



Identifying and Disrupting Key Antisemitic Actors — A Five - Step Guide

Policy Brief

July 2024

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About CEP: The Counter Extremism Project (CEP) is a non-profit and non-partisan international policy organization that was founded to tackle the growing threat presented by terrorist and extremist ideologies. CEP develops strategies aimed at disrupting the financial, recruitment, and material support networks of terrorist and extremist groups and their leaders. For further information please visit our [website](#).

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Introduction and Summary

- Since the HAMAS attack on Israel on 7 October, 2023¹ and the ensuing war in Gaza, many countries have seen an unprecedented rise in reported antisemitic incidents.¹ Dozens of research and policy reports have since been published, many of them aiming to count and map the extent of these antisemitic incidents.² Other reports have focused particularly on the online dimension of antisemitism since 7 October.³ Few reports, if any, have aimed at identifying and understanding the key antisemitic actors behind many of these incidents.
- To effectively combat antisemitism in the aftermath of the 7 October attacks, policy makers should consider implementing a risk-based and disruption-oriented approach. In this approach, the identified biggest risks for Jews in their respective countries receive the most attention by government actors. Then, key antisemitic actors that pose such risks should be identified. We recommend focusing on antisemitic incidents during 7 and 8 October 2023. During these two days, Israel was still fighting attackers inside the country and no major airstrikes were conducted against targets in Gaza, yet antisemitic criticism (sometimes masked as anti-Zionist criticism) was already levied at Israel. The antisemitic background of alleged criticism of Israel is therefore most clearly discernible during this period.

And lastly, measures for effective disruption of such key actors should be deployed. This paper presents a five-step guide on how to implement such an approach.

- A focus on key antisemitic actors is recommended because a significant number of antisemitic incidents seem to be organized or orchestrated by an experienced but small and well-networked group of instigators. Additionally, a risk-based strategy would reduce the risk of conflating citizens who advocate for legitimate demands with clearly antisemitic actors.

¹ Referred to in this paper as 7 October attacks

Effectively Fighting Antisemitism in “muddy waters”

There is no generally accepted definition of antisemitism. However, significant progress has been made in this regard with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)'s working definition of antisemitism,⁴ which is being promoted by the European Union⁵ and the majority of the EU Member States⁶. This is particularly relevant when it comes to the terrorist attacks of 7 October and the resulting war. In this climate, it can be challenging to determine if a statement or narrative is clearly antisemitic, and furthermore if the person or group responsible is aware of the antisemitic meaning. This is particularly relevant when assessing actions by individuals associated with antisemitic incidents, e.g. by joining a demonstration with antisemitic slogans or sharing an antisemitic post on social media. Citizens might advocate for legitimate demands related to human rights as well as for antisemitic ones. Therefore, it can be very difficult to develop effective (policy) measures against antisemitism. So how can policy makers differentiate between the different motivations of individuals involved in antisemitic incidents? How can policy makers differentiate between signal and noise?

A risk-based approach for effectively combating antisemitism in the aftermath of the 7 October attacks

Antisemitism manifests itself in different countries in different forms, which means a “one size fits all” approach is highly unlikely to be effective. To effectively combat antisemitism in the aftermath of the 7 October attacks and the following war, policy makers should therefore consider following a risk-based approach. This would mean that the identified biggest risks for Jews in their respective countries receive the most attention by government actors. A risk-based approach can also mitigate the unintended consequence of increasing the degree of polarisation within societies. Narratives and perceptions of governmental overreach related to issues of free speech, freedom of assembly, anti-war activism, and legitimate criticism of the Israeli government’s policies are of concern here.

Another reason for considering a risk-based approach is that according to some experts, a significant number of antisemitic incidents seem to be organised or orchestrated by an experienced but small, hyper-active, and well-networked group of instigators.⁷ These experts have highlighted that at demonstrations, public gatherings, and universities as well as on social media platforms, known long term actors are visible: “familiar faces, everywhere”.⁸

Disrupting Key Antisemitic Actors

A Risk-Based Strategy to Effectively Combat Antisemitism

RANK THE RISK

Ranking should consider not only the seriousness of the potential harm which could occur as a result of an antisemitic incident, but also the likelihood for its occurrence based on existing data and experiences.

