

# Report on Antisemitism 2021

for the German, Italian and  
Romansh language areas  
of Switzerland



Stiftung gegen  
Rassismus und  
Antisemitismus

Fondation contre le racisme et l'antisémitisme  
Fondazione contro il razzismo e l'antisemitismo  
Foundation against racism and antisemitism



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[official website](#)

## Foreword

There is tension in the air in Switzerland. The ongoing pandemic is undermining the Swiss sense of togetherness and creating new conflicts between all sorts of groups. It is hardly surprising that this climate allows antisemitic ideas and attitudes to flourish. For many, the need to explain and come to terms with the situation also makes them want to find a scapegoat and seek retribution. And again, it is not long before Jewish people are singled out for blame. These are also the conditions in which conspiracy theories with antisemitic associations can thrive.

We detected an increase in the number of antisemitic incidents even before the pandemic, but the virus has given further impetus to the trend. In other words, the Covid crisis is acting as a trigger for antisemitic attitudes already present in society. While other triggers – an armed conflict in the Middle East, say – are restricted to a period of a few days or weeks, the effect of the pandemic has continued unabated for almost two years. The widespread presence of antisemitic conspiracy theories was already a cause for concern but since the outbreak of the virus the adherents of conspiracy theories have grown rapidly in number. And theories with an antisemitic background have achieved great popularity.

A crisis of this kind, when social cohesion is weakened and compromised, has consequences: the boundary line for what can be said in public undergoes a perceptible shift. Inhibition levels fall, feelings of resentment grow and sometimes hate can even be translated into action. Jewish people are among those to have been at the receiving end of this. The desecration of synagogues in early 2020 during the second wave of the pandemic while the second lockdown was in force is a clear example of these tendencies. The increase in the amount of antisemitic material being sent

is also a sign of the new prevailing climate. The SIG and GRA have repeatedly warned that words can lead to actions.

Added to this is the increasing prevalence of comparisons associating Covid measures with the Shoah and the National Socialist regime. These comparisons are false, absurd and objectionable. Even if they are not antisemitic as such, they inflame the situation and create a hotbed for antisemitic prejudices, stereotypes and attitudes.

For these reasons, we are appealing to our politicians to come up with a comprehensive strategy to counter the circumstances that allow the breeding grounds for antisemitism to form. In specific terms, this means greater investment in education to combat conspiracy theories, more government backing for projects to prevent antisemitism and a government commitment at long last to monitor antisemitism and racism and review the legal means for recording hate speech.

This is not only a challenge for the Swiss government and institutions, however. We are appealing to the entire civilian population to raise its voice loudly and clearly to help counter the current mood in the country.

As a society, we must return to a culture of fact-based, reasoned discussion and oppose antisemitism and racism resolutely and consistently.

Ralph Lewin, President of the SIG and  
Pascal Pernet, President of the GRA



## Report an antisemitic incident



Have you experienced or witnessed an antisemitic incident?

Have you seen an antisemitic post on social media?

Contact us via

+41 43 305 07 77

[incident@swissjews.ch](mailto:incident@swissjews.ch)

[swissjews.ch/reportincident](https://swissjews.ch/reportincident)

[Report incident](#)

Any antisemitic incidents you have personally experienced or witnessed in the German, Italian or Romansh language areas of Switzerland can be reported to the SIG Office. These may include physical assaults, verbal abuse, offensive graffiti, letters and messages, or posts or comments seen on the internet or social media. The incidents will be analysed and classified by us, and counselling offered to those affected.

Please get in touch even if you are unsure whether the incident is antisemitic in nature or not. We will gladly help you with the classification.



## Overview

53

Incidents  
(real world)

Of which

0

Physical assault

1

Damage to property

7

Offensive graffiti

16

Verbal abuse

26

Statements

3

Public acts

806

Incidents  
(online)

Of which

51%

Conspiracy theories

37%

General antisemitism

8%

Israel-related  
antisemitism

4%

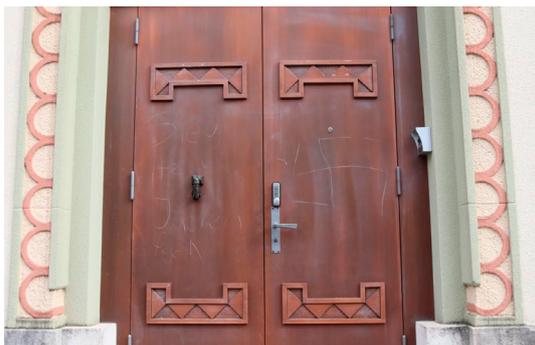
Shoah denial /  
trivialization



# 1. General analysis

## Antisemitism in the real world

Compared with the previous year, there was an increase in the number of real-world antisemitic incidents recorded (2021: 53, 2020: 47). An increase in the number of sent items containing antisemitic content (2021: 23, 2020: 15) was a major factor in this. The number of cases of verbal abuse (16) and public statements (7) increased less sharply than the previous year. There was a fall in the cases of offensive



The entrance to Biel Synagogue: a sharp instrument was used to etch antisemitic slogans and a swastika into it.

graffiti (7). In 2021 no cases of physical assault were reported, thankfully. It is still necessary to assume a certain shortfall in the figures, particularly where verbal abuse and comments are concerned, as many incidents are not reported to the SIG or the police. This is unavoidable when collecting data based on voluntary reporting. However, as long as reporting behaviour remains constant from year to year it is still possible to make comparisons over the course of time.

## Antisemitism online

Antisemitism continues to proliferate in the digital world. During the reporting year, a significantly higher number of online incidents (806) were recorded than in 2020 (485) – an increase of 66%. The majority of the incidents spotted and reported came from the Telegram messenger service (61%) and the Twitter short message service (28,2%). A far smaller proportion was seen on Facebook and in online media comments sections.

There are several reasons for the lower number of incidents on Facebook. Firstly, many newspapers have stopped posting articles about Judaism or the conflict in the Middle East on their Facebook pages as in previous years it has led to large quantities of unmoderated and openly antisemitic comments. Secondly, in response to massive criticism, Facebook has started to delete antisemitic posts and groups more quickly and efficiently. According to media reports has also had an effect in Switzerland. As a consequence, many users intent on disseminating antisemitic content have switched to other platforms (Telegram, for example). Some users admitted as much themselves on Telegram. One welcome development is the fall in the number of antisemitic incidents in the comments sections of the online portals of media outlets. This shows that most editorial departments are acting responsibly and, particularly with regard to contentious topics, are carefully moderating comments or not allowing them at all. One exception during the reporting year was “Inside Paradeplatz”, with three articles which between them spawned 15 antisemitic comments.

It is often difficult to place the authors of antisemitic comments in political or social categories. Where it is possible to do so, we find an extremely diverse variety of contexts: rightwing and left-wing extremists, radical animal rights campaigners, extremist Muslims and members of “mainstream society” are all represented.



## Antisemitism among Covid sceptics

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic in the spring of 2020, Switzerland has seen the emergence of groups who refuse to accept the measures to contain the pandemic. In Switzerland they are known as the “corona rebels”, a designation many of the groups choose to apply to themselves. As far as the SIG is aware, their members are mainly organized around group chats on Telegram and repeatedly make their presence known by staging demonstrations both large and small throughout Switzerland. The significance of Telegram in particular as a channel for people representing extreme opinions and conspiracy theories has grown over recent years. There are many adherents of such theories among the Covid sceptics and several of these chats have been followed by the SIG monitoring team since May 2020 as a result.

As reported last year, it was again noted that antisemitic content continues to be published in these group chats. Although there was an increase in antisemitic content in 2021, it still does not represent the majority opinion among these contributors – most of the antisemitic posts originated from a just a few users. Many of the posts are not clearly identifiable as antisemitic by all users as they are encoded and expressed in a convoluted way. Objections therefore only occurred in the case of open antisemitism. In the reporting year, 451 incidents were recorded where Covid sceptics were involved, significantly more than the previous year (143). The fact that these chats were only monitored by the SIG for eight months in 2020 is also a factor for consideration. This accounts for over half of all online incidents recorded in this report and under no circumstances should it be ignored or deemed not to be a problem. With some groups numbering several thousand members who post between a hundred and almost a thousand messages a day, we are only dealing with relatively small numbers. However, the increase in the pro-

portion of Covid-related incidents recorded online this year shows that the pandemic is an important trigger and that the Covid sceptics do attract people with questionable views.

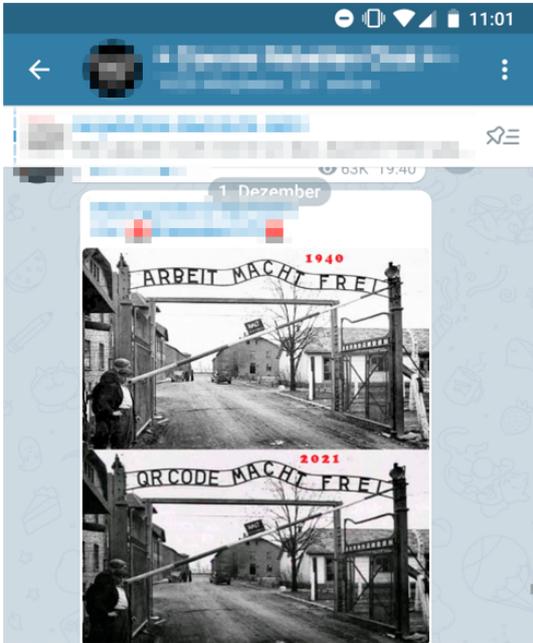
## Comparisons with the Shoah

Another widespread serious problem in the Covid-sceptic environment is the frequent and improper occurrence of comparisons to the Nazi regime and the persecution and murder of the Jewish people during the Shoah. This has been observed in group chats as well as at demonstrations. For example, the star of David with the words “unvaccinated” or “Covid certificate” can be spotted both on Telegram and at demonstrations. The comparisons have increased further, particularly in connection with the Covid certificate, and have even been promoted by well-known influencers. The SIG and GRA have therefore launched a number of appeals against the use of these comparisons. They have been listened to and discussed by politicians and the public.

