewish Committee, "The State of Antisemitism in American 2023: AJC's Survey of American Jews," https://www.ajc.org/AntisemitismReport2023.

online. I would argue that without social media, we would not see the rise in hate speech and violent antisemitism we are seeing today."[42]

The Israeli-Palestinian/Gaza conflicts are examples of real-world violence that are amplified on social media, which in turn aggravates anti-Jewish hate, often through disinformation. The government of Israel and various pro-Israel influencers have created their own accounts to battle the disinformation campaigns, but pro-Palestinian and anti-Zionist content is rampant and more extensive. Antisemitic (and Islamophobic) content on social media has risen since the start of the 2023 Israel-Hamas war, especially on TikTok and X due to platform algorithms.[43] The most common conversations on X about Israel, Palestine, and Hamas come together with anti-Jewish rhetoric and imagery, with 397 out of 458 being anti-Zionist.[44] Thus, realities in Israel have a direct impact through hateful posts on social media on the rest of the Jewish world.

## FURTHER EXAMINATION OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA PROBLEM

### Rating Social Media Platforms

Best practices to prevent online hate have been recommended by anti-hate civil organizations like the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), but according to them none have been fully implemented.[45] In July 2023, the ADL rated nine technology companies on eleven features, like blocking, muting, and filtering, to protect users from online hate. Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube received a "C" rating, Facebook and X a "C-", Discord (instant messaging) and Reddit received a "D," and Snapchat (often used by teens) received an "F." TikTok didn't even offer "antisemitism" as a category to report hate.[46] Social media platforms have a responsibility to prevent online hate and to protect users from existing hate, according to Jordan Kraemer, director of research at the ADL Center for Technology and Society. Kraemer sees them failing on to achieve both.[47]

These ratings confirm the failure to remove hateful posts in earlier studies by the Center to Counter Digital Hate (CCDH), a non-governmental organization based in the United States and the United Kingdom, which looked at 714 anti-Jewish posts viewed 7.3 million times on Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok in 2021. CCDH reported Facebook failed to remove 89 percent of its anti-Jewish posts, and social media platforms violated their own policies. Posts included Holocaust denial, conspiracy theories about Jewish people

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[42] Maayan Jaffe-Hoffman, "Kanye West, Social Media, Extremism: The Rise of Antisemitism in the US," *Jerusalem Post,* December 30, 2022, https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-726089.
[43] James Chaarani, "Social Media Algorithms to Blame for Antisemitic, Islamophobic, Content Online, Waterloo Expert Says," *CBC News,* November 27, 2023, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/twitter-x-tiktok-university-of-waterloo-hate-1.7037526.
[44] Jenni Frazer, "Hate 'Explosion' Sparked by Hamas Attacks Jewish News as CST Records All-Time High Antisemitism Figures," *Jewish News*, February 15, 2024, https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/hate-explosion-sparked-by-hamas-attacks-as-cst-records-all-time-high-antisemitism-figures/.
[45] Anti-Defamation League, "Block/Filter/Notify: Support for Targets of Online Hate Report Card (July 21, 2023): 28, https://www.adl.org/resources/report/blockfilternotify-support-targets-online-hate-report-card.
[46] Ibid, 7.
[47] Anti-Defamation League, "Social media platforms fail to support targets of online hate, finds ADL." *ADL Press Release,* July 21, 2023.

controlling governments and banks or orchestrating world events. Facebook removed 14 out of 129 posts, Twitter removed 15 of 137 posts, TikTok removed 22 out of 199 posts, Instagram 52 out of 277 posts, and YouTube took down 11 out of 52. On average, CCHD said no there was inaction on 84 percent of reported posts.[48] "The study of antisemitism has taught us a lot of things, said Imran Ahmed, the CEO of CCDH. If you allow it space to grow, it will metastasize. It is a phenomenally resilient cancer in our society."[49] Ahmed believes that social media companies are able but decide not to moderate hate content.

**TikTok** has not enforced its policies, according to CCDH, who discovered several videos and memes after searching terms like "Jewish lies Holocaust" or "Holocaust survivor liar."[50] When TikTok acted against antisemitic comments, it removed posts, but did not ban users. Users' comments offer one of the main means to spread hate on TikTok, and this section was mostly unmonitored until March 2021.[51] Additionally, TikTok's algorithm can offer users a variety of content on their homepage. One survey claimed those who watch videos on TikTok every 30 minutes become 17 percent more antisemitic.[52]

- According to a CCDH 2023 Factchecking blog, if you search the term "Jewish control" a variety of Kanye West's (Ye), a famous rapper, false videos continue to come up, including one with antisemitic claims about Jewish control or Jewish corporations owning 96 percent of the media; or one with Jewish baby gleeful over money.
- Searches for "Rothschild control" will bring up inaccurate conspiracy videos depicting the Rothchild family connected to freemason illuminati (secret society) controlling the world.[53]

**Facebook**, the largest social media platform, fails as a guiding example to other social media, despite its Jewish CEO. The American Jewish Committee found in a 2023 survey that Jewish adults who experienced antisemitism online at least once in the past 12 months, the most (51 percent) was found on Facebook, then X, with 47 percent, Instagram with 27 percent, YouTube with 24 percent, and 18 percent on TikTok (11 percent experienced it through gaming platforms). The percentage on Facebook has gone down since a 2020 survey, while all the other platforms have gone up.[54]