2

FOLLOW SYMBOLS AND MEMES

Groups and individuals that have used symbols associated with the 7 October attacks could potentially be considered key (violent) antisemitic actors, in particular if they overlap with the findings produced in Step 1 and 2.

4

FOLLOW THE MONEY

Governments should consider implementing a "Follow the Money" approach to further disrupt the financial strategies of key antisemitic actors.

1

FOCUS ON THE TIMELINE

The actors organizing antisemitic events or creating/sharing antisemitic content online during 7 and 8 October should be considered the starting points for a broader network analysis.

3

FOLLOW-UP WITH ACTIONS

Once a list of key antisemitic actors is produced as a result of Steps 1-3, governments should prioritize actions that disrupt antisemitic actors and networks that have a strategic function.

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How to identify and disrupt key antisemitic actors – a step-by-step guide

The objective of such a strategy would be to identify, analyse and potentially disrupt the most relevant key (violence-oriented)⁹ actors who produce and disseminate antisemitic narratives and who play key roles in orchestrating other forms of antisemitic incidents.

Step 1 – Rank the Risk:

The underlying process is driven by a risk-based approach, which would start by determining and ranking the most relevant risks to Jews in their respective countries from the perspective of the relevant government authorities and in consultation with Jewish and other expert organisations. The result of this step should produce a prioritized list of what are considered the most relevant and likely risks occurring in the jurisdiction of a specific government body. For example, a security agency would likely rank and prioritize risks differently from an agency with a focus on strategic communications or one with a focus on educational settings.

This ranking of the risks could be conducted along the analysis system of the Community Security Trust (CST).¹⁰ CST classifies as an antisemitic incident any malicious act aimed at Jewish individuals, organisations, or property, where there is evidence that the incident has antisemitic motivation or content, or that

the victim was targeted because they are (or are believed to be) Jewish:



- Extreme Violence: An incident that constituted grievous bodily harm (GBH) or posed a threat to life.
- Assault: Any physical attack against a person or people, which does not pose a threat to their life and is not GBH.
- Damage and desecration: Any physical attack directed against Jewish property, which is not life threatening.
- Threats: Any clear and specific threat, whether verbal or written.
- Abusive behaviour: Verbal antisemitic abuse, whether face-to-face or via telephone or the internet. This includes antisemitic abuse directed at non-Jews.
- Narratives and Literature: Antisemitic literature, narratives or slogans that are sent to more than one recipient.

The specific ranking should consider not only the seriousness of the potential harm which could occur as a result of an antisemitic incident, but also the likelihood for its occurrence based on existing data and experiences.

Step 2 – Focus on the Timeline:

To further develop the risk-based approach and to prioritize strategies and activities to combat key antisemitic actors, a mapping of the actors that were organising events or sharing antisemitic content online and offline during 7 and 8 October 2023 is recommended. During these two days, Israel was still fighting attackers inside the country and no major airstrikes were conducted against targets in Gaza.¹¹ Because the air campaign and ground invasion of Gaza had not yet begun, no antisemitic incidents that took place during this time period could be confused for a display of legitimate human rights concerns for Gazans.

The actors organising antisemitic events or creating/sharing antisemitic content online during 7 and 8 October should therefore be considered the starting points for a broader network analysis. They and their affiliated actors can be considered key antisemitic actors and should be the main target group to be mapped, analysed, and potentially disrupted. This list of key antisemitic actors might vary between different countries and between different government bodies.

Step 3 - Follow Symbols and Memes:

While prioritizing actors that have been involved in antisemitic incidents during 7 and 8 October, symbols and memes that can also be associated with the support of antisemitic violence should be identified.

