

ANTISEMITISM IN CANADA: AN OVERVIEW

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Presented to the

Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism (CPCCA)

August 2009

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Introduction – B'nai Brith's Role

This submission is presented to the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism (CPCCA) by B'nai Brith Canada's League for Human Rights. B'nai Brith has been in operation in this country since 1875 as the Jewish community's senior advocacy and volunteer service organization. With its network of regional officers and cross-country membership, it is well-positioned to understand the specific concerns of the grassroots Jewish community and advocate on its behalf. Its League for Human Rights is dedicated to combatting antisemitism and racism, undertaking major legal/legislative, educational and community outreach initiatives, and advocating for the rights of at-risk groups. A Special Advisory Committee, made up of representatives of many diverse minority communities, enhances the League's work in this area.

The League welcomes this opportunity to share its data and insights with the Coalition, putting them in the context of longer-term trends and influences, both domestic and international. The focus will be on moving the discussion beyond the purely philosophical aspects, to the realms of everyday reality. To this end, League experts are on hand to elaborate on these issues through oral evidence to the Inquiry.

The data and analysis presented here is based primarily on the League's *Audit of Antisemitic Incidents*, now in its 27th year, a study that has traditionally provided definitive data on bigotry and discrimination against the Jewish community. Given the authoritative nature of its data, the *Audit* has been cited by governmental and research bodies worldwide such as the US State Department, the Organization for

Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism at Tel Aviv University.

The annual *Audit* is just one expression of the League's front-line assistance to victims of antisemitism. The incidents documented are reported to the League for Human Rights primarily via its 24/7 community Anti-Hate Hotline (1-800 892 BNAI [2624]) and its online reporting service (www.bnaibrith.ca). Working closely with police forces and the grassroots Jewish community, these incidents are corroborated, documented and analyzed, and victims receive culturally-sensitive assistance. This hands-on involvement with the victims allows the League to offer an assessment of the impact of antisemitism that goes well beyond the quantitative aspect alone.

The Data – Key Features

In 2008, 1,135 antisemitic incidents were reported to the League for Human Rights, an increase of 8.9% over the 2007 figures. Once again, this figure breaks through previous thresholds set since the League began recording incidents 27 years ago. The findings represent a more than fourfold increase over the last ten years. (See Appendix A for a more detailed summary.)

This increase, therefore, is not an aberration, but the continuation of a growing trend of anti-Jewish prejudice and bigotry on the Canadian scene. After all, in the absence - till the final days of the year - of the type of significant Middle East triggers that traditionally spark increases in antisemitic incidents, logic would suggest that numbers should, rather, be declining. We also have to remember that sociologists and police experts agree that only about 10% of victims ever come forward to report their victimization, so we are just seeing the tip of the iceberg through the available data.

To give just a few examples from the 2008 *Audit*, there were 50 incidents targeting Jewish places of worship and 17 against community centres. These venues continue to face heavy security costs, though there has been some relief in the form of the *Communities at Risk: Security Infrastructure Pilot (SIP) Program*. Such incidents should not be dismissed lightly; they include death threats against Rabbis and synagogue staff, as well as vandalism of Jewish communal institutions, and were perpetrated right across the country, including Moncton, Montreal, Toronto, Barrie, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Vancouver and Kelowna.

Jews were targeted in their own homes in 105 incidents, including desecration of mezuzahs, (a mezuzah is a religious symbol that publicly identifies houses as Jewish). Such invasion of their private space makes Jews feel particularly vulnerable, as many victim impact statements on record with the League attest.

The explosion of hate on the internet was red-flagged by the League over a decade ago, as discussed in the three international symposia it has convened. Reflecting the range of new technologies used to disseminate hate, there were 405 reports of web-based hate activity with a Canadian connection, over 30% more than the year before. Apart from ugly, graphic web site postings, we note that text messaging, Facebook and other social networking methods are being used to disseminate the range of harassment over cyberspace, from bullying to death threats. Targeted action is needed to hold back this newest frontier of hate, as suggested in the *Recommendations* section of this submission.

In 2008, the level of antisemitism continued to intensify on campus, where anti-Israel protesters have ratcheted up the tension, bringing in virulent anti-Israel propaganda. For example, in 2008, the Israel Apartheid Week signature poster depicted Israel raping "Palestine". In 2009, the poster depicted the Jewish State collectively in the role of child killer, with a gunship helicopter targeting a toddler holding a teddy bear. This is the epitome of the modern-day blood libel, and the fact that the target audience is impressionable Canadian students is red-flagged here for the Inquiry's attention.