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[48] BBC, "Anti-Semitic Social Posts Not Taken Down in 80% of Cases," *BBC.com*, August 2, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-58058428.
[49] Deepa Shivaram, "Antisemitic Posts are Rarely Removed by Social Media Companies: A Study Finds," *NPR*, August 2, 2021, https://www.npr.org/2021/08/02/1023819435/antisemitic-posts-are-rarely-removed-by-social-media-companies-a-study-finds.
[50] Center for Countering Digital Hate, "Factchecking TikTok's Claims on Antisemitism," *CCDH Factchecking Blog*, (November 6, 2023), https://counterhate.com/blog/fact-checking-tiktoks-claims-on-antisemitism/.
[51] Gabriel Weimann and Natalie Masri, "TikTok's Spiral of Antisemitism," *Media*. (2021), https://www.mdpi.com/2673-5172/2/4/41.
[52] Asaf Elia-Shalev, "What is the pro-Israel Philanthropist on TikTok's Board Doing about Antisemitism on the App?" *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, February 1, 2024, https://www.jta.org/2024/02/01/united-states/tiktoks-pro-israel-investors-face-conundrum-as-platform-is-blamed-for-fueling-antisemitism.
[53] Center for Countering Digital Hate, "Factchecking TikTok's Claims on Antisemitism," *CCDH Factchecking Blog*, November 6, 2023, https://counterhate.com/blog/fact-checking-tiktoks-claims-on-antisemitism/.
[54] American Jewish Committee, "The State of Antisemitism in America 2023: AJC's Survey of American Jews." In a 2020 AJC report 22 percent of those who experienced antisemitism online 62 percent found it on FB, 33 percent on Twitter, 12 percent on Instagram, 10 percent on YouTube, 5 percent on Snapchat, 2 percent on TikTok.

- One user from Montreal, Canada, posted in French on Facebook after the synagogue hostage crisis in Colleyville, Texas, "Y devrait faire ça au Quebec . . . ils ne respectent rien ici!" The English translation is: "They should do that in Quebec . . . they don't respect anything here."[55]

**X** has also been a bastion of unrestrained antisemitic hate for a mainstream platform. Antisemitic content spreads more easily on platforms like X, which support images, have an easy share feature (like re-Tweeting), allow user anonymity, and have fewer restrictions on content moderation policies, especially since Elon Musk purchased the platform in 2022. Facebook and YouTube remove 80 percent of hate content in Europe compared to 40 percent removal on X.[56] X does not have an explicit Holocaust denial policy.[57]

- The antisemitic libel "Synagogue of Satan," which added up to 20 percent of the mention of the word "synagogue" on X and was often accompanied by calls for action against Jewish people.[58]
- Social media influencers using "Synagogue of Satan" on X include Ye (Kanye West, American rapper), Louis Farrakhan (Nation of Islam religious leader), and Kyrie Irving (Dallas Mavericks basketball player). Farrakhan, with 376,000 followers on X, used the meme to reach out to Black Lives Matter, claiming Blacks and Palestinians were both afflicted by the "Synagogue of Satan."[59] Irving also uses the derogative term to blame Jewish people for his perception of them using African Americans for their personal advantage.[60]
- Antisemitism and anti-Zionism tropes overlap on X with themes like bloodlust, dominance, hidden control and replacement, according to a study led by the Ruderman Foundation and Network Contagion Research Institute. This study also found that conflict in Israel spurs online hate, especially on X, against Jewish people in the United States.[61]
- Protestors in Philadelphia in December 2023 outside an Israeli-owned falafel restaurant shown in a video posted to X chant, "Goldie, Goldie, you can't hide, we charge you with genocide."[62] Videos of real-world events, like this one, spark further hate against Jews.

**Instagram**, owned by Meta and widely used by teens, continues to be used as a tool to propagate anti-Jewish hate. Influencers, like Ye, perpetuate harmful tropes about Jewish people and reach

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[55] B'nai Brith of Canada, "Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2022," (League for Human Rights, 2023): 19.
[56] Michael Bossetta, "Antisemitism on social media platforms: Placing the Problem into Perspective," in eds. M Hubsher and S. von Mering, *Antisemitism on Social Media* (Lund University, 2022)): 15.
[57] Anti-Defamation League Center for Technology and Society, "2023 Online Holocaust Denial Report Card," *Online Hate and Harassment Report*, April 10, 2023.
[58] Network Contagion Research Institute (NCRI) and Combat Antisemitism Movement, "The Synagogue of Satan: Uniting Extremist Groups in the Revival of an Antisemitic Libel Online," *Contagion and Ideology Report* (May 11, 2023): 2.
[59] Ibid., 11.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Peter Suciu, "Antisemitism Remains all Too Rampant on Social Media, Study Says," *Forbes*, July 14, 2023, https://www.forbes.com/sites/petersuciu/2023/07/14/antisemitism-remains-all-too-rampant-on-social-media/?sh=614fef7266ee.
[62] Luke Tress, "To Evade Anti-Israel Protests, US Jewish and Israeli Events Keep Their Locations Secret," *Times of Israel,* March 19, 2024, https://www.timesofisrael.com/to-evade-anti-israel-protests-us-jewish-and-israeli-events-keep-their-locations-secret/.

many through their various social media platforms.[63] His posts have since been deleted from Instagram and X.

