

# Contemporary Antisemitism in the United States: The Response of the Establishment in Israel

Michal Hatuel-Radoshitzky | April 4, 2022

**Dr. Michal Hatuel-Radoshitzky, formerly a research fellow at the INSS and a member of the research team dealing with contemporary antisemitism in the United States, describes the development of the Israeli establishment's response to antisemitic incidents in general and in the United States specifically. She analyzes the main activities of official state and national bodies and suggests alternatives for improving the response to the growing threat of antisemitism.**

In recent years the Israeli establishment has become increasingly concerned with the phenomenon of antisemitism. This is due to a number of factors, including the rise of incidents and expressions of antisemitism around the world, and particularly in the United States, which is home to the largest Jewish community outside Israel.

As such, this article asks “what are the characteristics of the Israeli response to contemporary antisemitism in the United States?” It begins with a historical survey, focusing on milestones and on the range of approaches that have characterized Israel's engagement with antisemitism in the diaspora over the years. The methodology section defines the variables included in the research and describes how the research was conducted. The discussion that follows seeks to map institutional state and national actors in this field and relates to their activities. The concluding section presents the main insights and policy recommendations.

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## **The Development of Israeli Engagement with Antisemitism in the Diaspora: Approaches and Milestones**

Israel's approach to the Jewish diaspora is not unique in comparison to other states' handling of diaspora communities. In contrast to previous decades, in the 21st century, at least 70 countries, including India, Poland, Japan, and Lebanon, have government ministries or special agencies to deal with such communities and their development (Kraus et al., 2009; Sheffer, 2020). In most countries, responsibility for activities designed to foster national identity and the sense of belonging to the homeland lie with the foreign ministry or a senior level interministerial committee that works in collaboration with the foreign ministry and includes representatives from the education, labor, and finance ministries. Some countries have formal cooperation between the government and nongovernmental agencies, such as foundations and other institutions for nurturing communities that live abroad (Kraus et al., 2009).

The first official reference by the State of Israel to diaspora Jewry can already be found in the Declaration of Independence (1948): "We appeal to the Jewish people throughout the diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding and to stand by them in the great struggle for realizing the age-old dream—the redemption of Israel." Upon its establishment, Israel embodied the solution for protecting not only its borders but also the entire Jewish people. According to the Zionist vision, the lack of security of Jewish life in the diaspora—including the threat of antisemitism—could be solved by immigrating to Israel (termed *aliyah*) (Shain & Bristman, 2002).

Developments from the mid-1970s onward, such as Resolution 3379 of the UN General Assembly (1975), which determined that "Zionism is a form of racism and of racial discrimination" and led to anti-Zionist and antisemitic propaganda; as well as the slow breakdown of the Communist bloc, created an important opportunity for Israeli diplomacy to pressure the Soviet Union to bring an end to displays of antisemitism in its territory. In 1987, it was proposed to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir to set up an interministerial government forum together with the Jewish Agency, to monitor antisemitism, which until then had been handled by several different government actors. In 1988, Elyakim Rubinstein, then government secretary, established the Interministerial Forum to Monitor Antisemitism, which also included representatives of diaspora Jewry and academic experts (Rubinstein, 2003; Weinberg, 2018). Although there was talk of raising awareness about the struggle against antisemitism and collaborating with Jewish communities and friendly governments, the main task that the government assigned to the State of Israel in this context was to encourage Jews to make *aliyah*.

In 1992, the Interministerial Forum to Monitor Antisemitism and the Anti-Defamation League initiated a project to research antisemitism at Tel Aviv University. The project sought to document and research antisemitism all over the world and eventually managed to periodically insert the subject into the government's agenda by means of an annual report. A decade later, in 2003, Minister Natan Sharansky founded the Global Forum for Combating Antisemitism. This forum became the coordinating body between Jewish leaders, intellectuals, and organizations (Weinberg, 2018). In 2004, on January 27—the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz—Minister Sharansky initiated the first special session of the Knesset to mark Israel's National Day to Combat Antisemitism (in 2005 the UN declared this date to be International Holocaust Remembrance Day). At that session, then Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said that “in the fight against antisemitism there must be cooperation between states and nongovernmental entities, Jewish and non-Jewish organizations” and emphasized that “the State of Israel is the only guarantee we have that Jews can defend themselves, by themselves” (Knesset, 2004).