The net result of this coordinated campus campaign has been an increase in openly antisemitic harassment, and even violence, against Jewish students. There were 76 reported cases of antisemitism on campuses in 2008 alone, more than double the 36 incidents just two years previously. The result is that many students report hiding their Jewish identity in order to avoid harassment and intimidation; some have told us they no longer participate in classroom discussions, for fear of possible academic reprisal. In spite of these factors, however, there is as yet no public acknowledgment of the dangers of this campaign of hate on Canadian campuses.

Analysis

While major, premeditated cases such as the fire bombings of Jewish schools in Montreal in 2004 and 2006, have the most potential to terrify a community, the random nature of other, less publicized incidents creates its own atmosphere of anxiety. This has led Jews to conceal visible signs of their

religion, such as kippas, when traveling in certain areas, which is surely an unacceptable restriction on freedom of religion. And while Jews might have long felt vulnerable in certain urban venues, a newer trend the League noted recently is open expression of antisemitism in rural areas, such as the 2008 assault against a visibly Jewish tourist in the Laurentians, while bystanders watched.

The far-right-wing in Canada, a movement largely discredited and generally dismissed as of little significance, still warrants close scrutiny, given the rise of such extremism in Europe and the international connections between adherents of racist ideologies. Ongoing review of white supremacist sites and message boards indicates that such groups are active and located throughout Canada. One significant example is increased recruitment activity in Calgary. Swastikas and Nazi-related symbols also feature much more prominently in anti-Jewish incidents, while Holocaust deniers have emerged from the fringes in a bid for quasi-academic status, managing to secure guest speaking engagements in some university-based settings.

Over the past decades, there have been signs of increasing synergy between the far-right wing and its far-left counterpart in terms of anti-Jewish activity, with each side borrowing from the rhetoric of the other. Thus, right-wing extremists have evinced a sudden interest in the Israel-Palestinian conflict, adopting every possible slander about the State of Israel in order to denigrate Jews. In the same vein, left wingers have latched onto Holocaust imagery to fuel their allegation that the Jewish State is a Nazi-like regime.

Against this backdrop of animosity, in the last few years, antisemitic incidents have taken place in an increasingly diverse range of venues: at the workplace, on the transit system, in retail outlets, at fitness clubs, in physicians' offices, to name just a few. It is interesting, however, that some of the worst anti-Jewish outbursts take place in the midst of rallies against Israel, whether on campus or in the public domain. This should not be viewed as an aberration given the main themes of these activities - demonization and delegitimization of the Jewish State - which are included in the Working Definition of Antisemitism adopted by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC). The League suggests that the Inquiry adopt the EUMC definition in order to cover the full dimensions of this newest variant of antisemitism, which seeks to deny Jews as a collective entity - alone of all peoples in the world - the right to self-determination in their own homeland, in much the same way as traditional antisemitism denied Jews as individuals human rights accorded to all others.

Continuing this theme, discriminatory moves against the Jewish State such as boycott campaigns need to be recognized for their antisemitic overtones. A precedent can be found at the European Court of Human Rights, which recently upheld a French court ruling that it is illegal and discriminatory to boycott Israeli goods. The Court further found that making it illegal to call for such a boycott did not violate any free speech rights. The ruling is now applicable to many European countries, and the League asks the Inquiry to take note of the opportunity this presents to address one of the most pernicious forms of anti-Jewish discrimination, commonly masquerading as anti-Zionism.

Implications

Recent *Audit* findings clearly show an ongoing, disproportionate targeting of the Jewish community compared to other minorities in Canada. This is especially significant at a time when the Jewish population is declining, making up less than 1% of the total population. By comparison, the Black and Muslim communities, which also report victimization, make up 2.5% and 2% respectively of the total Canadian population.

This finding is supported by other studies as well. For example, a 2008 Statistics Canada study, based on 2006 hate crime data, found that nearly two-thirds of hate crimes motivated by religion were directed at the Jewish faith. There were 63 incidents targeting the Jewish community, compared to the 21 cases against the next most targeted group, Muslims.

It is also significant that Toronto Police, which recorded 153 hate-related occurrences in 2008, documented 45 incidents against Jews who, as in past years, were the single most consistently targeted group. Other groups mentioned in the police report were Gays (34), Blacks (24), and Muslims (7). A similar trend was noted by the York Regional Police, which noted 81 incidents of hate, 26 against the Jewish community, with the next highest group being Blacks (19).