- Ye, who has more than 18 million followers on Instagram, posted on October 9, 2022, how he would "go death-con 3 on Jewish people" and a couple months later praised Hitler.
- Ye has accused Jewish people of "owning the Black voice" when he said, "Either it's through us wearing a Ralph Lauren shirt, or it's all of us being signed to a record label, or having a Jewish manager, or being signed to a Jewish basketball team, or doing a movie on a Jewish platform like Disney."[64]

Studies focusing on hashtags (# followed by labels) on Instagram have revealed that antisemitic hashtags often go together with conspiracy theories like chemtrails (white condensation trails from airplanes claimed to be biological weapons), 5G, and pedophilia. One study searched 27 hashtags, like #Israhell, #fakeJews, #Jewishmoney, #zionistagenda, etc., and collected 4000 Instagram posts, with 132,000 views, during a seven-week period. The hashtag #zionistagenda was viewed more than 97,000 times, with more than 42,000 likes. This study showed that people are exposed to antisemitic or anti-Israel content, even if they aren't looking for it.[65]

The **YouTube** platform, owned by Google, is often more challenging to detect hateful content because of its video format. Recent research showed antisemitic comments on YouTube videos related to the Israel-Hamas conflict increased by 4963 percent, according to the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), which included more than 15,000 hateful comments against Jewish people one week after the Hamas attack on October 7.[66] YouTube, however, has better anti-hate policies than most platforms, banning Neo-Nazi and Holocaust denial content in 2019, partly incentivized by content creators denying the Sandy Hook shooting that took the lives of 26 children and adults at the elementary school.[67]

- Comments on YouTube videos associate Israelis with Nazis.
- Comments contain conspiracies, such as Jews owning the media, political, and financial institutions, or that the Hamas' attack was a false flag planted by Israel.[68]

**Alt-Tech Platforms**

Mainstream social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and X have made attempts to restrain hate online, even if not totally successful. Due to their efforts to moderate content or de-platform extremism, a lot of the more extreme hate activity has moved to

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[63] Maayan Jaffe-Hoffman, "Kanye West, Social Media, Extremism: The Rise of Antisemitism in the US," *Jerusalem Post,* December 30, 2022, https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-726089.

[64] Maayan Jaffe-Hoffman, "Kanye West, Social Media, Extremism: The Rise of Antisemitism in the US," *Jerusalem Post,* December 30, 2022, https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-726089.

[65] Community Security Trust and Antisemitism Policy Trust Report, "Instagram: Bad Influence," (2021): 5

[66] Giulia Carbonaro, "Antisemitism Rampant Online Since Hamas Attack: with YouTube Recording a 51-fold Surge," *Euronews*, October 31, 2023, https://www.euronews.com/2023/10/31/antisemitism-rampant-online-since-hamas-attack-with-youtube-recording-a-51-fold-surge.

[67] Emily Stewart, "YouTube Finally Banned Content from Neo-Nazis, Holocaust Deniers, and Sandy Hook Skeptics," *Vox,* June 5, 2019, https://www.vox.com/recode/2019/6/5/18653666/youtube-bans-white-supremacists-holocaust-carlos-maza.

[68] Giulia Carbonaro, "Antisemitism Rampant Online Since Hamas Attack: with YouTube Recording a 51-fold Surge," *Euronews*, October 31, 2023, https://www.euronews.com/2023/10/31/antisemitism-rampant-online-since-hamas-attack-with-youtube-recording-a-51-fold-surge.

alternative platforms, including Gab, 4Chan (8kun), Discord, Reddit, and Telegram. When X and Facebook de-platformed QAnon (far-right political conspiracy theory and movement), its members turned to the platform Gab. In 2020, Gab had more than 1,157,000 cumulative registered accounts and 3.7 monthly visitors.[69] Truth Social, a social media platform founded in 2021 by former president Donald Trump, has also been used by Trump to post antisemitic messages, according to White House spokesperson Karine Jean Pierre.[70] In 2022, Trump posted Jewish people in the United States "need to get their act together" regarding their appreciation for Israel "before it's too late."[71] These alternative platforms don't focus only on Jewish people—only 3 percent of their posts are antisemitic.[72] However, these types of platforms are used to plan offline events, and scholars maintain that these alternative platform posts sometimes correlate with offline hate crimes in Europe and the United States.

- A Discord chat room was used to discuss attending the Charlottesville rally.
- The Pittsburg Tree of Life shooter posted on Gab prior to entering the synagogue.

**Telegram**, which started in Russia but is now based in Dubai, has more than one billion users. Extremists, including the Islamic State, began using the Telegram in 2015 to plan attacks and promote propaganda. Telegram draws users from all around the world, including Poland, Ukraine, Russia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Germany, Switzerland, France, Canada, the UK, and the United States. The platform lacks a clear policy about extremist activities and content removal is sporadic, according to a Simon Wiesenthal Center report.[73] Hamas had several channels on Telegram, where it promoted videos of the October 7 attack. They have been removed from Apple's IOS, but not from Android.[74]

- On Telegram mass shooters are glorified and Nazi manuals are shared.
- White Nationalists like the Proud Boys and Patriot Front post photos and videos of their actions and encourage others to follow, including through photos of posters hung in cities like Austin, Texas, and Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Neo-Nazi Telegram channels encourage the use of Hamas' attack tactics in the United States.