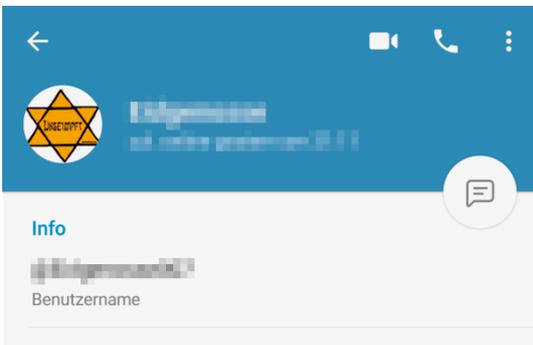
Comparisons between Covid measures and the Shoah and the Nazi dictatorship lack any basis in reality and are unquestionably improper. However, according to the IHRA’s definition of antisemitism they cannot be classed as antisemitic, nor categorized as “Shoah trivialization”. As long as these comparisons do not specifically and publicly demean the Holocaust they will not be recorded as antisemitic incidents in this report. Observations made it clear that among the Covid sceptics such comparisons were not regarded as explicitly trivializing the suffering and terror of the victims of the Nazi policies of exclusion, expulsion and extermination, but as an exaggerated elevation of their own sense of victimhood.

Although the comparisons are not in themselves antisemitic in this context, their number, frequency and prevalence do lead to a dilution of the awareness of the events of those times and thus to a degree of trivialization.





Post using Shoah comparison.



A Telegram user's profile picture.

## Shoah denial/trivialization

In this category, 38 incidents were recorded during the reporting year. As such, it remains the smallest of the four categories of content, however there was an increase in the number of incidents (2020: 25). These included comments that explicitly denied the Shoah, for example disputing that six million Jews had been murdered and that extermination camps with gas chambers had existed. There were also cases, however, in which words such as “allegedly” or “so-called” were used with the aim of obfuscating the denial. Under the heading of Shoah trivialization there were comments and posts containing tasteless jokes and remarks saying, for example, that the concentration camps “weren’t so bad”, but there were also frequent occurrences of claims such as “Hitler didn’t manage to finish the job”. Of the 38 incidents in this category, 28 were denials of the Shoah and 10 trivialized it.

Statements of this nature are made by people from all sorts of backgrounds. Among the extreme right there are people who deny the genocide of the Jews as well as those who celebrate it. Many authors of comments and posts that deny or trivialize the Shoah cannot be placed in a specific category, however.

## Israel-related antisemitism

The 74 incidents of antisemitism associated with the state of Israel represented a slight increase on the number recorded in the previous year (62). The majority of these incidents occurred in April, May and June, a period which saw a renewed escalation of the conflict in the Middle East. The rest of the time, the media focus on the coronavirus pandemic meant that, as in the previous year, the Swiss media reported far less on the Middle East conflict, causing fewer triggers with the potential to lead to antisemitic incidents. It is interesting to compare this situation with 2014, when the conflict between

Israel and Hamas on the Gaza Strip was a big enough trigger to cause a sharp increase in the number of online incidents. In 2021, however, the Covid pandemic dominated the public discourse to such an extent that the corresponding Israel-related trigger had a much weaker effect on the online incidents.

Israel-related antisemitism makes itself known in very diverse ways. The originators of these comments and posts come from all sorts of backgrounds, with extremist Muslim and far-left groups in the majority. Some authors appear to come from “mainstream society”, however.

## Conspiracy theories

Conspiracy theories, often featuring absurd conclusions and usually based on a world Jewish conspiracy, accounted for a larger proportion of all incidents than previously. 51% of all online incidents contained current antisemitic conspiracy theories. These conspiracy theories, which circulate almost exclusively on the internet, made up the largest of the four categories of content. It is evident that a large number of adherents of such conspiracy theories often now amalgamate the older conspiracies with theories about the Covid pandemic. For example, the “genocide of white people” orchestrated by the Jews is no longer being effected through the immigration of black people and Muslims, but also through vaccinations which sterilise or kill people.

The publication of the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” in “Harus”, the magazine of the Swiss Nationalist Party PNOS showed that there is still life left in even the oldest and best-known antisemitic conspiracy theory. This text, proven to be a fake, purports to be the minutes of a meeting of “international Jewish conspirators” as they reveal their plans for world domination. The “Protocols” were written by antisemites in Russia in 1900 and distributed around the world from there. This antisemitic pamphlet is

consciously used to propagate the myth of a world Jewish conspiracy. As a result, the SIG filed charges for a breach of the anti-discrimination law, article 261bis, with the public prosecutor’s office of the Bernese Oberland. The public prosecutor of the canton of Bern subsequently found the leader of the PNOS GUILTY of racial discrimination. A penal order to this effect was issued, and a suspended monetary penalty as well as a fine were imposed.

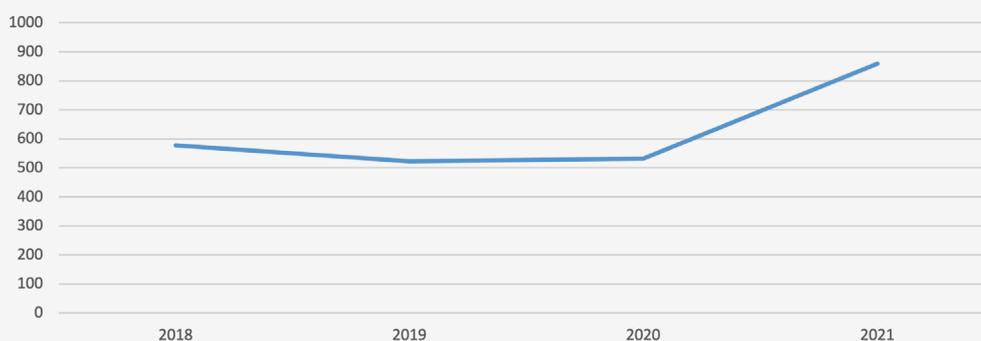


## 2. Statistics

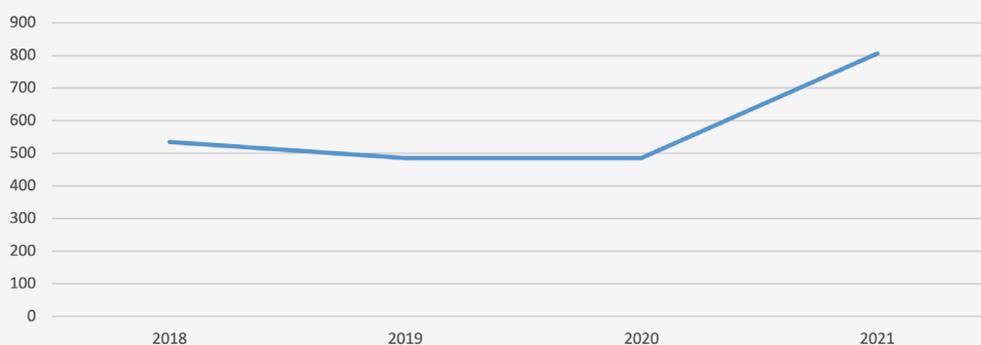
### 2.1 Incidents in 2021 in the German, Italian and Romansh language areas of Switzerland

#### Antisemitic incidents – trends over time

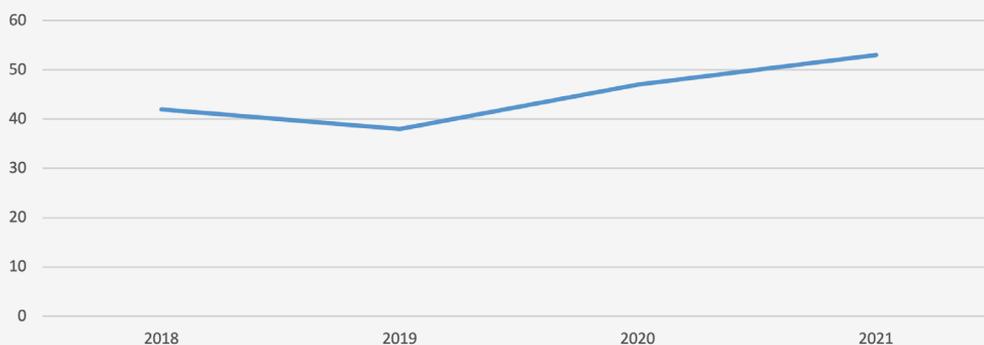
Change in the number of antisemitic incidents  
2018–2021 (all incidents)



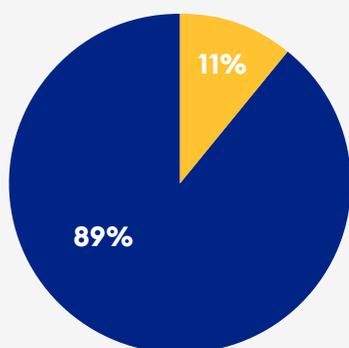
Change in the number of antisemitic incidents  
2018–2021 (online)



