

After Hamas terror attacks on Israeli civilians: antisemitic incidents surge in Berlin

ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS IN BERLIN

FROM OCTOBER 07TH, 2023 TILL
OCTOBER 18TH, 2023

A report of the Department of Research and Information
on Antisemitism Berlin (RIAS Berlin)



ACCOMPANYING STATEMENTS

Benjamin Steinitz, Project Leader of RIAS Berlin:

“The arson attack on the Kahal Adass Yisroel synagogue and community center, in which fortunately no one was harmed, means that antisemitism in Berlin has reached a new level of escalation. Now, Berlin’s Jewish communities must be supported. Politicians, law enforcement agencies and civil society must therefore resolutely confront Israel-related antisemitism and the glorification of terror against Israeli civilians.”

Anna Segal, Executive Director of Kahal Adass Yisroel:

“It is precisely because we are visibly Jewish and assertive that we are being targeted. The arson attack and other hostilities against our members are intended to destroy what we stand for as a community – self-confident, traditional Jewish life in Berlin.”

Sigmunt Königsberg, Commissioner against antisemitism at the Jewish Community of Berlin:

“It is more than disturbing that just before the 85th anniversary of the Kristallnacht on November 9, an arson attack was perpetrated against a Berlin synagogue. Only the protection of the synagogue by police officers prevented worse. All this is just as disturbing as reports that private Jewish residences were marked with Stars of David. Such an escalation has not occurred in Germany since 1945. The number of antisemitic incidents is skyrocketing, and there is a correspondingly great sense of insecurity in the Jewish community.”

Marina Chernivsky, Executive Director of OFEK e.V. Counseling Center for Antisemitic Violence and Discrimination:

“The terrorist attack on Israel is a deep break for the Jewish and Israeli community in Germany. OFEK Berlin has been working in crisis mode for two weeks. During this period, the number of requests for support has increased tenfold; the number of requests for advice on antisemitic incidents has increased fivefold. A large proportion of them involve the Berlin area. Sometimes there are assaults, but also abusive behavior at schools, at demonstrations, at work, in the neighborhood. For people who are already traumatized by the brutality and scale of Hamas’ terrorist attacks, the confrontation with antisemitism is particularly distressing.”

AFTER HAMAS TERROR ATTACKS ON ISRAELI CIVILIANS: ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS SURGE IN BERLIN

In the early hours of the morning of October 18, two hooded individuals threw burning Molotov cocktails at a Jewish community center in Berlin Mitte. The incendiary devices missed the building and went out on the sidewalk after causing a fire that was extinguished by security personnel. This attempted attack has led to a massive disruption of the sense of safety and security in the Jewish and Israeli communities. At around 8:00 in the morning, a man on an electric scooter drove around the police barrier in front of the community center, threw the scooter to the ground and pulled out his cell phone. He was detained by security personnel. About two hours later, another person near the attack site shouted "Free Palestine" and was detained as well. In the course of this event, a bystander showed solidarity with the detained person, saying, "You did kill 2,000 people in the hospital [editor's note: referring to the Al-Ahli Arab hospital in Gaza] yesterday!"

In the past, events in Israel such as a renewed escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have already had serious impacts on antisemitic incidents and the experience of Jews in Berlin and on social media, most recently in 2021. In October 2023, however, the situation seems to have become significantly more severe. As a result of the uninhibited violence against Israelis, international calls for violence by the terrorist organizations Hamas and Hezbollah, and the presence of antisemitism and the glorification of terror in Berlin, security measures in front of Jewish institutions in Berlin were increased, and a Jewish soccer club canceled a game. Many Jews take measures to ensure their safety — they do not want to be recognized as Jewish. As a precaution, they avoid going to everyday places or sending children to school, and in one case it became known that an Israeli establishment had not opened for business. On October 19, a vigil could not take place due to security concerns raised by the police. These extensive repercussions are a watershed for Jewish and Israeli communities in Berlin and must be considered alongside specific antisemitic incidents.

So far, RIAS Berlin has documented 70 verified antisemitic incidents in the period from October 7 to October 18, 2023. These numbers must be regarded as preliminary, since numerous further incidents have already been reported but could not yet be verified. The 70 incidents represent a tripling of antisemitic incidents from the same period last year, when 25 antisemitic incidents were documented. On average, more than 6 antisemitic incidents have been documented daily since the terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians on October 7, compared to an average of 2 to 3 incidents per day in the previous year.

RIAS Berlin became aware of one case of extreme violence since October 7, 2023 — the attempted arson attack on the Jewish community center described above. This incident represents an escalation of the previous pattern of incidents. While the building was not ultimately damaged, such forms of antisemitically motivated violence lead to an erosion of the sense of security within the Jewish communities.

In addition, RIAS Berlin learned of 3 assaults, 9 instances of targeted damage of property, 3 threats, 1 mass mailing, and 53 incidents of abusive behavior, including 10 gatherings involving antisemitic remarks.

The sharp rise in the number of reports and antisemitic incidents in Germany against the backdrop of the Arab-Israeli conflict is not a new phenomenon. However, there has been a qualitative change in the way the incidents affect Jews and Israelis in Berlin. Most Jews and Israelis are worried about relatives and friends as a result of the massacre by the Hamas terrorist organization, or mourn the murdered. Witnessing that a terrorist attack on Israeli civilians is accompanied by an increase in antisemitic incidents, an increased presence of antisemitism in public space, and public glorification and legitimization of the terrorist attacks in Berlin is extremely unsettling and can also lead to a lasting loss of confidence in the normality and security of Jewish life in Berlin.