Attitudinal studies support such findings, speaking to prejudices both latent and overt about Jews having too much power, or being responsible for their own victimization. Such prejudices have been noted in Quebec in particular, the province with the second highest number of incidents reported to the League each year. In one study commissioned by the League, (<http://www.bnairbrith.ca/publications/audit2001/audit2001-01.html>), while 10% of Canadians outside

Quebec perceived Jews as having too much power, the figure was 26% in Quebec. Such findings, since corroborated by additional studies, deserve further attention.

Conclusion

Each year, there are specific factors that influence the tide of antisemitism in Canada. In 2008, the fact that 547 incidents - close to half the total - took place in the last four months of 2008, can be linked to fall-out from the developing economic recession and the high-profile Bernard Madoff scandal.

Historically, antisemitism has increased in this type of climate, as disgruntled citizens seek a scapegoat to blame for their personal difficulties. In some years, international events, particularly those linked to the Arab-Israeli conflict, appear to have been a significant factor. Since these themes - economic downturn and Mideast tensions - unfortunately appear to be, at least in the short-term, constant features affecting the Canadian scene, antisemitism cannot be expected to abate any time soon.

Overall, we are increasingly seeing manifestations of a new bigotry that often masquerades as anti-Zionism, that unholy hybrid of age-old and new-age bigotry, which purports to be merely legitimate criticism of Israel, but strays far beyond civil or legitimate discourse. As the anti-Israel rhetoric intensifies, new boundaries are being crossed in terms of the range of anti-Jewish canards that are being invoked once more.

There is also a move to deny the Jewish people the right to define their own victimization, a stratagem long used by the anti-Israel bloc at UN agency meetings. "We are Semites too," the argument runs, "therefore how can we be accused of anti-Semitism?" This deliberate smokescreen is used by those seeking to distance themselves from the politically incorrect taint of antisemitism, at the same time as they implicitly enable it. That is why the single-word descriptor "antisemitism" - already adopted by the CPCCA - is a more accurate description of the phenomenon than the easily-manipulated terminology "anti-Semitism".

It is clear that a holistic approach is necessary to eliminate antisemitism, one that includes legislative reform and implementation of existing international obligations, as well as training for police and prosecutors, and educational and community outreach. The League welcomes the opportunity to discuss these issues further with the Coalition. Meanwhile, seven key recommendations that arise from this submission – just a sampling of the League's arsenal of anti-hate measures – are tabled here for further discussion.

Summary of Recommendations

i) Ongoing governmental support for the League's monitoring and documentation of antisemitism in Canada.

The League already provides the data on antisemitism in Canada to international bodies such as the US State Department (Office of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights). Its annual *Audit* forms the basis of the chapter on Canada in the *World Survey on Antisemitism* published by the Stephen Roth Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism at Tel Aviv University, and is cited in numerous other studies. In order to enable the League to enhance its current monitoring and reporting role, ongoing governmental support is requested. This will allow its functions to dovetail seamlessly with the work of the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism.

ii) Adoption of the Working Definition of Antisemitism set out by the European Union's Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, in order to determine the Inquiry's terms of reference.

The definition, reprinted in its entirety in Appendix B, would provide a useful framework for the Inquiry's study since it includes contemporary as well as historical manifestations of antisemitism, such as denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, calling the State of Israel a "racist endeavor", or applying to it double standards not required of any other democratic nation. The Inquiry's scope would be too narrow if its terms of reference were limited to more traditional antisemitism alone.

iii) Public acknowledgement of growing antisemitism on campus under the guise of anti-Israel campaigning.

The campaign of hate that is in danger of becoming entrenched in Canadian universities, needs to be publicly acknowledged, as has already been done in Britain in the 2007 *Report of the British All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism*. Such action would set a framework, setting down boundaries within which campus administrations can work with government and community partners to address this growing problem.

iv) Criminalization of boycotts against the Jewish State as discriminatory.

A strong public stance is needed, with legislation to support it, to acknowledge that boycotts against Israel are discriminatory and thus illegal. This would follow the precedent set recently in the European Court of Human Rights. Such action would be well within the parameters of the EUMC's Working Definition on Antisemitism (see Appendix B), since the anti-Israel boycott campaign singles out Israel alone, applying standards and stratagems not used against any other country, in an overall bid to isolate the Jewish State and delegitimize its existence.

v) A ban on racist groups in Canada.