## Change in the number of antisemitic incidents 2018–2021 (real world)



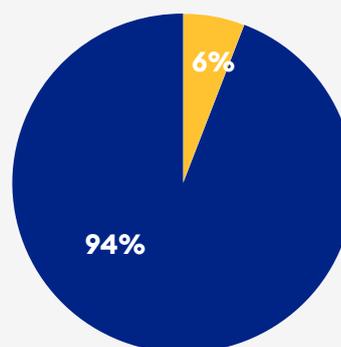
## Distribution of incidents



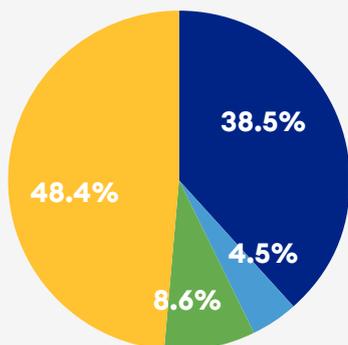
### Distribution of incidents reported and observed (all)



### Distribution of real world and online incidents



## Distribution of incidents by content

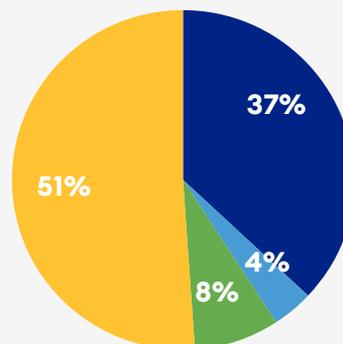


### Distribution by content (all incidents)

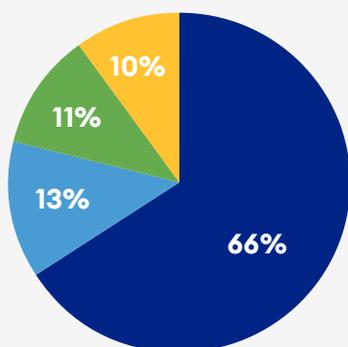
- General antisemitism **38.5%**
- Shoah denial/trivialization **4.5%**
- Israel-related antisemitism **8.6%**
- Antisemitic conspiracy theories **48.4%**

## Distribution by content (online)

- General antisemitism **37%**
- Shoah denial/trivialization **4%**
- Israel-related antisemitism **8%**
- Antisemitic conspiracy theories **51%**



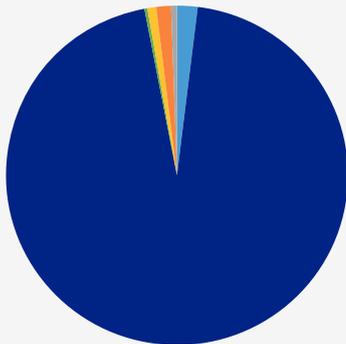
## Distribution by content (real world)



- General antisemitism **66%**
- Shoah denial/trivialization **13%**
- Israel-related antisemitism **11%**
- Antisemitic conspiracy theories **10%**



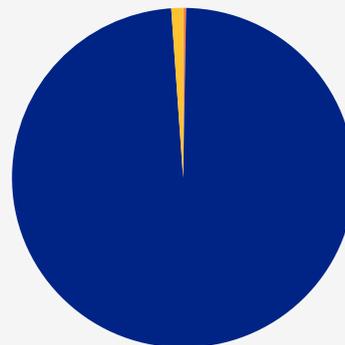
## Distribution of incidents by type



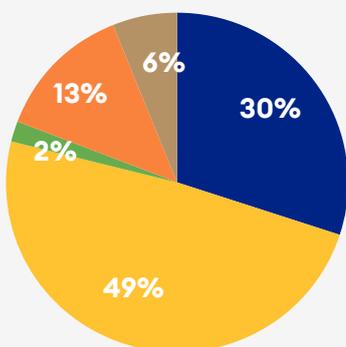
### Distribution by type (all incidents)



## Distribution by type (online)



## Distribution by type (real world)

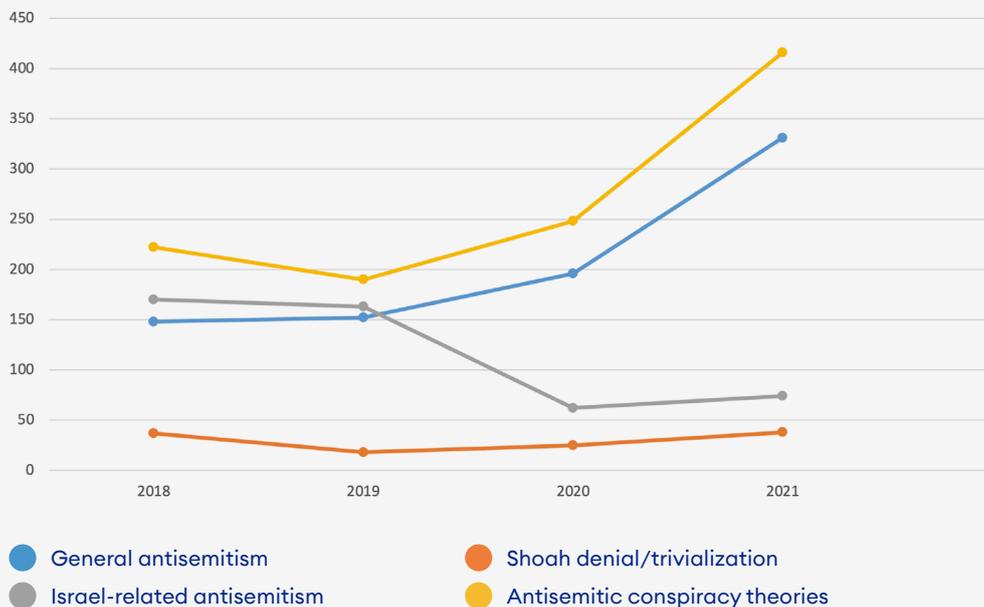


## Distribution of all incidents by month for 2020 and 2021

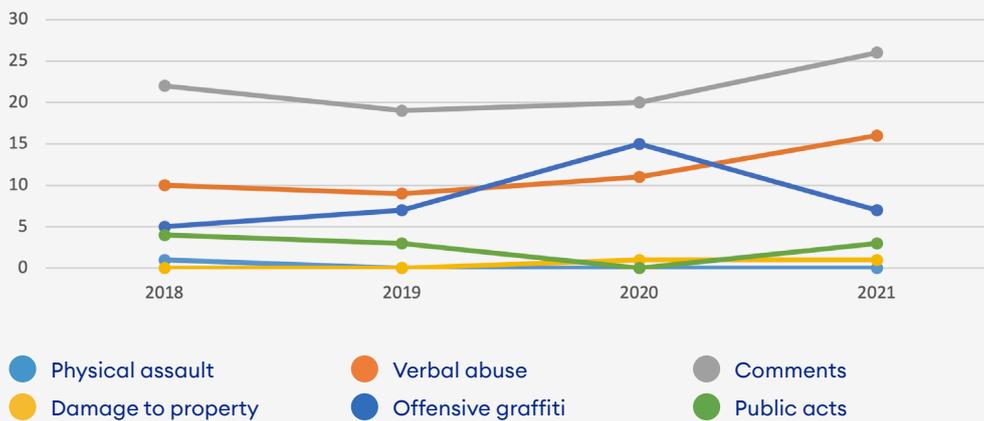
Month	Total incidents		Actions		Sent items		Online	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
January	42	62	2	4	4	1	36	57
February	75	54	1	2	2	3	72	49
March	105	29	0	1	4	0	101	28
April	71	38	5	2	1	2	65	34
May	103	43	5	6	4	1	94	36
June	63	32	5	3	2	1	56	28
July	82	42	1	3	1	1	80	38
August	74	21	5	2	1	0	68	19
September	62	39	0	1	2	1	60	37
October	59	42	3	2	0	1	56	39
November	77	74	1	5	2	1	74	68
December	46	56	2	1	0	3	44	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>859</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>485</b>

## Trends since 2018

### Trends by content (all incidents)



### Trends by type (real world)



## 2.2 Online incidents

### Recording online incidents

There are certain difficulties associated with monitoring the occurrence of antisemitism online. The large number of online posts makes it impossible to cover all social media platforms and online products, even with significant resources. The cases recorded do not therefore serve to determine the absolute level of antisemitic comments on the internet, but it is possible for the SIG to use its online monitoring to identify certain trends and moods and illustrate them in the Report on Antisemitism. The figures derived in this way also help to produce a useful and informative analysis.

### Distribution of online incidents

The table below shows where online incidents were registered. It should be noted that in the case the media outlets (Nau, Tages-Anzeiger, Basler Zeitung, etc.) only incidents observed in the comments sections on the website of the relevant source are counted. Comments posted on articles published on the outlet’s Facebook page are categorized under “Facebook”.

Naturally, we have no knowledge of how many online comments on media or social media platforms are deleted before they are published or spotted by us. However, various media outlets have told the SIG that with certain articles a large number of comments are not published because they contain antisemitic content, among other things.