While much extremism is relegated to less regulated alternative platforms, some extremist ideology can still surface on mainstream social media. A hybrid of Islamist and alt-right ideas merge into a concept called "Islamogram," which appears on a combination of mainstream and alternative platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, Twitter, Telegram, and Discord (gaming app), and includes more than 5,000 memes and more than 3,000 videos, with 20 percent supportive of Hamas, the Taliban, and Salafi-Jihadist organizations.[75] Sixty Islamogram accounts

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[69] Marc Herman-Cohen, "Gab as Disseminator of Antisemitic Conspiracy Myths and Enabler of Offline Violence," *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism,* 5, Issue 1 (2022): 7.
[70] Jeff Mason, "Trumps comments on American Jews were Anti-Semitic-White House," *Reuters*, October 17, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trumps-comments-american-jews-were-anti-semitic-white-house-2022-10-17/.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Michael Bossetta, "Antisemitism on Social Media Platforms: Placing the Problem into Perspective," in eds. M Hubsher and S. von Mering, *Antisemitism on Social Media* (Lund University, 2022): 8.
[73] Simon Wiesenthal Center, "Telegram: A Briefing," (July 2020): 21.
[74] Darren Loucaides, "How Telegram Became a Terrifying Weapon in the Israel-Hamas War," *Wired*, October 21, 2023, https://www.wired.com/story/telegram-hamas-israel-conflict/.
[75] Mustafa Ayad, "Islamogram: Salafism and Alt-Right Online Subcultures," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue Report*, (2021): 5.

on Instagram have more than 162,000 followers and 2.9 million interactions across posts. Much of this Instagram antisemitism targets Mark Zuckerberg, its owner, who is stereotypically seen as part of the Jewish group controlling the media. Much more explicit attacks on Jewish people can be seen on Discord and Telegram.

**Israel-Hamas War Impact on Social Media**

The war between Israel and Hamas is being played out on a virtual level. The major narratives against Israel in English and Arabic after October 7 include: violence against Jews using phrases like "Al Aqsa storm;" support for terror using terms like "Hamas;" religious antisemitism using terms like "Synagogue of Satan" or "Fake Jews;" and dehumanizing content and conspiracies, and denial of October 7, according to Rachel Brynien, Growth and Partnerhips Lead at Cyberwell, an Israeli company tracking online antisemitism.[76]

Disinformation on social media regarding the Israel-Hamas conflict is rampant. Short-video format like on TikTok cannot provide a medium for truth-telling content. Even with TikTok's efforts to moderate content, remove millions of videos promoting Hamas, hate speech, terrorism, and misinformation, antisemitic videos remain ubiquitous and content moderators can't keep up, according to journalists at NewsGuard, an organization that counters misinformation online.[77] Morbidly, Hamas used videos it created from the footage of the murders on October 7 to multiply the effect of its power beyond southern Israel: "Hamas recognized that, on the ground, they could reach and harm 10,000 people, said Orit Perlov, a social media analyst at the Institute for National Security Studies, but online they could reach the consciousness of 10 million Israelis, 400 million viewers in the Middle East, and potentially the entire world. The power of this tool is sometimes stronger than the power of a rifle."[78] The anti-Israel propaganda, including portraying Israel as a white oppressor, spread quickly using a variety of social media targeting tools toward groups like Black Lives Matter, climate activists, and those concerned about wealth inequality, according to Guy Rolnik, a professor of strategic management at the University of Chicago.[79]

Support for Palestinians has flourished due to the images of suffering Gazans on social media. Israeli military spokespeople standing at podiums push forward a less powerful message. At first, some news outlets perceived Israel to have the social media advantage due to Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs' creation of several accounts, including on TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and X.[80] After Hamas' initial attacks, Israel's government put out its own messaging through video ads of Hamas' attacks on X and YouTube aimed at viewers in the United States, the U.K., France, and Germany. The ads showed Hamas as a violent terrorist group, like Islamic State, and used

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[76] Rachel Brynien, "Combatting Antisemitism in the Digital Space," Presentation, 70 Faces Media *Jewish Digital Summit (online)*, February 2024. Twitter (47.3 percent), Facebook (22 percent) and TikTok (17.3 percent) had the most October 7 denial. YouTube has strict event denial policy since the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary.
[77] Jeffrey Sonnenfeld and Steven Tian, "The Israel-Hamas war Reveals the Fundamental Flaws of Social Media" 2023, *Time*, December 3, 2023, https://time.com/6342140/israel-hamas-war-social-media-flaws/.
[78] Amir Ben-David, "Delete Your account: How Social Media May be Metastasizing Terror in Service of Hamas," *Times of Israel*, February 12, 2024, https://www.timesofisrael.com/delete-your-account-how-social-media-may-be-metastasizing-terror-in-service-of-hamas/.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Liv Martin, et. al, "Israel Floods social media to Shape Opinion around the War," *Politico*, October 17, 2023, https://www.politico.eu/article/israel-social-media-opinion-hamas-war/.

graphic images, such as a lifeless, naked woman in a pickup truck. Google removed some of the ads due to the violent nature of the images.[81] "We would never post such graphic things before, said a spokesperson for Israel's Mission to the EU . . . . This is something that is not part of our culture. We have a lot of respect [for] the deceased . . . adding that 'war is not only on the ground.'"[82]

Israel's government's desire was to get ahead of Palestinian messaging. But soon that goal became impossible. For example, a 22-year-old Gaza-based journalist posted a video of the blue sky to her 3.6 million Instagram followers, saying, "The sky always gives me hope . . . but now when I look at the sky, all I can see is smoke and darkness . . . ."[83] A study by the Washington Post showed that since October 7, Palestinians tend to be winning the social media war, revealed through hashtags favoring Palestinians over Israel on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook, which used #freepalestine 39 times more than #standwithisrael, and 26 times more on Instagram.[84] However, some organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International claim social media platforms are censoring Palestinians by removing content, deleting accounts, or restricting engagement with content.[85]