Throughout the history of the state of Israel, various foreign policy considerations that affect the state's bilateral relationships have influenced Israel's approach to dealing with antisemitism. Condemnation of displays of antisemitism worldwide has been selective at times, taking into account other interests that the government has deemed important. For example, according to Shain and Bristman (2002), Prime Ministers Menachem Begin and Ehud Barak asked Abe Foxman, head of the Anti-Defamation League, to refrain from broadly condemning antisemitism in Egypt at a time when Israel wished to promote political or regional cooperation with the country. In more recent years too, a similar policy is apparent. Notably, for example, Israel did not swiftly nor unambiguously condemn former US President Donald Trump's weak response to the antisemitic march in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017, when neo-Nazis chanted the slogan “Jews will not replace us” (Jackson, 2019).

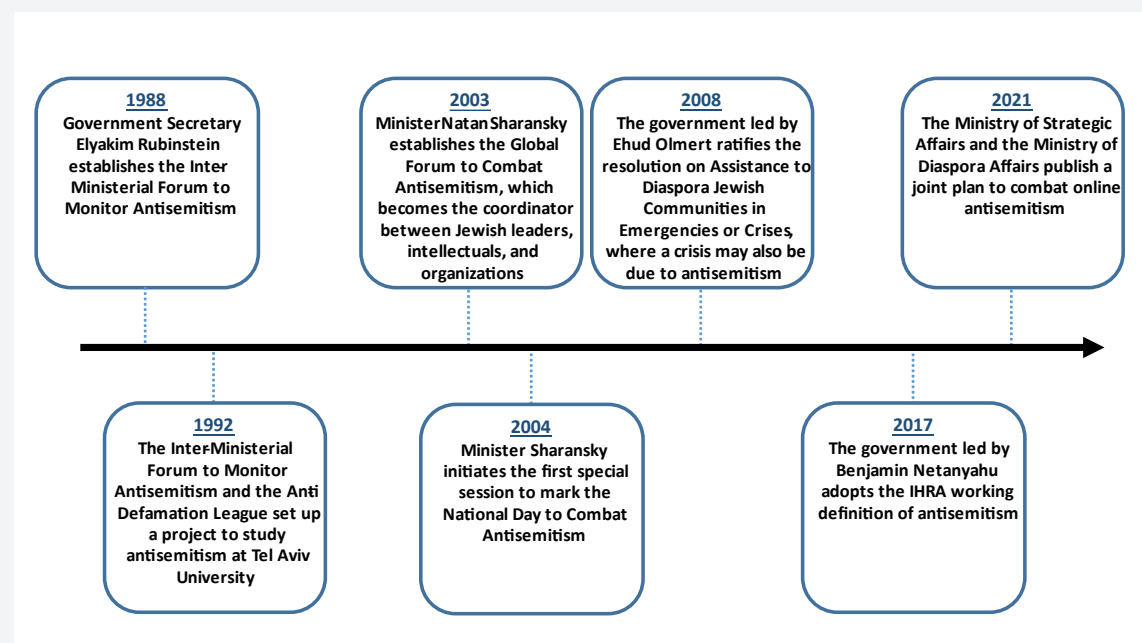
In 2008, the Israeli government led by Ehud Olmert ratified a resolution titled “Assistance to Jewish communities in the diaspora in situations of emergency or crisis,” which defined “crisis,” among other things by “displays of antisemitism” (Government Secretariat, 2008). Clause 2 of the resolution states that in such cases “a Forum on Preparations for Emergencies in Jewish Communities will be activated, with representatives of the Israeli government and the Jewish Agency, to serve as a forum for thinking, planning and taking action to help Jewish communities in the diaspora” (Government Secretariat, 2008). According to the Jewish People Policy Institute, this government resolution marked a turning point,

because of the attempt to define and budget for Israeli policy that affected Jews outside the state of Israel (Kraus et al., 2009).