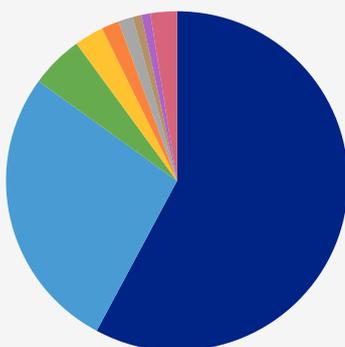
In comparison with 2020, there was once again less antisemitic content on Facebook. The 33 incidents on this platform accounted for just 4.2% of the total. On the one hand, the Covid pandemic meant that fewer articles were published on subjects which could have



	Telegram	Twitter	Facebook	Inside Paradeplatz	Nau	Instagram	SRF Online	Blick	Other	Total
January	19	14			1				2	36
February	36	16	3	13	1	2			1	72
March	64	28	3		4	1			1	101
April	37	26							2	65
May	45	31	6		1	4	3		4	94
June	23	32	1							56
July	49	23	7						1	80
August	51	13	2						2	68
September	43	15	2							60
October	43	8	1		1			2	1	56
November	54	16	3			1				74
December	28	5	8	2					1	44
<b>Total 2021</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>806</b>
Percentage share	61%	28.2%	4.5%	1.9%	1%	1%	0.4%	0.2%	1.9%	100%

acted as triggers for antisemitic comments (e.g. Middle East conflict, Jewish life). On the other, many media outlets also declined to publish these kinds of articles on their Facebook pages. As a result, the number of antisemitic comments on articles published on Facebook decreased. This was also the case with the comments sections in the media. The number of incidents on Twitter remained at 221, accounting for 28.1% of online incidents.

However, the group chats on Telegram on the subject of Covid, observed since May 2020, continued to generate many online antisemitic incidents and were responsible for 62.2% of online incidents.



Distribution of online incidents by platform

- Telegram **61%**
- Twitter **28.2%**
- Facebook **4.5%**
- Inside Paradeplatz **1.9%**
- Nau **1%**
- Instagram **1%**
- SRF Online **0.4%**
- Blick **0.2%**
- Other **1.9%**

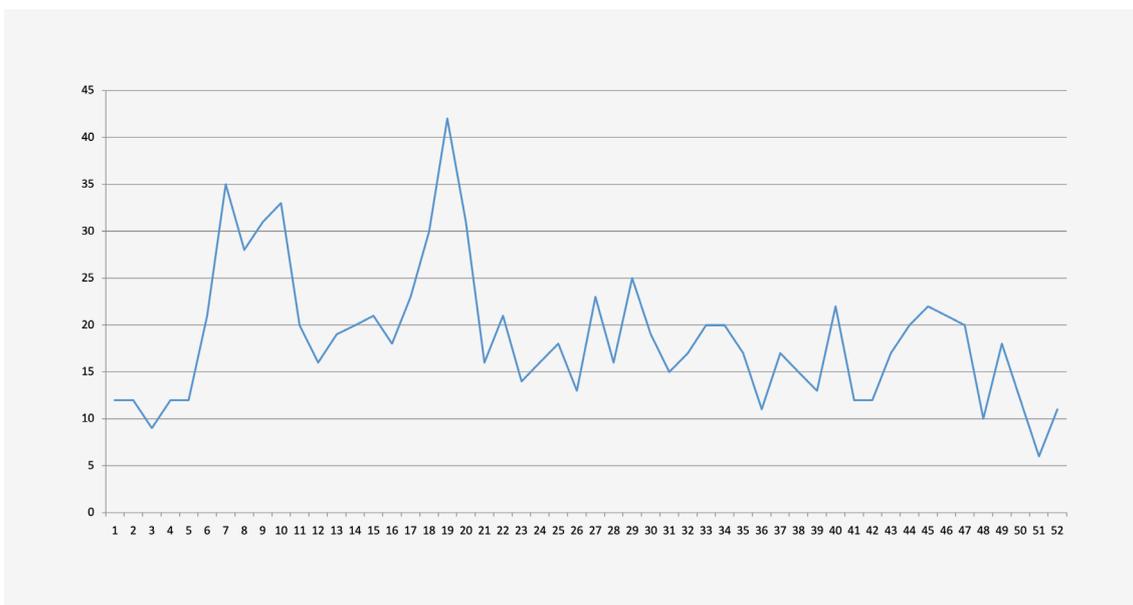
## 2.3 Triggers

Triggers are events or occurrences that, for a limited period of time, cause a massive spike in the number of antisemitic incidents or borderline cases of antisemitism. They may relate to international events (e.g. associated with the Middle East) or national ones (local ballots, court cases, etc.) or to media reports.

The graph below shows the total number of incidents and borderline cases per calendar week, illustrating how the figures peaked repeatedly during the course of the year. For this reporting year it was once again impossible to associate most of the peaks with any specific trigger, as the “Covid pandemic” trigger occurred throughout the year.

### The following peaks can be associated with a specific trigger:

- Calendar week 7: an article in “Inside Paradeplatz” containing numerous anti-Jewish prejudices, along with the reply to it from SIG President Ralph Lewin, led to a large number of antisemitic and borderline antisemitic comments in the online version of the newspaper.
- Calendar week 10: discussion of a Swiss memorial for victims of the Nazis led to some antisemitic and borderline antisemitic comments.
- Calendar weeks 18–20: the escalation of the conflict between Israel and Palestine in May 2021 acted as a trigger for a large number of antisemitic and borderline antisemitic comments and posts, especially on social media.
- Calendar week 40: coverage of the case of the German singer Gil Ofarim led to several antisemitic and borderline antisemitic comments.



## 3. The most serious incidents

### Damage to property

- In February, a sharp instrument was used to etch antisemitic slogans and a swastika into the door of Biel Synagogue.

### Online

- In January, a Zoom event hosted by the Jewish Liberal Community JLG in Zurich about the museum in Brungasse was gatecrashed by a large number of people displaying pictures of Hitler and obscene graffiti.
- Also in January, an online lecture in Jewish Studies at the University of Basel was disrupted with videos from Nazi Germany captioned “The Holocaust was a lie”.
- In April, a highly antisemitic e-mail was sent to the Department of Health BAG and copied to dozens of other recipients.

### Verbal abuse / comments

- In April, a car passed just behind a strictly religious Jewish man on a pedestrian crossing in Zurich. The driver leant out of the window and shouted: “I’ve got you Jews in my sights. We should run you all over.”
- In April, a landlord from the canton of Bern repeatedly swore at Jews and Muslims and said they should all be beheaded and the Holocaust was a lie.
- On a Shabbat evening in May, some orthodox Jews in Zurich were shouted at by a group of people hurling insults such as “F\*cking Jews”.

- In June, a Jewish married couple from the Basel area were involved in an argument about a car engine being left to idle when the neighbour called them “F\*cking Jewish scum.”
- In October, a car drove past several Jewish people in Zurich, sounding its horn. A Nazi salute was made out of the window. There was also shouts of “F\*cking Jews” and “Heil Hitler”.
- In November, a Jewish schoolgirl from the canton of Zurich was repeatedly subjected to antisemitic verbal abuse by a fellow pupil, who repeatedly called out “Hitler should have killed you” and “Hitler should have killed your whole family” in front of almost all the other pupils.

### Sent items

- In February, the President of the SIG received a letter blaming Swiss Jews for the conflict in the Middle East and for antisemitism. The author also launched threats against Jews and wrote that the SIG President should have his tongue cut out.
- In July, the SIG received an e-mail with a picture of Adolf Hitler captioned “The truth will never vanish”.

### Offensive graffiti

- In August, graffiti including antisemitic slogans and swastikas was found on several occasions around a train station in the canton of Aargau.
- In July, a caricature of a Jew was drawn on the board during break-time at a secondary school. The class included Jewish pupils.



## 4. The situation in the Italian language area

The SIG office also receives reports of antisemitic incidents from the Italian-speaking region of Switzerland and records them. Only a few incidents are reported, however.

As of spring 2022, the Goren Monti Ferrari Foundation, supported by the Università della Svizzera Italiana, is to open a dedicated reporting office for recording and registering antisemitic incidents in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland. These reports will be relayed to the SIG and included in the 2022 Report on Antisemitism.

## 5. Summary of overall situation in Switzerland

There are two antisemitism reports in Switzerland: one for the German, Italian and Romansh language areas and one for French-speaking Switzerland. This reflects the federal and multicultural character of Switzerland and the Jewish organizations. This joint publication summarizes the most important trends. The figures for the whole of Switzerland are presented and published in full and concurrently for the first time this year.

	German- and Italian-speaking Switzerland		French-speaking Switzerland		All of Switzerland	
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
Incidents real world	53	47	22	15	75	62
Online incidents	806	485	143	132	949	617
<b>All incidents</b>	<b>859</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>1024</b>	<b>679</b>
Antisemitic conspiracy theories	416	249	23	48	439	297
Israel-related antisemitism	74	62	31	25	105	87
Shoah denial/trivialization	38	25	78	42	116	67
General antisemitism	331	196	33	32	364	228



Any analysis of the similarities and differences between the country's various language areas must take into account the fact that French-speaking Switzerland is influenced by the culture of France, whereas in the German-speaking area there is an influence, albeit it to a lesser extent, from Germany.

An example: Dieudonné, his antisemitic songs and his "quenelle" gesture are very popular among antisemites in French-speaking Switzerland, whereas the gesture is practically unknown in the German-speaking part of the country.

On the other hand, well-known Germans such as Attila Hildmann and Xavier Naidoo have supporters in the German language area but are quite unfamiliar to people in French-speaking Switzerland.

## Violence, verbal abuse and vandalism

The German and Italian language areas of Switzerland and the French-speaking part all saw an increase in antisemitic incidents in the real world. In the German and French areas synagogues were desecrated, and there were reported incidents of verbal abuse and antisemitic comments made in public. Two cases of physical abuse against Jewish people took place in French-speaking Switzerland. No such cases were recorded in the rest of the country. There was a slight fall in the occurrence of offensive graffiti nationwide.