Pro-Israel social media influencers, like 25-year-old Adiel Cohen, who has 51,000 followers on Instagram, 65,000 on TikTok, and 12,000 on X, have also increased their views on social media, yet he still thinks pro-Israel or pro-Jewish content cannot outpace pro-Palestinian content: "When it comes to views, likes and engagement and even the amount of pieces of content put out there, we are largely outnumbered," Cohen said.[86] Other Jewish and Israeli social media influencers fighting disinformation about Israel include Noa Tishby, Hananya Naftali, Hen Mazzig, and Montana Tucker. Naftali, an Israeli believer in Jesus, has more than 165,000 followers on X and works for the prime minister of Israel.

Jewish celebrities have been using their fame to counter hate related to the Israel-Hamas war on social media. More than thirty of them, including Sacha Baron Cohen, Debra Messing, and Amy Schumer, met with executives at TikTok to express their concerns about antisemitism, particularly since the October 7 Hamas attack.[87] "Shame on you, Cohen told execs. If you think back to Oct. 7, the reason Hamas were able to behead young people and rape women was they were fed images from when they were small kids that led them to hate." TikTok claims it has

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[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Desire Adib, "Amid Israel-Hamas, 'Information war' Plays Out on Social Media, Experts Say," *ABC News*, November 24, 2023, https://abcnews.go.com/International/social-media-information-war-israel-hamas-conflict/story?id=104845039.
[84] Evan Nierman, "Israel Must Prevail on the Social Media Battelfield – Opinion," *Jerusalem Post*, December 31, 2023, https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-780117.
[85] Human Rights Watch, "Meta: Systemic Censorship of Palestine Content," December 20, 2023.
[86] Desire Adib, "Amid Israel-Hamas, 'Information war' Plays Out on Social Media, Experts Say," *ABC News*, November 24, 2023, https://abcnews.go.com/International/social-media-information-war-israel-hamas-conflict/story?id=104845039.
[87] David Muriquand, "TikTok: 'The Biggest Antisemitic Movement since the Nazis, Says Actor Sacha Baron Cohen," *Euronews*, November 11, 2023, https://www.euronews.com/culture/2023/11/20/tiktok-the-biggest-antisemitic-movement-since-the-nazis-says-actor-sacha-baron-cohen.

removed more than 24 million fake accounts and more than 500,000 "bot comments" with hashtags associated with the Israel-Hamas war.[88]

## SOLVING ANTI-JEWISH HATE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

### Social Media Companies' Responsibility

Social media executives, like Meta's Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook, Instagram) or Elon Musk (X), try to balance free speech while trying to reduce harm caused by hate speech. In 2020, Zuckerberg made some policy changes, which included banning Holocaust denial content, and YouTube banned Holocaust denial videos in 2019.[89] Hate speech increased on X, after Musk acquired it (as Twitter), and he has recently tried to move company ads away from hateful posts.[90] Since October 7, antisemitism has gone up by 919 percent on X, according to the Anti-Defamation League.[91] The American Jewish Committee has been calling on social media companies to use the official IHRA definition of antisemitism in order to target it, and to respond to antisemitism through transparency, better content moderation, and through better policies.[92]

Back in 2020, Israel's government set up a task force to address antisemitism on social media. Elizabeth Kanter, director of TikTok's government relations in Israel expressed her concern for anti-Jewish hate and stated how her company takes action by removing content and closing accounts when TikTok's community values are violated: "Antisemitism is an abomination, and therefore anti-Semitic content that expresses hatred has no place on our platform. We have zero tolerance for organized hate groups and those associated with them . . . ."[93] She explained TikTok follows its anti-hate guidelines through technology tools and 10,000 content experts trained in hate ideologies, including Hebrew and Arabic speakers. She added that TikTok publishes transparency reports showing how more than 90 percent of videos were removed either before users reported them or after they watched them. But members of Israel's task force still feel that further training is necessary to fully recognize antisemitic content.[94]

Some Jewish people sit on the board of TikTok and own a percentage of the platform, like Arthur Dantchik and Jeffrey Yass, yet it remains unknown if they can help confront the antisemitic content. Some Jewish staff at TikTok, like Barak Herscowitz, have resigned from the company due to the company's anti-Israel bias: "We live in a time which our very existence as Jews and Israelis is under attack and in danger, said Herscowitz. And in an era of such instability, people's priorities sharpen."[95]

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[88] Ibid.

[89] Mark Weitzman. "Antisemitism in Social Sedia and on the Web" in *Cambridge Companion to Antisemitism Part III: The Modern Era* (Cambridge University Press, 2022): 9.

[90] Center for Countering Digital Hate: "X Content Moderation Failure," *CCDH Report*, (2023): 6.

[91] James Chaarani, "Social Media Algorithms to Blame for Antisemitic, Islamophobic, Content Online, Waterloo Expert Says," *CBC News,* November 27, 2023, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/twitter-x-tiktok-university-of-waterloo-hate-1.7037526.

[92] AJC, "Social Media Companies Action Items," 2024, https://www.ajc.org/call-to-action/social-media.

