

## Preface

With the outbreak of the second Intifada in October 2000 and Israel's subsequent military actions, particularly in the spring of 2002 in Jenin and Bethlehem, there was a wave of anti-Jewish and anti-Israel attacks and demonstrations in many western European countries. In response, the *European Monitoring Center for Racism and Xenophobia* (EUMC) put together its first report on antisemitism in the then 15 EU member states. This brought the theme of antisemitism back to the public, political and academic agendas of Germany and Europe as a whole. In rapid succession, there were antisemitism conferences hosted by the *Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe* (OSCE) in Vienna (2003), in Berlin (2004) and in Cordoba (2005). Since that time, the subject of antisemitism has been very much in the political eye, and the successor organization to the EUMC, the *Federal Agency for the Protection of Human Rights* (FRA), publishes annual (monitoring) reports on the topic.

With developments in the Middle East conflict, however, a number of important changes also have taken place in this field. Whereas until the late 1990s – particularly in Germany – the vast majority of confrontations with antisemitism were related to the National Socialist past and to questions about adequate remembrance of the persecution and murder of Jews, the center of focus shifted with the turn of the century – and in Germany with the so-called Müllemann-Friedman dispute of May 2002 – towards Israel-related antisemitism, which has continued to be displayed publicly, particularly during phases of escalation of the Middle East conflict. At the time, there was talk of a »new antisemitism« in Europe, in which Israel was the stand-in for »collective Jewry.« To this day, there is great uncertainty about where exactly to draw the line between legitimate and one-sided criticism of Israel's policy vis-à-vis the Palestinians, and comments that are to be considered antisemitic. This uncertainty has prompted increased efforts towards determining a binding definition of antisemitism.

Thus in early 2005 the *EUMC* joined with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and experts to propose a working definition of antisemitism, determining when Israel-related statements can be considered antisemitic. In some European countries the working definition led to greater sensitivity in the registration of certain crimes as antisemitic, but the elements of the definition related to Israel remain disputed despite persistent efforts to resolve this dispute (→ Definition). The question of whether the recent adoption of the definition by the *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance* (IHRA) will have any impact in this direction must remain open here.

With the wave of anti-Jewish and anti-Israel incidents in 2002, in which for the first time young Muslims emerged as an identifiable perpetrator group in some European countries, another development – in addition to the focus on the Middle East conflict – came under scrutiny, namely antisemitism among migrants from predominantly Muslim countries. The extent and character of this antisemitism has been hotly debated since then, with, as usual, very few reliable findings available. Although by now the scope has been extended to include other migrant groups, and though antisemitism is regarded today as a phenomenon within the context of an »immigration society,« there is still a lack of research on the subject. The debate about antisemitism among Muslims and about whether refugees have »imported« antisemitism entered the arena of public discourse at the latest in the summer of 2015, with the massive influx of people from zones of war and crisis in the Middle East and North Africa. In the discussion about whether to accept refugees, questions in particular about their religious identity and their national origins in the Middle East played an increasing role. The emphasis on the Middle East conflict has led to another shift in the public debate, since now the political left wing felt confronted with accusations of antisemitism due to their positions on the conflict. Meanwhile, the largest group of perpetrators then as now – namely, the extreme right wing – was rather overlooked at times.

In addition to this intensified focus on the Middle East conflict, a series of new developments have brought attention to antisemitism as an urgent problem and contributed to the discussion about appropriate measures of prevention and control. A major new threat that has gained increasing public and political attention as of late is the increasing hate speech on the Internet. Completely new avenues of communication have opened up via the »semi-public space« of the Internet, particularly social networks, which allow users to reach an enormous readership for their antisemitic statements, a feat that was much more difficult to accomplish using traditional publishing outlets.

The Internet also eases the spread of conspiracy theories, which in many cases are connected with antisemitic ideas about a Jewish or Zionist world conspiracy and domination of the financial world. This creates a larger, receptive environment for hate messages, with an amplifying tendency that more easily

evades criminal justice. The government was late to recognize this problem and has not found it easy to resolve, since one can hardly apply national regulations to pressure international providers to control the content they disseminate, as the current debate on the topic indicates.

This dissemination of antisemitic material via new media also has drawn the attention of academia and the public away from the political extremes and towards the so-called middle of society, which now appears as a new problem area. But actually, a look back at the history of the Federal Republic of Germany shows that this is not at all a new phenomenon and that antisemitic attitudes in the middle of society were even more common in the first post-war years than today. Despite the fact that the situation has improved, antisemitic attitudes remain widespread in the population, so that latent, culturally rooted resentments can be reactivated under certain circumstances. The focus on the »middle« should underscore that antisemitism is not merely a phenomenon limited to small fringe groups but rather that it also is found among those who regard themselves as socially and politically mainstream and who also meet the socio-economic criterion to be considered »middle class.« However defined, this »middle« is very important for the perception and evaluation of antisemitism as well as for its spread and development – because this segment of society represents the vast majority of the public; is addressed by politics; and includes numerous relevant societal actors. Thus the »middle« is and remains a central field for intervention against and prevention of antisemitism.

In addition to being fueled by the opening of new means of communication through the Internet, antisemitism received a boost through the debate over Islam, terrorism and immigration / flight. This debate and the financial crisis have given impetus to right-wing populist movements (such as Pegida), political parties (like the Alternative for Germany/AfD) and conspiracy theory movements in Germany and elsewhere, which in turn intensify these debates. Even if antisemitism was not and is not a dominant phenomenon in these circles, its actors have created a political climate of polarization through inflammatory slogans, nationalist-populist ideology as well as implicitly or explicitly formulated conspiracy theories. Supporters and detractors of an open, pluralistic society are just as opposed to one another as right-populist parties or citizens' movements are to the political elites and established media; the tone towards minorities and »strangers« has overall become more harsh and thus unsettled the Jewish minority as well, even if right-populist parties and movements currently concentrate on »the Muslims« and try hard to avoid the appearance of antisemitism.

As a result of these societal changes, the study of antisemitism in politics, academia and civil society organizations also has intensified, a development that in turn impacts the perceived meaning and urgency of the problem. A whole network of domestic and international organizations, NGOs and academics has emerged that deals with antisemitism in its various manifestations, preparing reports, holding conferences, taking strong positions against antisemitism and discussing possibilities for prevention. An attempt is made to gain public attention to the theme, while at the same time surveys show that the vast majority of Germans (77 percent) believe that antisemitic attitudes are not widespread in Germany. There is a gap in perception; while Jews perceive antisemitism as a central problem due to their everyday experience of it, there is little sensitivity towards the phenomenon among the general public. This fact, too, provides important jumping-off points for prevention.

This second report of the *Independent Expert Group on Antisemitism* (UEA) is an expression of the greatly increased political attention given to this problem. It points to the many manifestations of antisemitism in various social spheres, asks about perceptions of antisemitism from a Jewish perspective and presents both state and civil society efforts to combat and prevent antisemitism, while also examining the limitations and deficits of these efforts.