## Antisemitism online

In 2021 the whole of Switzerland saw a sharp increase in the number of antisemitic incidents on the Internet and on social media. This was more evident in the German language area than in French-speaking Switzerland. The main reason for the rise was the Covid pandemic, which acted as a trigger for antisemitism throughout the year. In May, a relatively

high number of Israel-related incidents were observed both in the German and French language areas. This was due to the escalation of the Israel-Palestine conflict there.

There are differences between the language areas in the platforms used: while Telegram has a very important role in German-speaking Switzerland, it is less well-known in the French-speaking part and therefore not such a prominent presence. On the other hand, more incidents were discovered on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in the French-speaking part of the country.

## Antisemitic conspiracy theories

Conspiracy theories in general are prevalent as a result of the Covid pandemic. This also has an effect on antisemitic conspiracy theories, of course, and there was another increase in the proportion of conspiracy theories contributing to the online incidents in German-speaking Switzerland. In the statistics for French-speaking Switzerland, the number of antisemitic conspiracy theories decreased. This is due to the fact that most conspiracy theories there are linked to the Holocaust, so in the report for French-speaking Switzerland these incidents are placed in the category of "Holocaust denial/trivialization". This category again showed a massive increase. For the whole of Switzerland, the conclusion must be that antisemitic conspiracy theories are continuing to gain traction.

## Holocaust denial

Denial or trivialization of the Holocaust has increased across the whole of Switzerland, albeit to a lesser extent in the German language area than in French-speaking Switzerland. Some of the responsibility for the sharp increase in the French language area is held by a website that constantly published new



articles on the subject, including, as previously mentioned, linking conspiracy theories to the denial of the Holocaust.

## 6. Safety of the Jewish community in Switzerland

In its most extreme form, antisemitism manifests itself in physical assaults on Jewish people and institutions. The Jewish community and its institutions in Switzerland are subject to a heightened level of threat, with meeting places, synagogues and schools all potential targets for terrorist attacks. This danger emanates from far-right and Islamist groups in particular. This assessment of the situation is based on the experiences of a number of terrorist attacks worldwide and in Europe. The Nachrichtendienst des Bundes NDB (Federal Intelligence Service) confirms this view in its annual review and classifies the Jewish and Muslim communities as being at increased risk.

Europe has been confronted with the rising threat of extremist violence for over ten years. The large number of attacks prove that this is not a temporary problem but a permanent and real threat to safety. Over a dozen European countries have been affected, demonstrating that this kind of terrorist activity does not recognize national borders. Attacks have repeatedly and specifically targeted Jewish institutions. The attacks on the Jewish museum in Brussels, a synagogue in Copenhagen, a Jewish school in Toulouse, a kosher supermarket in Paris and a synagogue in Halle are examples of antisemitic aggression targeted at the Jewish community. Around the world, further examples include the attacks on synagogues in Pittsburgh and San Diego in the United States.

The Jewish community in Switzerland has faced rising demands on its security for decades and has responded quickly to the increased threat evident in recent years. Safety and security arrangements covering building security, security staff and training have been updated and reinforced. Jewish communities still have to meet most of the resulting costs themselves – these are estimated to be four to five million Swiss francs per year nationwide. Implementing proper security for Jewish institutions is non-negotiable and reducing security measures is not an option, despite the heavy financial burden. The Jewish communities reached the limit of their ability to pay for this long ago and are consequently being forced to make cuts to other budget areas, such as training, events and education. This affects the very purpose of a religious community: the practice of their religion.

After years of debates about accountability and responsibilities regarding safety and security, this unsatisfactory situation was acknowledged by the federal government in 2017, and in November 2019, the Federal Council passed the “Verordnung über Massnahmen zur Gewährleistung der Sicherheit von Minderheiten mit besonderen Schutzbedürfnissen” (regulation on measures to guarantee the security of minorities requiring special protection). The law is in accordance with the Federal Council’s July 2018 resolution to increase the safety of at-risk minorities and reduce the burden on communities to finance security measures. The measures set out in the resolution are based on a security concept put forward by a working group with representatives from the government, the cantons and municipalities, and the minority groups affected – including the SIG. The resolution states that funding will be provided for safety-related projects implemented by the minorities concerned in the areas of “protection of buildings”, training, awareness-raising and information – up to a maximum of 50% of the total expenditure on each individual project. The



government has set aside up to CHF 500,000 a year for this. In July 2020, January 2021 and January 2022, the Federal Office of Police awarded the first grants to benefit Jewish communities and institutions. The projects put forward by Jewish communities and institutions are targeted primarily at structural measures to increase the security of synagogues, schools and community buildings.

The government explicitly described the law as a first step and announced that it would outline further measures, also with regard to ongoing costs, and examine the case for introducing a federal law to that effect. The cantons were also called upon to increase their commitment in this area. Some cantons and towns have now decided to contribute to the safety costs. The canton and city of Zurich and the canton of Basel City in particular have made more financial aid available and implemented other solutions. The cantons of Aargau, Bern, Lucerne and Waadt and the cities of Biel, Lausanne and Winterthur have also provided support.

The SIG has been in discussion with the government for some time about extending the support and is confident that solutions can be found in the near future to make the protection required for Jewish communities and institutions more financially affordable for them.

## 7. Recommendations and action areas

The annual SIG and GRA Report on Antisemitism provides a well-researched insight into the issue of antisemitism in Switzerland. The presentation and analysis of incidents reported and observed sheds light on the different types of antisemitism and their prevalence and causes. The comparisons over several years allow potentials, trends and dynamics to be interpreted. For the SIG and the GRA themselves, but also and importantly for politicians,

educational establishments, the media and the public too, the report sets out a picture of the overall situation. It serves as a basis on which to develop suitable measures for prevention, education and criminal prosecution. The aim of this list of recommendations is to form a catalogue of measures to be directed towards various bodies and individuals in society. Due to the changing nature of the phenomenon of antisemitism as well as the ongoing debate and other developments in society, the list is neither exhaustive nor final.

### Analysis

In order to understand and take action against antisemitism, a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon must be compiled.

- The government should provide increased funding for the various methods used in civil society to monitor and analyse antisemitism.
- The government should reinforce and enhance its own methods of monitoring and analysis.

### Social media

Antisemitic hate speech and conspiracy theories are widespread on social media. Accordingly, adequate means must be provided to combat this phenomenon.

- The judicial authorities should examine additional methods for monitoring and prosecuting relevant posts and their authors.
- Social media platforms should greatly increase their own efforts to curb such posts and adopt stricter guidelines where they have not already done so.
- The government should investigate how the operators of these platforms can be made to meet their responsibilities more effectively.



## Media

The media also have an important part to play in combating prejudice and hate speech.

- Media outlets should monitor their comments sections on websites and in particular social media channels more extensively, and produce and apply clear community guidelines.
- Media outlets should be more active in providing their own employees with training on the subjects of intercultural knowledge, the use of terms based on stereotypes and the reinforcement of prejudices.

## Prevention and education

In order to deny antisemitism its breeding ground, antisemitic prejudices must be tackled at the earliest opportunity.

- The government should give increased and more targeted support for projects from civil society aimed at preventing antisemitism.
- The education authorities should increase the amount and extent of teaching and information in the school curriculum and programmes of study about minority groups and the formation and consequences of prejudices and stereotypes.
- Companies and organizations should review and develop their guidelines and values relating to religion, minorities, antisemitism and racism.
- The government and cantons are urged to promote and fund educational projects aimed at prevention.

## Speaking out

Everyone can actively oppose antisemitism and racism.

- State authorities and political representatives are called upon to confront antisemitism decisively and audibly with targeted and powerful statements.
- Companies and organizations are called upon to take a clear position condemning antisemitic and racist incidents.
- The public as a whole are called upon to confront antisemitic and racist attitudes in their own environments on an everyday basis.

## 8. Results of the “Zusammenleben Schweiz” survey (2020)

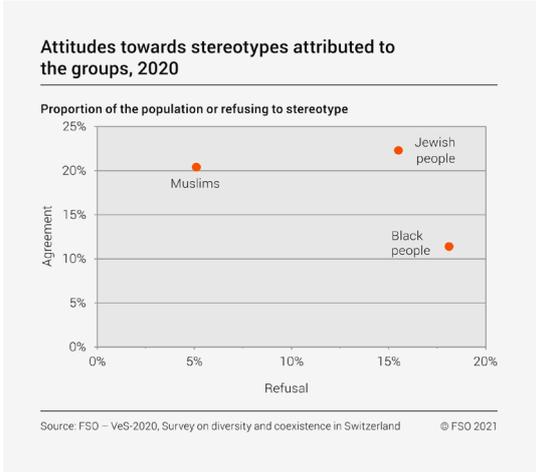
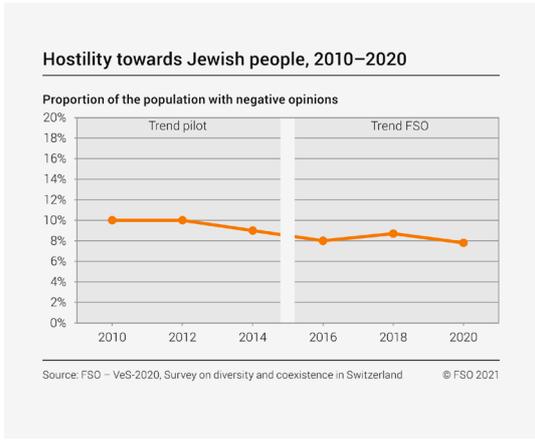
At regular two-year intervals, the Federal Statistical Office conducts its “Zusammenleben Schweiz” survey (on co-existence and diversity in Switzerland). The aim of the exercise is to gain a reliable picture of the co-existence of various population groups and chart social trends relating to racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

The survey also covers subjects including antisemitism, the attitude of the majority of society towards the Jewish minority and the acceptance of current Jewish stereotypes.