A decade later, Israel's response to antisemitism in the diaspora shows that the government has assumed growing responsibility for Jewish communities around the world and that it is investing more resources in combating antisemitism (Reut Institute, 2017). Another milestone in this context is Government Resolution 34 to adopt the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) working definition of antisemitism (Government Secretariat, 2017). This definition, which has been the subject of extensive disputes between its opponents and supporters, has over the years become an important tool behind the efforts of many diverse players working against antisemitism worldwide.

One variable that may explain the State of Israel's increasing interest in the phenomenon of antisemitism is the growing direct and actual exposure of Israelis to antisemitic content on digital platforms, particularly social media, which serve as a meeting place for citizens of the world. To this, we can add the rise of anti-Israeli antisemitic expressions, on social media and elsewhere. Concerns about the spread of antisemitism in the digital space were reinforced in 2021, after the publication of the government's policy on combating antisemitic hate speech online, drafted through joint efforts of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs and the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs (Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, 2021b).

**Figure 1. Milestones in the Development of Israel's Involvement in Fighting Antisemitism**



## Methodology

The research question—*what are the characteristics of the Israeli response to contemporary antisemitism in the US?*—necessitates the consideration of two variables.<sup>1</sup> The first is who are the central Israeli players vis-à-vis contemporary antisemitism, and the second is the type of actions that these players are initiating. In addition, the research traces the approaches that guide the work of the various players and gaps in their functioning. To this end, the research is based on three main sources:

1. **Learning encounters and in-depth interviews:** In 2020–2021 57 experts (27 Israelis, 28 Americans, and two international experts) were interviewed. The interviews (mostly on Zoom) were structured, and the questionnaire was adapted and updated during the data collection period.
2. **Meetings of the Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs Committee and of the Subcommittee on Israel–Diaspora Relations, in the 23rd Knesset (2020–2021):** The Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs Committee began its work on June 3, 2020, and the last discussion relevant to this study took place on February 2, 2021. On September 4, 2020 the Subcommittee on Israel–Diaspora Relations was established. During the research period these committees held about 120 discussions, 15 of which addressed antisemitism or US Jewry. All 15 discussions with relevance to the subject matter of this research were analyzed (for the full list of discussions included in the analysis, see the Appendix).
3. **Political documents, organizational reports, and press items that shed light on the positions of senior Israeli officials or actions taken in Israel regarding contemporary antisemitism in the US.**

## Actors in the Israeli Establishment Involved in Combating Antisemitism

Many actors in Israel are involved in the fight against antisemitism—including government and national institutions, civil society organizations, and private companies. The focus of this article is on government and national institutions whose activities are overt. Hence, civil society organizations that address

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the limited scope of this paper and the fact that it is part of a comprehensive body of articles that address the phenomenon of contemporary antisemitism in the US, the third variable in question—contemporary antisemitism—is not discussed here.

antisemitism or government bodies that could be involved in addressing antisemitism but whose operations are covert are not assessed.

### The Ministry of Diaspora Affairs

In April 2013, Government Resolution 74 authorized the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs to lead the struggle against antisemitism, including the coordination of the Global Forum to Combat Antisemitism. The ministry is relatively small in terms of resources and personnel, and its many activities are largely based on shared projects with nongovernmental actors. Under the ministry's responsibility is the monitoring of global antisemitism and submitting an annual report to the Israeli government thereon (Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, 2021a). For this purpose, it operates a team that conducts advanced monitoring of online antisemitic content and incidents. Special attention is given to the US and Western Europe, which are the source of most antisemitic expressions found by the ministry's sophisticated monitoring systems. When categorizing a statement as antisemitic, the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs relies on the IHRA working definition. In addition, the ministry maintains contact with diaspora Jewish communities and provides training and courses for both emergency and security forces around the world on the subject of hate crimes and protection of the Jewish community. As part of the effort to develop educational content for combating antisemitism, the ministry has provided funding for developing a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)<sup>2</sup> on antisemitism, compiled by Yad Vashem.

