

[official website](#)

Report on Antisemitism 2021 – Summary

Compared with the previous year, 2021 saw an increase in the number of antisemitic incidents recorded (2021: 53, 2020: 47). In the reporting year, the SIG recorded 53 antisemitic incidents in the German, Italian and Romansh language areas of Switzerland (not including online incidents). They included 16 cases of verbal abuse, seven cases of offensive graffiti and one case of damage to property. No physical assaults were reported. There were 806 reports of online incidents, particularly on social media and in the comments sections of media outlets. In total, this amounted to 859 incidents reported and observed within the examination period.

The recorded incidents were divided into four categories: general antisemitism (331 incidents), Shoah denial or trivialisation (38), antisemitism related to Israel (74) and current antisemitic conspiracy theories (416).

Antisemitic incidents often occur in clusters, due to “triggers”. On the international stage, these triggers were mostly events in or relating to the Middle East. Nationally speaking, during the reporting year above-average numbers of antisemitic comments and posts occurred following the publication of an article on “In-side Paradeplatz” which contained numerous anti-Jewish prejudices, after the response to the article from the President of the SIG, and in association with the discussion about a Swiss memorial for victims of National Socialism. By far the most important trigger in 2021 was the coronavirus pandemic. Unlike previous

triggers, the effect was not limited to certain days but spread over almost the entire year. It therefore comes as little surprise that 51% of all online incidents this year contained current antisemitic conspiracy theories.

At the same time, there was once again less antisemitic content on Facebook. The 33 incidents on this platform accounted for just 4.25% of the total (previous year: 15.9%). One important reason for this is that many media outlets have stopped posting articles about Judaism and the conflict in the Middle East on their Facebook pages. In previous years, this had led to a large amount of unmoderated and openly antisemitic comments. The number of incidents on Twitter remained roughly the same at 221, accounting for 28.2% of online incidents. On the other hand, the number on Telegram continued to grow, so that it now heads the list of platforms both in actual numbers (489) and as a percentage (61%) of the total.

In this reporting year, Covid sceptics were again involved in propagating conspiracy theories and posting comments and images with antisemitic content. 451 antisemitic incidents were recorded in eight different chats involving Covid sceptics, significantly more than the previous year (135). Most of the antisemitic posts originated from a small minority of users, however. Analyses have shown that antisemitism among opponents of Covid measures in Switzerland is widespread, but, contrary to many other European countries and the US,



does not seem to represent the attitude of the majority of them. However, the higher proportion 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.

The frequent and improper occurrence of comparisons to the Nazi regime and the persecution and murder of the Jewish people during the Shoah continues to be a widespread and serious problem in the “Covid-sceptic” environment. This has been observed in group 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.

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.”
- 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”.

Contact

Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities SIG

Gotthardstrasse 65 | PO Box | 8027 Zurich
+41 43 305 07 77 | info@swissjews.ch

swissjews.ch

GRA Foundation Against Racism and Antisemitism

PO Box | 8027 Zurich
+41 58 666 89 66 | infogra@gra.ch

gra.ch

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**.