For example, a red triangle was used by HAMAS attackers in southern Israel on 7 October to mark targets.¹² Since then, red triangles have also been used to mark and threaten (pro-) Jewish or (pro-)Israeli individuals, bars, clubs, university staff and politicians.¹³ Red triangles marked out political prisoners in German concentration and extermination camps in WWII.

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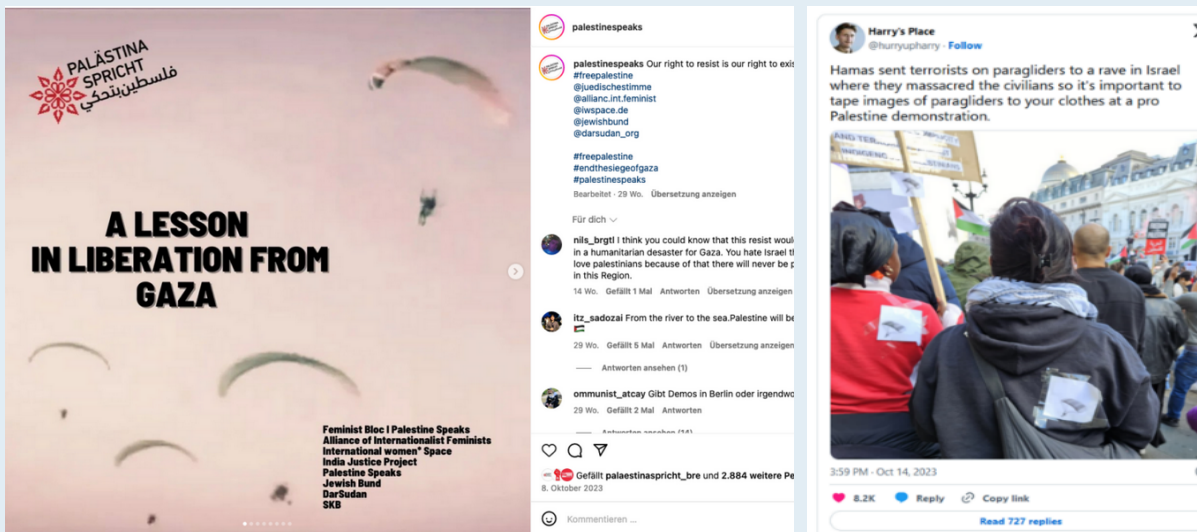


Hazem Bader/AFP/Getty Images



The major of Berlin, Germany, and the head of Humboldt university Berlin, are being marked with triangles.

A second relevant symbol that is very particular to 7 October and therefore can inform a risk-based approach are pictures or memes showing (motorized) paragliders. Some HAMAS attackers used motorized paragliders to cross into Israel and, for example, attacked and killed participants of the Supernova music festival.¹⁵



Groups and individuals that have used these symbols could potentially be considered key (violent) antisemitic actors, in particular if they overlap with the findings produced in step 2. This approach should be applied offline as well as online. The relevance of these and other symbols might vary between countries. Some of these symbols are also legally considered to be indicating support of HAMAS in several countries, such as Germany and Great Britain, and therefore their public display is illegal.¹⁶

Step 4 - Follow-up with Actions:

After combining the results of steps 1-3, government bodies should have produced a list of A) the most relevant risks to Jewish citizens and Israelis with their area or responsibility, as well as B) a list of key antisemitic actors that potentially pose these risks. Government actions could then prioritize investigating and disrupting the key antisemitic players and networks that have a strategic function. The list of potential antisemitic key actors could lead to *prioritized* criminal investigations, their legal ban, or to attempts to *disrupt the financial networks* of key antisemitic actors by cutting funding if they receive public funds e.g. for their cultural or social activities, or by revoking their non-profit status.

Step 5 - Follow the Money:

To further disrupt key antisemitic actors, a "Follow the Money" approach could be implemented. In many countries, multi-agency structures or administrative approaches are already being used at federal, state and local level to combat other criminal phenomena, in particular organized crime and money laundering. However, a "Follow The Money" approach to investigate financial activities and networks of key antisemitic actors are rarely, if at all, implemented.