### The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for broadening Israel's international relations, including cultivating relations with Jewish communities in the diaspora. The ministry employs diplomatic tools in the fight against antisemitism, and regularly convenes conferences of the Global Forum to Combat Antisemitism. Furthermore, the ministry represents Israel in the IHRA forums and leads the state's efforts to recruit international endorsement of the IHRA's working definition of antisemitism, among other things by utilizing Israeli embassies and consulates around the world.

In the fight against antisemitism in the digital world, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs adopts a three-pronged approach: It reports online antisemitic content and works toward its removal through ongoing contact with civil society organizations worldwide; it engages in ongoing dialogue with technology companies, such as

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<sup>2</sup> A platform to which educational institutions can upload academic courses for the general public. The course can be completed with a test, and those who pass receive a diploma for a small fee.

Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok, to remove harmful content; and it liaises with other governments on legislation addressing antisemitism and hate crime, inter alia in the context of social media (Committee for Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs, 2020e). In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs works with Jewish organizations to ensure that antisemitic and anti-Israel content is not incorporated into school curricula and strives to forge contacts with organizations representing minorities in the US.

### The Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy

In 2015, the Political-Security Cabinet assigned the Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy with the responsibility of guiding, coordinating, and integrating the activities of government ministries and civil society organizations in the struggle against the boycott movement and attempts to delegitimize Israel (State Comptroller, 2016). This ministry, which was active until 2021, also focused on the phenomenon of contemporary antisemitism. In this way it differed from the Ministry of the Diaspora, which over the years focused mainly on classic antisemitism. In recent years, the Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy worked with Concert, a nonprofit public-benefit corporation that the ministry initiated, to support a range of civil society ventures that address issues with which the ministry is concerned.

To best communicate with Israel supporters' worldwide, the ministry founded a Global Community for Israel (GC4I) network, comprised of civil society organizations and pro-Israel activists. Similarly, more specified networks were created in the law and digital arenas. Members of the digital network, for example, include social media influencers, managers in the online media sphere, and activists in a variety of organizations. The ministry would assist their work by providing materials and information as needed. Over the years, the ministry attempted to create a network of pro-Israeli academics, but this initiative did not take shape.

In general, the Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy directed its activities toward four areas where it had added value: First, linking civil-society pro-Israel activists who work against expressions of contemporary antisemitism worldwide; second, providing financial support for the activities of network members; third, conducting research, due to its ability to produce reports based on global data and due to its ability to leverage its research findings in the international arena; and fourth, monitoring the funding sources of anti-Israeli entities, which necessitates state-level technology and resources. During 2020, the ministry focused on anti-Israel action in the digital and social media domain, and

as mentioned above, in early 2021, together with the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, published a paper outlining the government's policy on combating antisemitic hate speech online (Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, 2021b).

On July 19, 2021, under the newly formed Bennet-led government, Resolution 136 ordered the closure of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy and the transfer of its activities to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Government Secretariat, 2021). In January 2022, a new entity was initiated in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—the Division for Combating the Delegitimization of Israel—relying upon the infrastructures, personnel, and experience gained by the Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy.

### Ministry of Immigration and Integration

If Israel's solution to the problem of antisemitism is Jewish immigration, it could be argued that the Ministry of Immigration and Integration plays an important role in addressing antisemitism. The ministry deals with all aspects of aliyah. This includes the preparation of candidates in their home-countries for the process by employing dozens of emissaries (*shlichim*) who help them acquire the Hebrew language and who assist them in assembling the many bureaucratic documents necessary for their arrival and integration into Israeli society. The ministry is forbidden from operating directly among the Jewish community in the US, hence cooperating with other bodies is an integral part of its work. The organization that is mandated to prepare Jews from the US for their arrival in Israel is *Nefesh b'Nefesh* (Committee for Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs, 2020a). With respect to antisemitism, the ministry tracks reasons for aliyah and, as such, collects data on antisemitism as a trigger for immigration.