For example, 22% of Swiss people completely agree with current stereotypes of Jewish people, while only 16% completely reject them.



It is extremely alarming that almost 2 million people in Switzerland agree with stereotypes of Jews as mercenary, power-hungry and politically radical. However, a comparison of this attitude with actual incidents also shows that for the majority of people, agreeing with the prejudices does not translate into antisemitic actions. On one hand, this is pleasing, but there is still a danger that in times of great crisis these attitudes can increasingly manifest themselves in open antisemitism, as was observed at the beginning of the Covid pandemic, for example.



Further information can be found on the website of the Federal Statistical Office:

Survey on diversity and coexistence in Switzerland | Federal Statistical Office (admin.ch)

The hostility towards Jews, i.e. antisemitism, was already being investigated before the “Zusammenleben” study with regularly recorded figures going back over the past ten years. These reveal that between 8% and 10% of the Swiss population have a hostile attitude towards Jewish people, with a slight downward trend being evident.



## 9. Prosecutions for breach of Article 261bis of the Swiss Criminal Code in 2021

Offences reported by the SIG and the GRA led to six convictions of far-right and antisemitic offenders in the reporting year:

- After investigations lasting several years, the Zurich Public Prosecutor's Office imposed a custodial sentence on the singer of the Neonazi band Mordkommando. The far-right Swiss band wrote lyrics containing death threats to Jews and uploaded their songs to YouTube. The lyrics explicitly named public figures, including Herbert Winter, the then president of the SIG.
- A Twitter user from Aargau tweeted that many aspects of the Holocaust were made up, including descriptions, recollections, family accounts and figures. They also claimed that no one knew exactly how the Holocaust had happened, and that "most of it" was a "Jewish distortion of history". In addition, he had posted dozens of Tweets containing various versions of a "Jewish world conspiracy". The district court at Zofingen sentenced him to a suspended monetary penalty and ordered him to pay court costs.
- The well-known right-wing extremist Tobias Steiger had repeatedly posted antisemitic messages and Shoah denials on social media as well as making an openly antisemitic speech at a demonstration organized by the PNOS, the Swiss Nationalist Party. He was sentenced by the Basel-City Public Prosecutor's Office by penal order to a suspended monetary penalty and ordered to pay a fine.

- In March, a local politician from Capriasca in Ticino made statements denying the Shoah during a TV interview. The SIG reported the offence to the police. In November 2021, she was sentenced by the Ticino Public Prosecutor's Office by penal order to a suspended monetary penalty.
- The president and vice-president of the far-right PNOS party were found guilty by the Canton of Bern Public Prosecutor's Office of racial discrimination. They were given a suspended monetary penalty and ordered to pay a fine. Almost a year earlier, the PNOS had published the inflammatory "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" in its party magazine, "Herus". This verdict is not yet legally binding, however.
- In December, a man was sentenced by the Bernese Oberland regional court to a suspended monetary penalty and ordered to pay a fine. He had published online a report from the 1930s that attempted to prove that the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" were genuine, thus openly stirring up hatred against Jews. The defendant accepted the verdict, which is therefore legally binding.



## 10. Interventions

The SIG and GRA have made a number of statements on incidents of antisemitism during the reporting year:

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**In January, an online cultural event held by the Jewish Liberal Community JLC in Zurich was hijacked by people wearing hoods.** The group disrupted the event with obscene and abusive images, including swastikas and pictures of Hitler. The hosts were not able to restore order and block the intruders and were forced to discontinue the event. The SIG and GRA publicly condemned the incident. The SIG supported the JLG's efforts to have charges brought against the perpetrators.

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**Also in January, the SIG once again reported the far-right Swiss Nationalist Party PNOS to the police for publishing the inflammatory "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" in its party magazine "Harus".** This antisemitic pamphlet is consciously used to propagate the myth of a world Jewish conspiracy. The Covid period has seen another rise in the popularity of conspiracy theories, including those with an antisemitic context. The publication of the "Protocols" adds momentum to these myths and encourages antisemitism. Throughout the year, the SIG and GRA raised awareness of the issue of antisemitic conspiracy theories.

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**In February, antisemitic symbols and slogans were found etched into the door of the synagogue in Biel.** This was an act of desecration. The Jewish community in Biel, the SIG and the GRA all condemned the act in the strongest terms. The perpetrators had still not been identified at the end of the year.

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**In March, a local politician from Capriasca in Ticino made statements denying the Shoah during a TV interview.** The SIG reported the offence to the police. The SIG and GRA had expressed their concern that the politician continued to stand for election to the executive and legislative bodies in Capriasca. Fortunately, she was not elected. Finally, in November 2021, she was sentenced to a suspended monetary penalty by penal order.

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**The SIG and GRA had to make a number of appeals against comparisons being made between the Covid pandemic and the Shoah after this had occurred both in society in general and in the political arena.** Not only are such comparisons fatuous and wrong, they trivialize the immeasurable suffering and pain of the victims of the Nazi regime.

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**Two verdicts by the press council gave rise to great annoyance in the SIG and GRA in July and August.** In the first, the press council ruled that in describing the BDS movement ("boycott, disinvestment, sanctions") as "having an antisemitic bias" the Prime News media outlet had breached its duty to report truthfully. The council had based its conclusion on arguments made by the BDS. The SIG publicly criticized the ruling. Secondly, an article was published on "Inside Paradeplatz" in which numerous prejudices and clichés about Jewish people were collated and disseminated. The press council did not object to this, on the grounds of "freedom of opinion". After the SIG had publicly called attention to the various contradictions and errors in the two rulings and the SIG and GRA had complained to the press council, it agreed to investigate the cases again.



## 11. Prevention of antisemitism

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**The army intends to adopt new approaches with regard to minority groups.** In collaboration with the SIG's Likrat Public project for the promotion of dialogue and understanding, a pilot project has been launched under the title "Sensibilisierung zu Diversität und Inklusion in der Armee" ("Raising awareness of diversity and inclusivity in the army"), or SEDIA. At the beginning of July 2021, specialists from Litkrat Public led an awareness-training course for prospective recruits. The Armed Forces Training Command had commissioned the Army Chaplaincy to work with the SIG to develop and implement such a pilot project.

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**In 2021, it was possible to arrange over a hundred school meetings through Likrat.** Specially trained young Jewish people known as Likratinos and Likratinas visited schools to talk about the Jewish religion as well as their own personal religious and cultural experiences. Due to coronavirus pandemic, some of the encounters were conducted online. Meetings also took place in primary schools for the first time, following a specially adapted programme. It is worth noting that many teaching staff were so impressed by the Likrat meetings that they have booked them again for this year. A new training course for Likratinos and Likratinas is now planned for 2022. For the first time, there will be a joint course for German and French speakers.

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**The Likrat Public summer project focusing on Jewish holidaymakers in Swiss tourist regions was held for the third time.** The aim was once again to encourage greater mutual understanding between the hosts and their Jewish visitors. The facilitators were based in Davos, with activities also taking place in Arosa,

St. Moritz and Saastal. This year's project also included a mobile approach for the first time. Short visits explored and covered new destinations, including Lake Blausee, Crans Montana, Engelberg, Grindelwald, Riederalp and Sedrun. At these new locations, the visit was used to establish whether there was the potential and demand for a Likrat involvement.

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**In collaboration with FC Hakoah and FC Kosovo, the GRA organized a friendly soccer match in the name of tolerance and diversity to take a stand against racism and antisemitism in sport and break down existing prejudices.** The match aroused great interest. It demonstrated the importance of meeting this way in normal life and the important part sport can play in prevention and awareness-raising activities.

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**To counter the spread of antisemitic conspiracy theories and raise greater awareness among the general public, the GRA published an information leaflet for teachers on dealing with conspiracy theories in the classroom.** It also produced a glossary explaining terms with antisemitic connotations found in the jargon of conspiracy theorists. The glossary was published in places including Tangram, the magazine of the Federal Commission Against Racism FCR, and helps journalists to classify certain comments.

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**In May 2021, a plan was submitted to the Federal Council for the erection of a memorial to the victims of National Socialism.** It outlined the creation of an innovative place of commemoration, communication and connection. The SIG collaborated intensively on the project. The corresponding motions in parliament were each adopted unanimously in the first chamber of parliament.



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**A study was published in 2020 by the Zurich University of Applied Sciences in consultation with the GRA.** Entitled “Erfahrungen und Wahrnehmungen von Antisemitismus unter Jüdinnen und Juden in der Schweiz” (“Jewish experiences and perceptions of antisemitism in Switzerland”), it detailed for the first time how Jewish people in Switzerland experience antisemitism. The study showed that the majority of antisemitic incidents occur in everyday situations – among friends, or at school or work.

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**Based on the content of the website [www.stopantisemitismus.ch](http://www.stopantisemitismus.ch), the GRA produced the first Swiss educational tool on antisemitism.**

Using real antisemitic comments as examples, young people learn how to demonstrate civil courage and respond to antisemitic remarks in everyday situations.

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**The Swiss Federal Council has recognized the definition of antisemitism provided by the IHRA.** All parties involved in this issue in the public and private sectors are encouraged to familiarize themselves fully with this working definition and the debate surrounding it. In its report, the Federal Council also outlined a catalogue of measures designed to combat antisemitism and racism more comprehensively. The Federal Council intends to adopt a coordinating role and come up with framework conditions enabling synergies to be exploited to best effect and a nationwide strategy to be developed and rolled out.