Since racist organizations are not presently prohibited in Canada, the growth of far-right-wing groups in Canada has been left unchecked. That failure puts Canada in violation of Article 4(b) of the relevant UN *Convention*. The Supreme Court of Canada, in the case of Suresh, held that the provision in the *Immigration Act*, which allows for deportation based on membership in a terrorist organization, is constitutional. The implication of the judgment is that a prohibition against racist groups would also be constitutional.

vi) A crack-down on online antisemitism

Attention needs to be focused both on Internet processes, and on its infrastructure - architecture, protocols and software - in order to understand the technical, as well as the strategic and policy issues involved in fighting online hate. Options need to be explored for adapting tracking systems currently in use to counter child exploitation, so as to be able to deal with online incidents of hate. As well, enhanced tools should be developed for tracing the online funding of hate groups, based on the possibility of utilizing existing fraud detection technology.

vii) Inclusion of Holocaust Denial as a hate crime offence.

Since Holocaust denial is one of the most insidious forms of antisemitism, the *Criminal Code* needs an amendment - along the lines of the German legislation - to make it clear that the hate crime offence encompasses Holocaust denial. Such a provision could inhibit the dissemination of Holocaust denial, whether in a foreign language or in English. We note, however, that this amendment would need to be "much more finely tailored" than the former *Criminal Code* false news provision struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada as unconstitutional in the Zundel case.

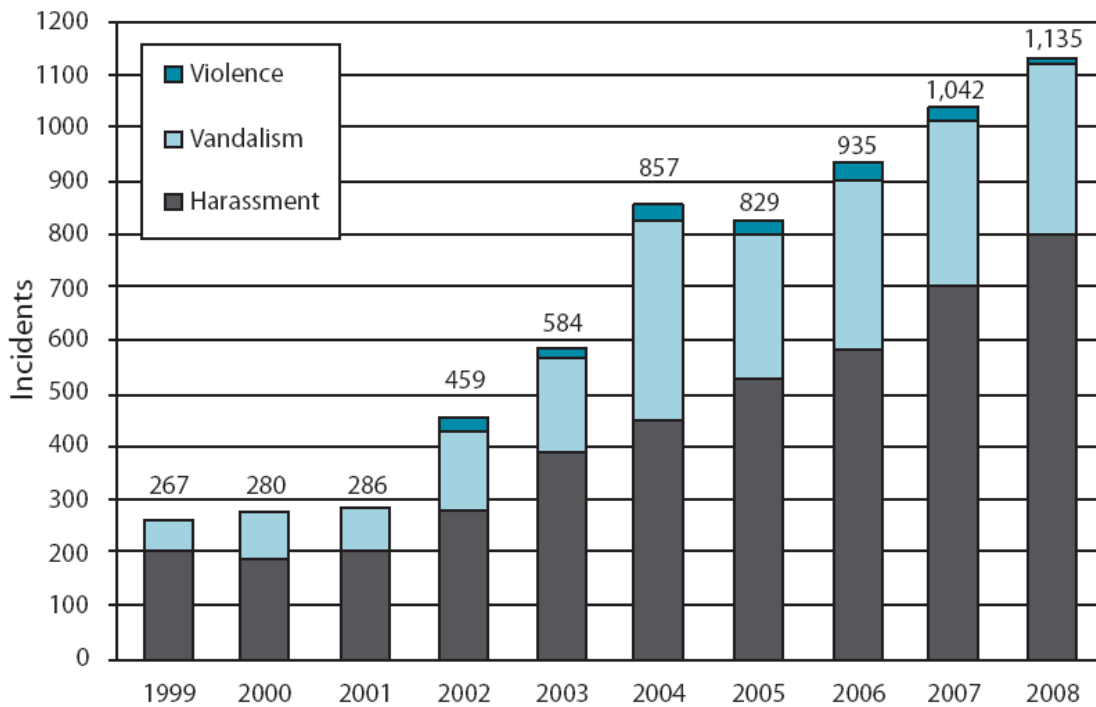
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2008 Audit of Antisemitic Incidents

For twenty-seven years, the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada has documented hate-related incidents against Jews in this country in its annual *Audit of Antisemitic Incidents*. This study provides an important picture of racism against the Jewish community, as expressed in incidents of harassment, vandalism or violence against individual Jews or community institutions.