The vast majority of incidents documented by RIAS Berlin since Hamas' terrorist attack against Israel (about 80%) were related to the massacre. For example, on October 7, while the massacre in Israel was being carried out, young adults in the S-Bahn were talking and seemed pleased with the reports about victims of the massacre. When one person mentioned that 600 people were dead so far, one of the participants said that he wished for "a million Israeli victims." During an event in the leftist/anti-imperialist scene, there was a "solidarity action" for an activist. At least online, the "fullest solidarity with the resistance!" [editor's note: meaning Hamas] was declared. In a video, the activist stated:

“This resistance is legitimate, this resistance is just, and is a response to a hundred years of colonialism and exploitation of the Palestinian people.”

14 antisemitic incidents occurred in the living environment, a setting where they have a particularly unsettling effect on victims. Several markings on residential buildings, with Stars of David smeared on entrance doors or in the entrance area of houses, were found to be particularly threatening. This is reminiscent of the marking practices of the Nazis, who marked i.a. Jewish stores with a Star of David. Such markings may also serve as public identification of targets of potential assault. To date, no assaults have been known to occur as a result; however, if such markings are discovered in the immediate living environment, they can fundamentally shake a person’s sense of security.

Almost two-thirds of the incidents (46 out of 70) exhibited the manifestation of Israel-related antisemitism. Anti-Israel slogans such as “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” and “Child murderer Israel” were shouted at gatherings. Graffiti such as “Death to Israel” in Arabic or “Fuck Israel” next to “Hamas” surrounded by a heart were discovered in the city — in the context of the Hamas terror attack, these represent clear support for the massacre.

During the period under evaluation, RIAS Berlin recorded 10 gatherings; the indispensable on-site documentation by Democ e.V. and the Jewish Forum for Democracy and Against Antisemitism e.V. are currently taking place under exceedingly difficult conditions. Most of the gatherings could be categorized as belonging to the political-ideological spectrum of anti-Israel activism. However, it was observed that various actors from different political-ideological spectrums came together at the gatherings and that, for example, left-wing anti-imperialists appeared together with Islamists alongside anti-Israel activists.

An escalation in content was also observed in online incidents. In several cases, persons recognizable as Jewish were confronted with threats or wishes of extermination. In online posts on social media or in chat groups, the massacres were legitimized as resistance to oppression or Israel’s right to exist was denied, among other things.

In a clear deviation from the incidents documented in other periods, 21% of the incidents between October 7 and October 18 could be attributed to the political-ideological spectrum of anti-Israel activism. In comparison, during the previous year, 9% of the incidents came from this spectrum. The documentation of RIAS Berlin over several years shows that, fundamentally, antisemitism

in all its manifestations is a phenomenon found in all political-ideological spectrums.

Antisemitic incidents occurred in all of Berlin's districts except Lichtenberg, with the most reported from Mitte (17), Neukölln (14) and Kreuzberg (14).

Examples

Mitte, Oct. 07, 2023: At noon (thus, at a time when it was known that Hamas terrorists were carrying out a massacre of Israeli civilians), a group of young people danced through the rain at Berlin's main train station, shouting "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free."

Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, Oct. 10, 2023: The inscription "Kill Jews" and five swastikas were discovered on the "East Side Gallery."

Pankow, Oct. 12, 2023: The door of an apartment building, which is home to a Jewish resident among others, was marked with a Star of David.

Tempelhof-Schöneberg, Oct. 12, 2023: During a vigil for the victims of Hamas terrorism, "Fuck the Jews" was shouted from a passing car.

Online, Oct. 13, 2023: In a private chat group, a chat participant addressed another person in the group with antisemitic extermination fantasies. Among other things, they wrote: "You ought to be tied to a rocket. And this missile should hit an Israeli elementary school. That would be great. And it's still going to happen. Wait and see. World War III is coming." In other messages, the person stated that Jews deserve to die.

Reinickendorf, Oct. 13, 2023: An Israeli flag mounted at Reinickendorf City Hall was set on fire by unknown persons during the night.

Mitte, Oct. 14, 2023: Posters with references to victims of Hamas kidnappings were torn down at Rosenthaler Platz.

Mitte, Oct. 15, 2023: Approximately 1,000 people took part in an anti-Israel gathering on Potsdamer Platz. The participants chanted, among other things, "Child murderer Israel," "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" and Hamas slogans. Members of the press were called "Zionist media."

Neukölln, Oct. 16, 2023: A couple was sitting outside a pub, talking in Hebrew. Suddenly, an unknown person threw a firecracker at them. The couple remained unscathed.

Mitte, Oct. 18, 2023: Masked individuals threw two Molotov cocktails in the direction of a Jewish community center. These missed the building and went out on the sidewalk.

Online, Oct. 18, 2023: After an Instagram post about a journalist's tweet that also addressed antisemitic incidents in Berlin, a Jewish user receives the following comment: "It is the Zionists who ruthlessly kill our descendants and steal our land. The Ummah should not rest until every last one of these cockroaches is wiped out. Death to the Zionists. Until every last head rolls across the floor. Would have been the ones who deserved the bullets."



◀ **Neukölln, 15.10.2023:** Antisemitic graffiti on the premises of a school

IMPRESSUM

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Berlin, 1. Auflage 2023

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