[93] The Knesset, "TikTok Representative at the Knesset: 'Antisemitism is an Abomination; It has no Place on our Platform," *Knesset News*, October 14, 2020, https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/news/pressreleases/pages/press141020g.aspx.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Asaf Elia-Shalev, "What is the pro-Israel Philanthropist on TikTok's Board Doing about Antisemitism on the App?" *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, February 1, 2024, https://www.jta.org/2024/02/01/united-states/tiktoks-pro-israel-investors-face-conundrum-as-platform-is-blamed-for-fueling-antisemitism.

**Governments Holding Social Media Accountable**

Because of the challenge for social media companies to restrain online hate, governments have begun to step in. The Biden-Harris Administration released the U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism on May 25, 2023, which, among many things, called on Congress to hold social media platforms accountable for spreading hate-fueled violence like antisemitism.[96] Canada has also expressed commitment to creating transparent and accountable online regulations.[97] Germany and the European Union have created legislation holding companies more accountable with reporting requirements, content moderation efforts, and enforcement of terms of service.[98] Companies like Facebook have received fines of two million euros.[99] Experts believe that only global efforts to hold social media companies accountable for hate speech, detected by experts and artificial intelligence, on their platforms as well as local action like penalties, counter speech, and anti-hate campaigns can contribute to solving the problem.[100]

Other pending legal decisions could affect antisemitism on social media platforms as well as content moderation more broadly. In March 2024, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill that could lead to a TikTok ban if ByteDance (the parent company in China viewed as a national security risk) doesn't sell TikTok within five months.[101] If TikTok is banned completely in the United States, it would remove a major online tool for spreading antisemitic content that leads to real-world hate in the United States. In 2021, Texas and Florida passed legislation limiting social media platforms' ability to moderate content. For Texas, social media companies cannot remove content based on a user's viewpoint, and in Florida, companies cannot remove politicians from platforms. Lawsuits by tech trade groups against Texas and Florida are being heard before the Supreme Court to decide if these states can legally prohibit platforms from banning posts or users.[102] If Texas and Florida win this case, social media company platforms will have less power to control content, possibly including antisemitic posts and users.

**Civil and Religious' Leadership Responsibility**

Civil and religious leaders have a responsibility to combat antisemitism in the real world and on social media, including politicians, academics, clergy, editors and journalists, businesspeople, trade unionists, and other community leaders, according to the Executive Council of Australian

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[96] White House. "The U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism," June 02, 2023, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/06/02/the-u-s-national-strategy-to-counter-antisemitism-key-actions-by-pillar-2/

[97]James Chaarani, "Social Media Algorithms to Blame for Antisemitic, Islamophobic, Content Online, Waterloo Expert Says," *CBC News,* November 27, 2023, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/twitter-x-tiktok-university-of-waterloo-hate-1.7037526.

[98] ADL Center for Technology and Society, "Platform Transparency Reports – Just How Transparent?"*ADL Blog*, February 14, 2024.

[99]André Oboler, "Solving Antisemitic Hate Speech in Social Media through a Global Approach to Local Action" in *Confronting Antisemitism in Modern Media, the Legal and Political Worlds Volume 5,* ed. Armin Lange et al (de Gruyter, 2021): 2, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110671964-02

[100] Ibid.

[101] Rebecca Klar, "House Easily Passes Bill that Could Ban TikTok." *The Hill*, March 13, 2024, https://thehill.com/policy/technology/4528594-house-passes-bill-that-could-ban-tiktok/.

[102] Pooja Salhothra, "Does the First Amendment apply to social media moderation? The U.S. Supreme Court will decide." *Texas Tribune*, February 26, 2024, https://www.texastribune.org/2024/02/26/texas-social-media-law-supreme-court/.

Jewry.[103] The U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, Deborah Lipstadt, agrees the best way to fight antisemitism online and offline is for high-profile people to call it out at all times: "Leaders have to speak out, said Lipstadt. Political leaders, religious leaders, celebrities, opinion makers, they have to speak out and say this is wrong."[104]

Certain Christian leaders, individuals, and groups are actively fighting antisemitism on social media. Yael Eckstein, president and CEO of International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, believes there are millions of evangelicals who would defend and stand with the Jewish people: "The Evangelical Christian community is one of the most overlooked potential allies in the battle against antisemitism . . . . If we would be able to foster and grow and give a platform to those [Christian] voices, I think the narrative would shift quickly from Jews being a voiceless people to being a powerhouse, Eckstein said." [105]

Examples of evangelical Christian groups fighting anti-Israel bias and anti-Jewish sentiment online include: Christians United for Israel (CUFI), which posts pro-Israel messages on Instagram; Gateway Center for Israel in Southlake, Texas, has a YouTube channel with pro-Israel and pro-Jewish video content; and the Fellowship of Israel Related Ministries (FIRM) defends Israel on Facebook, X, YouTube, and Instagram. In October 2023, 10,000 Christians, spearheaded by Faithful America, a social justice Christian organization, and 150 Jewish leaders joined together to combat the surge in hate speech against Jews on X. They called on Christians to denounce Elon Musk's attacks on the Anti-Defamation League and the rise of antisemitism on X and for advertisers on the platform to disassociate with X until its owner, Elon Musk, takes action.[106] On X, Musk also agreed with a conspiracy post that claimed Jewish people were replacing white people. Since that time Musk has traveled to Israel to visit the Israeli government, currently wears a dog-tag, a symbol calling for the return of the October 7 hostages, and has visited the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp.

