



# 2020

## Summary of the Report on Anti-Semitism

The Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities SIG registered 47 antisemitic incidents (excl. online ones) in 2020. They include 11 cases of verbal abuse, 15 cases of offensive graffiti and one case of property damage. No physical attacks were reported. Furthermore, 485 online incidents (primarily via social media and newspaper commentary columns) were reported, while an unknown number went unreported.

The online incidents were divided into four categories: general antisemitism (196 incidents), Shoah denial or trivialisation (25), antisemitism related to Israel (62) and contemporary antisemitic conspiracy theories (249). The latter are again on the rise – most recently in connection with the Corona pandemic.

A number of triggers leading to a surge in incidents were identified. On the international stage, these triggers were mostly events in or relating to the Middle East. In Switzerland, media reports about the “Trump plan” for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, the foundation against racism and antisemitism (GRA), the ZHAW study entitled “Erfahrungen und Wahrnehmungen von Antisemitismus unter Jüdinnen und Juden in der Schweiz” (experiences and perception of antisemitism among Jews in Switzerland) and the SIG’s antisemitism report, as well as a video contribution in “20 Minuten” on Jewish life in Zurich (cf. chapter 2.3), all led to an above-average number of antisemitic comments and posts. The most important trigger in 2020 was, however, undoubtedly the Corona pandemic. Unlike the above-mentioned triggers, the reactions here were not limited to several days, but spread over almost the entire year. The fact that 45 percent of all registered antisemitic conspiracy theory “contributions” were triggered by the Corona pandemic shows what an important role it played in 2020.

Compared to 2019, only just under 65% of the 2020 online incidents came from Twitter or Facebook (2019: 90%). The reason is that, owing to the Corona pandemic, there were fewer newspaper articles on topics that would normally trigger antisemitic comments (Middle East conflict, Jewish life). This reduced the amount of antisemitic statements in articles published on Facebook or in newspapers’ commentary sections. A new factor in 2020 were the group chats on Telegram, a messenger service, which accounted for almost one-third of the online incidents (cf. chapter 2.2).

Conspiracy theories as well as statements and images with antisemitic content were, for example, disseminated there in the “Corona rebels” environment. Between May and December 2020, 143 antisemitic incidents from seven different “Corona rebels” chats were registered. Analyses have shown that antisemitism among opponents of Corona 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. The Corona conspiracy theories prevalent in Switzerland obviously have fewer links to antisemitic ideas. Nevertheless, the Corona pandemic as trigger should not be underestimated.

A widespread and serious problem in connection with the “Corona rebels” scene are the frequently observed and inappropriate comparisons with the Nazi regime and the persecution and mass murder of Jews during the Holocaust. Images of yellow badges (“Judensterne”) with inscriptions like “ungeimpft” (unvaccinated) or “Maskenattest” (proof of mask) can be found on Telegram and at demonstrations. Statements have been made by members of these groups that they feel “like Jews in the Second World War”. Such comparisons are utterly baseless and inappropriate. Yet they cannot be classified as antisemitic according to the IHRA definition of antisemitism, and therefore cannot be registered as cases of Holocaust trivialisation. Although such comparisons in the given context may not be antisemitic, the fact that they are numerous, frequent and widespread leads to a dilution in the perception of the Nazi-related events in the past, making them appear more harmless than they were in reality.

The gravest incidents in 2020 were (cf. chapter 3):

- In January, after an argument between two children, the father of one of them sends the other (non-Jewish) father a WhatsApp message in which he calls him “sale juif” (dirty Jew).
- During a Zoom event organised by the Juso (young social democrats) party of the Canton of Zurich to mark May 1st and featuring a Jewish speaker, unknown participants show antisemitic caricatures and call “Sieg Heil” and “Tod den Juden” (death to Jews).
- In June, a pupil at school says to a fellow-pupil: “We’re not sitting on the same bench as you, because we are Swiss and you are the son of a Jew.”
- In July, at a tourist location, a travel guide complains to her group about difficulties with Jewish guests, saying that they bring their entire food along from home, dirty the public sanitary installations, bring no money for restaurants and rent entire hotels.
- In August, a sixth-grade schoolgirl announces on the playground that she, just like her father, finds Adolf Hitler cool. Looking at a Jewish girl, she laughs and says: “He killed all of you.”

### Contact

#### Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities SIG

Gotthardstrasse 65 | Postfach | 8027 Zurich  
+41 (0)43 305 07 77 | info@swissjews.ch  
[www.swissjews.ch](http://www.swissjews.ch)

#### GRA Foundation Against Racism and Anti-Semitism

Postfach | 8027 Zurich | +41 (0)58 666 89 66  
infogra@gra.ch | [www.gra.ch](http://www.gra.ch)

### Imprint

**Publisher:** Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities SIG and GRA Foundation Against Racism and Anti-Semitism, Zurich 2021

**Design:** SolitaireDesign, Berlin

The report may be downloaded as a PDF (in German and French) free of charge from [www.antisemitismus.ch](http://www.antisemitismus.ch).