The Counter Extremism Project (CEP) has developed a toolkit titled "Effective Measures against Extremist Financial Strategies and Networks - How to Implement a "Follow The Money" Strategy to Disrupt non-designated Extremist Entities

and Individuals”,¹⁷ which could serve as a starting point for a country specific application of such an approach.

A "Follow The Money" strategy would apply a risk-based approach to a set of non-designated extremist entities and individuals. Government actions are then prioritized to investigate and disrupt extremist key players and networks that have a strategic function for their respective extremist milieus. Think catching “big fish” instead of “small fish”. This strategy can be applied to combat antisemites, right-wing extremists, Islamist extremists, and left-wing extremists, as well as other forms of extremism.

Connecting the Silos

A “Follow the Money” Strategy

JOINT TASK FORCE



Footnotes

- ¹ For example: <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/global-antisemitic-incidents-wake-amas-war-israel>
- ² For example: https://report-antisemitism.de/documents/2023-10-18_en_antisemitische_reaktionen_in_deutschland_auf_die_hamas-massaker_in_israel.pdf and <https://decoding-antisemitism.eu/> and <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/The-Fragility-of-Freedom.pdf> and <https://billtammeus.typepad.com/files/isca-report-holocaust-distortions-on-social-media-after-10.7.pdf.pdf> and https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Uri-Klempner/publication/378679566_Counterung_Hate_in_the_Digital_Age_Analyzing_Far-Right_Extremist_Responses_to_the_Israel-Hamas_War/links/65e3754cad608480af63212/Counterung-Hate-in-the-Digital-Age-Analyzing-Far-Right-Extremist-Responses-to-the-Israel-Hamas-War.pdf and <https://www.belltower.news/monitoring-telegram-und-die-antisemitische-verrohung-des-diskurses-154063/> and <https://www.belltower.news/hass-auf-israel-antisemitismus-auf-tiktok-153303/> and <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/generative-artificial-intelligence-gai-and-israel-amas-war> and https://ict.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Koblentz-Stenzler-Klempner-Chavez_Counterung-Hate-in-the-Digital-Age_2023_10_22-2.pdf
- ³ Ibd.
- ⁴ <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>
- ⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/698894/en>
- ⁶ Katharina von Schnurbein, EU Coordinator on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnbqJXU8yS4&t=12s>
- ⁷ Researchers and experts on antisemitism in the European Union, interviewed in June 2024.
- ⁸ Ibd.
- ⁹ The term violence-oriented is used by the German government and covers "all actions of persons who can be described as violent, willing to use violence, supporting violence or advocating violence.": https://www.bundestag.de/webarchiv/presse/hib/2020_11/808908-808908
- ¹⁰ <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/6/e/Definitions-of-Antisemitic-Incidents.1425054324.pdf>,
- ¹¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/10/07/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-maps.html>
- ¹² For example: <https://extremismterms.adl.org/glossary/inverted-red-triangle> and <https://www.belltower.news/alarmstufe-rotes-dreieck-antisemitismuskritik-als-feind-155875/>
- ¹³ For example: <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/news/kai-will-pay-hu-berlin-verurteilt-eskalation-der-schmierereien-an-uni-gebaeude-li.2224719> and <https://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/chronik/kundgebung-fuer-juedisches-leben-bedroht-durch-zeigen-von-haenden-die-zu-dreieck-geformt-sind/> and https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/amas-terror-berlin-rote-dreiecke-antisemitismus-100.html?at_specific=ZDFheute&at_content=Sophora&s=03
- ¹⁴ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/classification-system-in-nazi-concentration-camps>
- ¹⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/09/how-the-amas-attack-on-the-supernova-festival-in-israel-unfolded>
- ¹⁶ <https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/three-women-convicted-displaying-paraglider-stickers-london-protest> and https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/amas-terror-berlin-rote-dreiecke-antisemitismus-100.html?at_specific=ZDFheute&at_content=Sophora&s=03
- ¹⁷ <https://www.counterextremism.com/de/content/effective-measures-against-extremist-financial-strategies-and-networks>

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