Christians should avoid conspiracy theories or promote those ideologies on social media. Some Christian conservatives have supported QAnon, an overall term for a host of online conspiracies about pedophiles who run the world and contains antisemitic tropes, including Jewish people trafficking children for their blood.[107] These conspiracies started on alternative platforms like 4chan and 8chan (now 8kun) where followers post antisemitic images and target well-known Jewish people and flowed into mainstream social media, gaining adherents in conservative

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[103] Executive Council of Australian Jewry, "Report on Antisemitism in Australia 2023" (December 31, 2023): 242. See an example of a goodwill statement between Catholics and Jews on p.260 of the report.
[104] Cambdyn Bruce, "Leaders Warn Social Media 'a Ticking Time Bomb' for Antisemitism" *The Hill,* December 14, 2022, https://thehill.com/policy/international/3774968-leaders-warn-social-media-a-ticking-timebomb-for-antisemitism/.
[105] Maayan Jaffe-Hoffman, "Kanye West, Social Media, Extremism: The Rise of Antisemitism in the US," *Jerusalem Post*, December 30, 2022, https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-726089.
[106] Zvika Klein "Thousands of Christians Criticize Antisemitism on Elon Musk's X Platform," *Jerusalem Post*, October 2, 2023, https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-761248.
[107]Southern Poverty Law Center Hatewatch Staff, "What you need to know about QAnon," *Hatewatch*, October 27, 2020, https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/10/27/what-you-need-know-about-qanon.

religious and political circles.[108] Christian leaders, with their large church and online platforms, can focus on combatting online and real-world conspiracies and antisemitism.

**Countering hate messages online**

Even though social media platforms contain much hate content, they can serve as educational tools that responsibly counter antisemitism. Responses from users in posts that challenge the hate narrative may reduce antisemitism by creating normative content for the community, according to Michael Bossetta, social media expert at Lund University.[109] Apparently, when credible organizations like the Anti-Defamation League counter hateful messages on social media with their positive counter-narrative, it goes further and remain online longer than the hateful ones.[110] This can be done by users employing the reaction feature in positive and negative ways; liking posts on Facebook and Instagram, leaving positive comments and sharing, or reporting and decrying hateful content. These actions can create social norms on platforms and can reduce and even reverse the effect of antisemitic content on a platform's user community, according to studies noted by Bossetta.[111] One example of those countering antisemitism on social media are Holocaust survivors who have made videos on Facebook, Instagram, and X to explain how the Holocaust began with hate speech in a campaign called #itstartedwithwords.[112]

Others think reacting or leaving comments on videos, for example, would be further promoting the hate content because more people would see the content and ignite the algorithms, according Aimée Morrison, an associate professor at The University of Waterloo's English department.[113] Sharing, reposting, and engaging antisemitic content helps promote that content through the social media algorithms, according to Sabine von Mering, of Brandeis University. She advises to report the hate speech through the platform, and to show solidarity with the person targeted through one's own social media page, without sharing the original post.[114] The ADL recommends users care for their safety first by blocking individuals if they are targeted and take screen shots so as not to amplify posts. The ADL also recommends commenting only on accounts that have visibility—so education reaches a broader audience, getting educated before posting, directing other users toward resources, reporting antisemitic posts to the platform and to

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[108] Mark Weitzman, "Antisemitism in Social Media and on the Web," in *Cambridge Companion to Antisemitism* Part III: The Modern Era (Cambridge University Press, 2022): 13. https://doi.org/10.1079/99781108637725.032.

[109] Michael Bossetta, "Antisemitism on Social Media Platforms: Placing the Problem into Perspective," in eds. M Hubsher and S. von Mering, *Antisemitism on Social Media* (Lund University, 2022): 10-11.

[110] Sefa Ozalp et al., "Antisemitism on Twitter: Collective Efficacy and the Role of Community Organisations in challenging Online Hate Speech," *Social Media and Society*, June, 18, 2020, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2056305120916850.

[111]Michael Bossetta, "Antisemitism on Social Media Platforms: Placing the Problem into Perspective," in eds. M Hubsher and S. von Mering, *Antisemitism on Social Media* (Lund University, 2022): 11. Sadly, some Jewish organizations are overwhelmed by the amount of hate content, they have removed their accounts.

[112] David Rising, "Holocaust Survivors Use Social Media to Fight Antisemitism," *AP*, April 8, 2021, https://apnews.com/article/holocaust-remembrance-day-anti-semitism-social-media-7798234e0837bc571a36a7cc7833b103.

[113] James Chaarani, "Social Media Algorithms to Blame for Antisemitic, Islamophobic, Content Online, Waterloo Expert Says," *CBC News,* November 27, 2023, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/twitter-x-tiktok-university-of-waterloo-hate-1.7037526.

[114] Brandeis University, "The Dark Side of Social Media: How it Fuels Antisemitism," *The Jewish Experience*, May 13, 2022, https://www.brandeis.edu/jewish-experience/social-justice/2022/may/antisemitism-social-media.html.

the ADL, and to call law enforcement if a user is being threatened.[115] Hate content can be filtered out of users' feeds, if they do not want to see the content. On TikTok, for example, this can be done through "content preferences" and training the algorithm.