### The Knesset

The Knesset addresses the issue of antisemitism through the Committee for Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs, whose elected chair in the 23rd Knesset (March 2020–April 2021) was Knesset member David Bitan (Likud), and through the Subcommittee for Israel–Diaspora Relations, led by MK Michal Cotler-Wunsh (Blue and White). A related subcommittee to contemporary antisemitism is the Subcommittee for Foreign Policy and Public Diplomacy, which operates under the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. However, the proceedings of the latter subcommittee are not publicly accessible; hence, its work is not addressed in this article.

During the research period, the Committee for Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs worked energetically; however its central focus was on

immigration and absorption rather than antisemitism. Over the course of eight months in which the committee convened, eight meetings dealt directly with antisemitism, at least four of which focused on antisemitism in the social media and digital domain.

The analysis of meeting proceedings reveals five substantial contributions. First, the committee served as a platform for meetings and dialogue between representatives of Jewish and pro-Israel communities and organizations across the world and Israeli MKs and organizations, thus opening a tangible communication line between the Knesset and diaspora Jewry. Second, the committee invited members of organizations representing an array of ideas and approaches in the Jewish world, thus contributing to the perception that Israel accepts the diversity encapsulated in Jewish communities around the world. Third, through the committee, the Knesset maintained working relations with other parliaments and with the Interparliamentary Task Force to Combat Online Antisemitism, established in 2020 (Deutch, 2020). Fourth, the committee enabled the synchronization and updating of professionals from the government, national institutions and civil society organizations concerned with multiple aspects of Jewish life in the diaspora—including the fight against both antisemitism and the delegitimization of Israel. That is, under its umbrella, the many stakeholders were able to examine the situation on the ground, assess efforts being made to address challenges, identify gaps, and create links between professionals. In this context, the committee mobilized cooperation between the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and the Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy, which led to the joint formation of the government policy document on combating online antisemitism. The fifth contribution of the committee, is its ability to make concrete policy recommendations and track their implementation.

The 23rd Knesset also had three lobbies that dealt with matters relating to combating antisemitism (in general and in the US specifically): the Lobby for Strengthening Relations between Israel and US Jewry; the Lobby for Combating Antisemitism and Delegitimization of the State of Israel; and the Lobby for the Jewish People. A Knesset lobby is a group of Knesset members who work to gain support for a specific issue. Although they are not official Knesset entities, they are authorized to hold meetings in the Knesset building, and their members can utilize their annual budget for the lobby's purposes.

To complete the puzzle of official state actors involved in combating antisemitism in the US, four additional bodies should be mentioned: the President's Office, the Prime Minister's Office (upon all its executive arms), the Ministry of Education, and Yad Vashem. Although these bodies have the potential to do a great deal in the

field, their activity on the issues at hand are generally quite limited—as seen, for example, in their absence from the meetings of the Committee for Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs and the Subcommittee for Israel–Diaspora Relations, analyzed in this research.

The President's Office is very involved in global Jewish affairs; however, it does not focus specifically on the US, nor on antisemitism. Rather, the key focus is on Israel's ties to Jewish communities across the globe. A notable contribution to raising the issue of antisemitism to the international public discourse was made in January 2020, the 75-year milestone to the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, when the President's Office hosted the Fifth Global Holocaust Forum, attended by the leaders of 47 states.

The Prime Minister's Office is an important body for diaspora Jewry in many ways: from allocating budgets for activities among Jewish communities worldwide, through engaging its security agencies to foil antisemitic attacks and help secure Jewish communities, to diplomacy missions conducted by the prime minister himself. Although the Prime Minister's Office could potentially shape Israel's policy for combating antisemitism, the issue is low on the priorities of this office's crowded agenda. Either way, seeing as efforts on the issue of antisemitism initiated by the Prime Minister's Office remain covert, this body is not included in the current research.

The Ministry of Education addresses the subject of antisemitism in schools, mainly in relation to Jewish History and World War II. Syllabi contain little material on the subject of Jewish life in the diaspora nowadays, an issue mainly taught as part of the Civics studies curriculum for matriculation. In schools that do not choose the Jewish People cluster for matriculation (as a unit in the Civics curriculum), pupils learn nothing about diaspora Jewry nor contemporary antisemitism. Since 2016, younger age groups have been studying Jewish-Israeli Culture, but without distinctly relating to antisemitism. To address the lack of familiarity of teachers and the ministry's officials with these issues, a collaboration between the Ministry of Education, the Jewish Agency, and the UJA Federation of New York was forged. As a result of this partnership, delegations of teachers and educational directors spend time in New York and learn how local Jewish communities deal with a variety of issues and challenges, including antisemitism.