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**More and more Swiss political parties are recognizing the IHRA definition of antisemitism.**

The Social Democratic Party SP was the first to do so at the end of 2019, followed by the Free Democratic Party FDP in September 2021 and the Green Liberal Party in November 2021. The SIG welcomes this development and hopes that in future all the major Swiss parties will recognize this important definition.

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**The SIG is pleased to acknowledge that the majority of Swiss media companies are aware of the problem of hate speech in the online comments sections and are working to counter it.** Increased moderation has led to the number of antisemitic comments published in some outlets falling to almost zero. A further improvement in the dialogue and cooperation with the SIG on this subject was also achieved.

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## 12. Positive developments in 2021

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**The Federal Commission Against Racism FCR has launched a project to record racist hate speech on the internet.** The reporting page allows individuals, specialists and organizations to report racist incidents spotted online. The aim of the centralized reporting site is to provide a country-wide overview of the nature and extent of racist hate speech on the internet. The FCR is working in collaboration with existing reporting sites. Antisemitic hate speech reported on the new FCR platform will automatically be forwarded to the FCR and can therefore be included in the SIG and GRA Report on Antisemitism.



## 13. The European and international context of the situation in Switzerland

Once again, there were two ways in which antisemitism found public expression in 2021. Firstly and predominantly, there were the accusations that Jews act against the values of a global community, are only concerned with their own financial gain and so maintain a worldwide network for the purpose of furthering their own aims. Here, it is clear that antisemitism is really the “cultural code”, as Shulamith Volkov described it. In addition, events in the Middle East trigger the kind of protests against the state of Israel which are not made as political demonstrations but do regularly portray Israel as the only state responsible for the situation, accuse it of committing war crimes in the Middle East whilst working with a combination of “Israelis”, “Zionists” and “Jews”, and basically deny the state its basic legitimacy.

The coronavirus pandemic has brought both forms of antisemitism starkly into the public eye. Accusations range from causing the pandemic and exploiting the medical emergency either by selling vaccines or by purchasing vaccines at greatly reduced prices, to the “realization” that due to the vaccination programme Israel is a deadly place because the Jews learn “evil” especially quickly in such situations.

At the same time, the Shoah is presented as a model for accusations directed at the way governments have responded to the pandemic. The scope, frequency and proliferation of assertions, also found in Switzerland, of being a victim just like the Jews (wearing masks with the Star of David on them), of feeling like it was 1933 again, and associating the “unvaccinated” with the “ghetto”, not only trivialize the his-

torical events of 1933 onwards, they also mock the victims. For the most part, antisemitism is (so far) expressed far less violently in Switzerland than, for example, in France or Germany. There is no “rowdy” antisemitism, as Jacques Picard termed it. However, this does not mean that the rejection of Jews by people of an antisemitic disposition and their coldness towards them is any less radical. Associated with this is their refusal to recognize Jews as part of Swiss society. This attitude of rejection is shared by Switzerland with other countries in Europe. It is evident in the use of the phrase “the Swiss and the Jews” – where “Swiss” could equally be replaced by other nationalities.

For Switzerland in 2021, as discussions during the pandemic have shown, it is important to note that antisemitism is not a phenomenon that can be attributed to a single social strata or class or population group. Rather, it runs throughout society, with the twin threads of “antisemitic accusations” and “trivialization and mockery of the Shoah” interacting with each other to become a particularly strong presence in 2021.

Prof. Dr. Erik Petry, Deputy Head of the Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Basel.

## 14. Algorithms – programming against online hate

This year’s Report on Antisemitism shows in black and white something we have known for years: online hate is on the rise. The shocking figures in the report are, to coin a phrase, just the tip of the iceberg, as manually monitoring online hate is complex and time-consuming and only covers a fraction of all the hate messages on the internet. Firstly, the internet is a bottomless pit. The more resources you invest



in the search for hate messages, the more you will find. Secondly, as part of the digital world the internet is incredibly fast-paced. Existing platforms can disappear within weeks and new communications channels appear – such as Telegram, for instance. Thirdly, unlike the real world, the internet has no borders. Chat forums can often operate across national boundaries.

These challenges have all been recognized by researchers. Very quickly, several initiatives have been formed with the aim of identifying online hate using trained algorithms. The advantage of algorithms is that unlike humans they can analyse and categorize vast quantities of data within a very short time. The Institute for Strategic Dialogue ISD developed an algorithm to recognize antisemitic messages on YouTube, for example. And in the “Decoding Antisemitism” project, an international team of researchers is training an algorithm that it is hoped will work in multiple languages and automatically identify antisemitic content. Some online newspapers in Switzerland are already using algorithms which identify key words to automatically filter out comments that could potentially violate the platform’s guidelines on discrimination. Combined with manual moderation this has resulted in a noticeable reduction in the occurrence of hate speech in the comments sections.

Will algorithms soon be able to replace manual searches for online hate? It sounds promising but will not be easy to achieve. Algorithms are only as good as their training. Every algorithm has to be fed a vast quantity of data and then programmed before it can recognize and categorize similar material itself. However, the training process is extremely complex, especially where antisemitism is concerned. This is because antisemitism often does not appear explicitly, with specific code words, but implicitly – as the many hundreds of examples of antisemitic hate speech presented by the SIG

and GRA for this report demonstrate. To circumvent the social media platforms’ rules on discrimination, antisemitic messages are increasingly being couched in coded language, which can change very quickly. Also, algorithms are incapable of recognizing humour, irony or double meanings. The context in which comments are posted is always significant, however, so the algorithm needs more than just a list of swear words typically contained in antisemitic posts. Another difficulty comes with the range of forms of communication on the internet. Hate is not only expressed in the written word, but in images as well – in memes, GIFs and TikTok videos, for example. In the context of Switzerland, things are even more complicated. Unlike the situation in Germany, France or Great Britain, online exchanges in this country often take place in dialect. Due to the lack of spelling rules, algorithms searching for specific code words are only of limited use.

It has not yet been possible to develop an algorithm which can meet these challenges reliably, so it is highly unlikely that algorithms will be able to completely replace manual monitoring in the near future. However, they can help to screen the almost limitless realms of the internet for antisemitic or racist content, quickly identify new trends and spaces and form a better overall picture of what is happening. The combination of automated search and manual contextualization could then produce a more accurate result. One thing is clear: to solve a problem like hate speech, you must first be able to fully define its actual scope.

Dina Wyler, Managing Director of the GRA Foundation Against Racism and Antisemitism



# 15. Appendices

## 15.1 Dates

Form	Phy.		Verb.			Com.			Pub.	Dam.	Graf.	PB.	Car.	Act.	Sen.	On.	Total
Content	A	A	S	O	A	S	O	A	A	A	A	S	O	Total	Total	Total	
General antisemitism	0	10	3	0	4	11	288	1	1	5	0	0	8	21	14	296	331
Shoah denial/trivialization	0	1	0	1	2	2	30	1	0	1	0	0	0	5	2	31	38
Israel-related antisemitism	0	1	0	0	1	4	67	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	4	68	74
Antisemitic conspiracy theories	0	0	1	0	0	2	410	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	3	411	416
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>859</b>

**Legende:** Phy. = Physical assault / Verb. = Verbal abuse / Com. = Comments / Pub. = Public acts / Dam. = Damage to property / Graf. = Offensive graffiti / PB. = Posters/banners / Car. = Caricatures / Act./A = Actions / Sen./S = Sent items / On./O = Online.



## 15.2 Methods

### 15.2.1 How does the SIG find out about incidents?

→ Reported incidents: The SIG operates a reporting site for antisemitic incidents. Incidents that have been observed or experienced personally can be reported via a contact form or by phone or e-mail. These may include physical assaults, verbal abuse, graffiti, letters and messages, or posts or comments seen on the internet or social media. By following up contacts and conducting research it is possible to verify whether the incident occurred as described and whether it was definitely a case of antisemitism. If necessary, the credibility of witnesses or other parties involved may be investigated. Only once the verification process is complete is the incident added to the list of antisemitic incidents for the year concerned.

- Media monitoring: The SIG also carries out monitoring of the media and records antisemitic incidents which are reported upon there.
- Online research: The SIG carries out research on the internet, the social media and in the comment sections of the online media and records antisemitic incidents. The very nature of the internet makes it impossible to monitor all social media platforms and websites in full and record all incidents. Nevertheless, over the course of the reporting year this approach has provided an assessment of the triggers that cause antisemitic incidents, the basic mood among the public, who the authors of antisemitic comments are and the narratives they typically use.





und Wahrnehmungen von Antisemitismus unter Jüdinnen und Juden in der Schweiz” (“Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism among Jews in Switzerland”), gives some insights into the context of the unrecorded cases. For example, victims would often come to the conclusion that it was not worth reporting an incident to the police or a specialist organization such as the SIG, either because of the time and effort involved, or the possible consequences, or for other reasons. It is of concern that these are often cases of verbal abuse and insults in public spaces and also in the workplace. The SIG therefore encourages members of the Jewish community to report antisemitic incidents to the SIG so that we can compile as complete a picture as possible.

### 15.2.5 Definitions: antisemitism, anti-Zionism, criticism of the state of Israel

#### Antisemitism

##### Definition by the IHRA

The SIG uses the definition of antisemitism and illustrative examples provided by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance IHRA. The definition is also recognized in most other European countries and used by most Jewish organizations in Europe. “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.”

Examples are:

- 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;
- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour;
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

##### Recognition of the IHRA definition in Switzerland

The IHRA definition of antisemitism is now recognized and applied by 30 countries along with various cities and organizations. The IHRA, of which Switzerland is a member, approved this definition in 2016. The European Parliament called upon its member states to adopt it in 2017.