Findings of the *Audit* include:

- 1,135 antisemitic incidents were reported in 2008, the highest figure ever recorded in the history of the *Audit* and an increase of 8.9% from 2007.
- A ten-year view shows that incidents have increased four-fold over the last decade. When the League released its first *Audit* 27 years ago, the number of reported incidents was only 63.
- The majority of incidents across Canada consistently occur in Ontario. In 2008, 682 incidents (60.1% of the total) took place in Ontario. Of these, 538 incidents took place in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and 62 in Ottawa.
- Incidents in Quebec - representing 21.6% of all Canadian cases - dropped by 15.8% to 245, compared to 291 in 2007. Of these, 201 incidents took place in Montreal.
- Incidents were up by 31.1% in British Columbia (80 cases) and by 56.3% in Saskatchewan (25). There were 34 incidents in Manitoba and 19 in the Atlantic Region. In Alberta, there were 50 incidents, a marked increase of 78.6% from the 28 reported in 2007.
- The 1,135 incidents across Canada break down as follows: 803 cases of harassment (70.7%), 318 of vandalism (28%) and 14 of violence (1.2%). As in previous years, harassment continues to comprise the majority of cases.



Trends

- There were 50 incidents targeting Jewish places of worship and 17 against community centres. Incidents included death threats against Rabbis and synagogue staff, as well as vandalism of Jewish communal institutions. Such incidents were perpetrated right across the country, including Moncton, Montreal, Toronto, Barrie, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Vancouver and Kelowna.
- 105 incidents targeted Jews in their own homes. Incidents included mezuzah desecrations, which targeted individuals who identified their homes as Jewish.
- 76 incidents occurred on university campuses, continuing the sustained level of tension in 2007, when there were 78 incidents.
- Reflecting the range of new technologies used to disseminate hate, there were 405 reports of web-based hate activity with a Canadian connection, a 30.6% increase from the 310 cases in 2007.
- 547 incidents, close to half the total in Canada overall, took place in the last four months of 2008. This can be linked to fall-out from the developing economic recession and the Bernard Madoff financial scandal. Historically, antisemitism has increased in this type of climate, as disgruntled citizens seek a scapegoat to blame for their personal difficulties.
- Of the 151 incidents that occurred in December, the month with the highest total of the year, 70 related to the emerging war in Gaza. Of these, 36 occurred in the last few days of the year as tensions heightened. This is typically a very quiet period due to the holiday season.

Examples of Incidents

Edmonton, AB – A synagogue is vandalized, and its windows smashed.

Winnipeg, MB – A young Jewish boy traveling with his mother on a public bus is threatened and taunted with antisemitic slurs.

Toronto, ON – A government health worker is called a “Christ Killer” by her supervisor.

London, ON – Public facilities on the University of Western Ontario campus are defaced with antisemitic graffiti.

Thornhill, ON – An email in Russian repeats an age-old blood libel, warning recipients to watch over their children lest they be kidnapped by Jews who will, it is alleged, use the infants’ blood to make matzas (unleavened bread) for Passover.

Toronto, ON – A Jewish organization receives mail blaming Jews for the removal of the Lord’s Prayer from the daily proceedings in the provincial government, as part of an alleged conspiracy to wipe out Christianity.

Montreal, QC – A blogger writes antisemitic comments about Hassidim in Quebec.

Moncton, NB – A number of city sites, including a university, are defaced with antisemitic slurs and swastikas, as part of a vandalism spree.

Sainte-Agathe, QC – A visibly Jewish man visiting the area is assaulted while walking to synagogue, as bystanders watch.

Barrie, ON – A synagogue is defaced with the word “Nazi” just prior to the High Holidays.

Montreal, QC – Bricks are thrown through the windows of a synagogue.

Calgary, AB – A posting on Facebook calls for a “Kick a Jew Day”.

Charlottetown, PEI – A Revenue Canada employee tells a taxpayer not to worry, the agency is “Not Jewing” him.

The full text of the *Audit* can be accessed at: www.bnaibrith.ca

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Appendix B

Definition of Antisemitism according to the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)



WORKING DEFINITION OF ANTISEMITISM

The purpose of this document is to provide a practical guide for identifying incidents, collecting data, and supporting the implementation and enforcement of legislation dealing with antisemitism.

Working definition: *“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.”*

In addition, such manifestations could also target the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. 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 of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, 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 mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.
- Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
- Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).
- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
- 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.

Examples of the ways in which antisemitism manifests itself with regard to the state of Israel taking into account the overall context could include:

- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.
- Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.

Antisemitic acts are criminal when they are so defined by law (for example, denial of the Holocaust 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.