With disinformation and mysterious algorithms, especially concerning the Israeli-Hamas conflict, some advocate that users either diligently fact-check posts or stay away from social media altogether.[116] Scholars like Rolnik of the University of Chicago advise people delete their social media accounts because of his lack of trust in social media companies to protect against harmful algorithms, which he says allow them to make money. Professors at UMass Boston found that it may be counterproductive, and even dangerous, to engage in political activism on social media. Algorithms on platforms like X, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, are designed to engage users for as long as possible either through hostile or agreeable content, but provides very little education. Additionally, users will receive disinformation from countries like Russia, Iran, and China who are pushing propaganda that undermines Israel and promotes Hamas.[117]

Some watchdog tech companies are trying to work with social media companies to help them fight antisemitism. Cyberwell, an Israeli company tracking antisemitism on social media since 2022, has created the first open database of online antisemitic content so that social media companies can see the data and react to policy violations. Cyberwell monitors five platforms: TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and X. The public can also interact with its database and report the antisemitic content Cyberwell finds. Reporting matters to raise awareness to content reviewers, according to Rachel Brynien, Cyberwell's Growth and Partnership Lead.[118] After October 7, Cyberwell was able to help companies block hashtags and remove antisemitic videos and monitor through Artificial Intelligence.[119] Cyberwell also examines tech companies' digital policies and contacts them about violations, and how to enforce and improve them. Cyberwell believes speaking the language of these companies is the best way to combat antisemitism online, not positive content campaigns, or challenging hate speech online. Since Cyberwell's start, it has flagged almost 300,000 pieces of content, vetted and reported more than 6000 pieces of antisemitic content, and seen a 9 percent increase in removal rate of posts. Brynien thinks social media platforms are trying to remove antisemitic content and has hope for the future: "I do think and hope that we see a difference in the coming months, years, in seeing

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[115] Anti-Defamation League, "Tips for engaging and Disengaging on Social Media," *Tools and Strategies*, November 12, 2022, https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/tips-engaging-and-disengaging-social-media.

[116] Peter Kafka, "Don't Blame Social Media for the Fog of War," *Vox*, October 25, 2023, https://www.vox.com/technology/23930670/israel-gaza-hospital-explosion-media-new-york-times-twitter-x-tiktok-telegram-peter-kafka-column.

[117] Nir Eisikovits, "War in Gaza: an Ethicist Explains Why You Shouldn't Turn to Social Media for Information about the Conflict or to do Something about It," *The Conversation,* December 15, 2023, https://theconversation.com/war-in-gaza-an-ethicist-explains-why-you-shouldnt-turn-to-social-media-for-information-about-the-conflict-or-to-do-something-about-it-218912. Additionally, Iran proactively promotes state sponsored antisemitism through its Press TV on Facebook and Twitter, according to the State Hate report by the ADL and CCDH.

[118] Rachel Brynien, "Combatting Antisemitism in the Digital Space," Presentation, 70 Faces Media *Jewish Digital Summit (online)*, February 2024. Go to app.cyberwell.org to see the database and help Cyberwell report content.

[119] Tal-Or Cohen Montemayor "Social Media is the Key to Reversing Decades Old Antisemitic Brainwashing – Opinion," *Jerusalem Post*, December 21, 2023, https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-778913

that platforms are taking a stand," she said during an online lecture on how to combat antisemitism on social media.[120]

## CONCLUSION

Many people who study antisemitism in the world and online don't believe it can ever be completely removed. "Antisemitism cannot be eradicated—it is too ingrained in the psyche of European and middle eastern cultures. But it can be mitigated and thwarted."[121] Because this hate and bias against Jewish people remain part of societies, it becomes a challenge to remove all of it from social media platforms, which mirror and contribute to reality. "As it stands now there is simply too much hate speech online for even the most ambitious effort to control," according to Mark Weitzman, COO of the World Jewish Restitution Organization.[122] Despite this pessimism, efforts have and can be made by all toward minimizing hate against Jewish people and Israel in the real-world and on social media.

## POINTS FOR PRAYER AND ACTION

### Prayer

- Pray social media companies will become more aware of and understand the meaning of antisemitism (including the IHRA definition) and anti-Israel sentiment on their platforms.
- Pray social media companies will become more transparent in their reports, implement reporting tools and employ better content moderation to remove posts and users who engage in antisemitism and anti-Israel hate.
- Pray God's hand will hold back the surge in hate against Jewish people.
- Pray that the hearts of those who engage in antisemitism online and offline will be changed.
- Pray that Christians, politicians, and other leaders will speak out against antisemitism online and offline, and produce legislation to combat anti-Jewish hate.
- Pray for the protection of teens/young adults on school campuses and their safety online.

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[120] Rachel Brynien, "Combatting Antisemitism in the Digital Space," Presentation, 70 Faces Media *Jewish Digital Summit (online)*, February 2024.
[121] Executive Council of Australian Jewry, "Report on Antisemitism in Australia 2023" (December 31, 2023): 270.
[122] Mark Weitzman, "Antisemitism in Social Media and on the Web," in Cambridge Companion to Antisemitism Part III: The Modern Era (Cambridge University Press, 2022): 15. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1079/99781108637725.032

**Action:**

- Report any antisemitic and anti-Israel posts to the social media platforms using their reporting tools. If they do not remove the post, report it to Cyberwell and the Anti-Defamation League.

- Do not repost antisemitic content on social media.

- Respond on social media with affirming and positive posts about the Jewish people and Israel on posts that are antisemitic.

- Speak out in your communities against antisemitism and anti-Israel hate.

- Learn about the history of antisemitism and Israel's history so as to educate people in your community and online.

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