In response to a postulate by Council of States member Paul Rechsteiner, the Federal Council published its report on the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism in June 2021. In it, the Federal Council acknowledged the value and practical relevance of the IHRA's working definition, which is not legally binding. The Federal Council further emphasised that the IHRA's working definition must be interpreted within the context of specific cases. All parties involved in this issue in the public and private sectors are therefore encouraged to familiarize themselves fully with this working definition and the debate surrounding it.

Of the major political parties in Switzerland, the Social Democratic Party SP officially recognized the IHRA definition in May 2019, the Free Democratic Party FDP in September 2021 and the Green Liberal Party in November 2021.

## Symbols

The SIG only classifies daubed or sprayed Nazi symbols such as swastikas or SS insignia as antisemitic if their use is directly or indirectly connected to Jewish people or institutions. For example, they would have to be applied directly to a synagogue or other building belonging to a Jewish institution, or in conjunction with Jewish symbols, or be interpreted as being anti-Jewish (indirectly) through the context.

## Criticism of the state of Israel

Criticism of the state of Israel or its politics is not generally antisemitic as long as the criticism is made in the same way that one would criticize any other country. Criticism of Israel is antisemitic if:

- double standards are applied by requiring of Israel a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation;
- equivalence is given to "Israelis" and "Jews";

- symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism are used to portray or characterize Israel or Israelis, such as through the use of symbols and images traditionally associated with antisemitism (e.g. claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel);
- comparisons are drawn between contemporary Israeli policy and that of the Nazis.

## Anti-Zionism

Anti-Zionism refers to the rejection of the Jewish national movement (Zionism). The motives and rationales of anti-Zionists are wide-ranging and not bound up with any particular political parties or ideologies. It is not generally antisemitic to reject the ideology of Zionism. In reality, however, anti-Zionist comments are often made to disguise antisemitism. For example, instead of the antisemitic narrative of a "Jewish-controlled press", someone might say the "Zionist-controlled press", or make a comment like "I don't hate the Jews, just the Zionists". If "Zionists" are described in terms of classic antisemitic stereotypes, it is easy to see through the obfuscation. However, it is often necessary to check carefully whether a case of antisemitism exists or not. Sometimes it helps to know whether a person has previously made explicit antisemitic comments in the past.

### 15.2.6 Incidents and their categories (with examples)

Reports submitted and the results of research are categorized as:

**Incidents:** Cases of obvious antisemitism

**Borderline cases:** With these cases it is not possible to say without any doubt whether they are antisemitic or not, or various interpretations may be possible. They are therefore not counted as incidents.



**Cases** in which **no antisemitism** is present and which are therefore not included in the statistics.

**Incidents** are divided into the following sub-categories according to their content:

- **General antisemitism:** These incidents involve classic antisemitic stereotypes, e.g. Jews are mercenary, Jews control the banks and the media or Judaism is the devil's religion;
- **Shoah denial and trivialization:** This category includes denying that the Shoah (Holocaust) happened or trivializing or downplaying it;
- **Israel-related antisemitism:** This is antisemitism linked to the state of Israel (see the section on "Criticism of the state of Israel" on page 31);
- **Contemporary antisemitic conspiracy theories:** This category covers conspiracy theories that go beyond the classic "Jews rule the world" idea and have proliferated in recent times, e.g.: "The Rothschild family and the entrepreneur George Soros are responsible for the waves of refugees because they want to manipulate European ethnicity. They want to create a stupid 'Negroid mixed race' which is easier to control by the elite Jewish bankers." Or: "Jews invented the coronavirus so they can use vaccines to sterilize and kill people."

There are also categories for the different type of incident:

Physical assault, verbal abuse, comments, public appearances, damage to property, offensive graffiti, posters/banners and caricatures.

**Physical assault:** physical attacks motivated by antisemitism on people who are Jewish or presumed to be Jewish.

**Verbal abuse:** antisemitic abuse directly targeted at people who are Jewish or presumed to be Jewish, e.g. "F\*cking Jew", "Get in the gas chamber", "Shame Hitler missed you".

**Comments:** comments with antisemitic content not directly targeted at a specific person

**Public acts:** public demonstrations of antisemitic thinking, for example at demonstrations or by aiming Nazi salutes at Jewish people.

**Damage to property:** damage to synagogues, Jewish institutions, Jewish cemeteries or Jewish businesses where the motive can reasonably be assumed to be of an antisemitic nature.

**Offensive graffiti:** graffiti, painted images or stickers with obvious antisemitic content.

**Posters/banners:** posters or banners on public display with obvious antisemitic content.

**Caricatures:** caricatures based on antisemitic stereotypes, often mimicking the style of antisemitic cartoons from the first half of the twentieth century.

For some of the incident types (verbal abuse, comments and caricatures) a decision may be made as to whether they also belong in the sub-categories of action, sent item or online incident.

**Actions:** anything occurring as part of an interaction with people or buildings.

**Sent items:** anything sent to a person, i.e. letters, packages, e-mails, text messages, etc.

**Online:** anything occurring in the digital realm or on the internet, e.g. on a website, in the comments sections of online media, on social media such as Facebook and Twitter or Telegram.



An incident can only be categorized as one incident type. This ensures there are no duplicate entries. Where an incident could be placed in more than one category, the most serious is selected. For example, damage to property would take precedence over graffiti, and physical assault over verbal abuse.

Examples of incident types:

**Physical assault:** (Taken from a previous report as no assaults were reported in 2021). On a Saturday evening at 10 pm, a recognizably Jewish man became involved in an argument with another, non-Jewish, passer-by outside a building in Zurich District 3. The latter was staring at a number of Jewish children on a playground. The Jewish man later left the building with three Jewish acquaintances. The passer-by previously involved in the argument ran after the group, shouting antisemitic slogans and holding a knife. He was stopped by a witness and later arrested by the police.

**Verbal abuse:** A man in a café overheard two people speaking Hebrew and went over to them and abused them in antisemitic terms.

A Jewish person received an e-mail with the insult “You f\*cking Jew!!!”

**Comments:** A Social Democrat member of the National Council received an e-mail stating: “We unvaccinated people don’t need your phony pandemic and Jewish poison. Stick with your own kind, the lying socialist dregs of society, and we’ll all be fine. Thanks!!!!”

In a Telegram chat, Jews and the Jewish Rothschild family were described as snakes controlling the media.



**Public acts:** A lecture on the subject of religions was held in Basel. Along with a variety of abstruse topics, the lecture also contained various antisemitic statements and antisemitic conspiracy theories.

**Damage to property:** In February, a sharp instrument was used to etch antisemitic slogans and a swastika into the door of the synagogue in Biel.



### Offensive graffiti:



Antisemitic graffiti at a train station.

**Posters/banners:** (Taken from a previous report as no posters/banners were reported in 2021). Banners showing swastikas and the slogans “I love Hitler” and “Kill Jews” were attached to several motorway bridges on the A3 between Reichenburg (SZ) and Richterswil (ZH).

**Antisemitic caricatures:** A caricature published on Twitter showed an elephant with a “Jewish face” implying that “the Jews” were behind all sorts of groups and ideologies.



### Grenzwertige Aussagen:



A post on Twitter. Tweet - Is Germany an extra-territorial US state or an Israeli province? Who's in charge – USA, Israel, CIA, Mossad, AIPAC, Defamation League?

Reply - Now they're even increasing the defence budget. Inflation here we come. Bye bye euro.

**Borderline graffiti:** A swastika on a playground in Lugano. The location is not near any Jewish institutions, however. There is also no explicit Jewish connection.





chats as well as at demonstrations. For example, the star of David can be seen labelled with the words “unvaccinated” or “Covid certificate” both on Telegram and at demonstrations. The comparisons have increased further, particularly in connection with the Covid certificate, and have even been promoted by well-known opinion shapers. Several appeals against the use of such comparisons have been made by the SIG and listened to and discussed by politicians and the public.

Even though these comparisons are completely scandalous, they are not recorded as antisemitic incidents in this report. Based on the IHRA definition of antisemitism, comparisons are only antisemitic if they deliberately denigrate or deny the Holocaust/Shoah. Although such comparisons may not be antisemitic, the fact that they are numerous, frequent and widespread leads to a dilution in the perception of the events of that period and an element of trivialization.

- On a Shabbat evening in May, some orthodox Jews in Zurich were shouted at by a group of people hurling insults such as “F\*cking Jews”.
- In October a car drove past several Jewish people in Zurich, sounding its horn. A Nazi salute was made out of the window. There were also shouts of “F\*cking Jews” and “Heil Hitler”.



The most serious incidents in 2021 were:

- In February, a sharp instrument was used to etch antisemitic slogans and a swastika into the door of Biel Synagogue.
- In January, a Zoom event hosted by the Jewish Liberal Community JLG in Zurich about the museum in Brungasse was gatecrashed by a large number of people displaying pictures of Hitler and obscene graffiti.
- Also in January, an online university lecture in Jewish Studies was interrupted by videos from Nazi Germany with the caption “The Holocaust was a lie”.
- In April, a car passed just behind a strictly religious Jewish man on a pedestrian crossing. The driver leant out of the window and shouted: “I’ve got you Jews in my sights. We should run you all over.”





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## Publishing details

**Publisher:** Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities SIG and GRA Foundation Against Racism and Anti-Semitism, Zurich 2022

**Design:** SolitaireDesign

The report can be downloaded as a PDF free of charge from [www.antisemitismus.ch](http://www.antisemitismus.ch).