Yad Vashem—The World Holocaust Remembrance Center—was established by the Knesset following the Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Law (1953), and it is assigned with the remembrance, documentation, research, and teaching of the Holocaust (The Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Law—Yad Vashem,

1953). For many years, Yad Vashem focused on Holocaust research only and refrained from addressing contemporary antisemitism. However, further to many requests, and misinformation surrounding the term “antisemitism,” particularly in the context of distorting the remembrance of the Holocaust and delegitimizing Israel, Yad Vashem currently addresses antisemitism in two programs. One provides background information on classic and contemporary antisemitism, equipping teachers with tools for greater clarity, understanding, and skills to broaden awareness. Another is an online course about the Holocaust, which includes a component about contemporary antisemitism from the right and the left sides of the political spectrum. Nevertheless, the subject of contemporary antisemitism remains peripheral to Yad Vashem’s ongoing work, and any focus on it does not specifically emphasize the US.

### National Institutions

The two most relevant national institutions in the context of this research are the Jewish Agency for Israel and the World Zionist Organization.

The Jewish Agency focuses on three strategic subjects: aliyah, Israel–diaspora relations, and the representation of diaspora Jews in Israeli society (Committee for Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs, 2020b). The Jewish Agency has defined antisemitism as one of the five main challenges for the Jewish people nowadays.

Similar to government agencies, the Jewish Agency has adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism and works to promote it. The Jewish Agency’s team assesses reports written by government ministries and research institutes and compares them against data received from its circa 2,000 emissaries (*shlichim*) worldwide. The Agency also provides Jewish communities with information to help them fight initiatives or proposed laws that restrict Jewish life in the diaspora and runs both a data center and a call center for Jews interested in immigrating to Israel. At the government’s request, the Agency set up a fund for the security of Jewish communities, which works to protect Jews and Jewish institutions around the world, except for in the US.

At the request of the Jewish community in the US, which is well-organized and best-suited to address local challenges, the Jewish Agency does not deal with antisemitism there. However, as mentioned above, the Jewish Agency partners with local Jewish organization in the US to send delegations of senior Israelis and relevant professionals (from the Ministry of Education, for example) to American Jewish communities, where they learn about Jewish life in the US, including how antisemitism is addressed.

### **Antisemitism in the US: The Response of the Establishment in Israel**

The World Zionist Organization arranges conferences around the world and engages in activities focused on online antisemitism, including running a media center that monitors online antisemitic content (based on Masa Program volunteers who speak different languages). It also monitors antisemitic content; operates a “red alert” mail with reports about antisemitic incidents; provides tools to fight online expressions of antisemitism; and engages with the central digital platform companies, such as Google and Facebook, to combat online antisemitism.

## **Issues with the Israeli Response to Contemporary Antisemitism**

One of the most striking findings from interviews carried out under this research is the clear difference between Israel’s role in struggling against antisemitism in Europe and other parts of the world—where Jewish communities yearn for Israel’s help—compared to Israel’s limited role in this context in the US.

An analysis of the activity of Israel’s official and national institutions in the fight against antisemitism in general (including in the US) highlights three central issues: Israel’s complex role in dealing with a phenomenon that occurs outside its sovereign territory; collaboration (or lack thereof) among the many different players involved in the struggle against antisemitism, and the quantification and measurements of efforts in this domain.

### **1. Israel’s complex role in dealing with a phenomenon outside its sovereign territory**

We are the government of the Jewish people ... the element of antisemitism... ultimately the hope (is) that in the end they will immigrate to Israel, but we have to say there are people living in the diaspora who do not want to immigrate, and that’s OK, but they are Jews and we have to give them all the tools and legitimacy . . . and give them every support due to our commitment. (Omer Yankelevich, former Minister of Diaspora Affairs, Committee for Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs, 2020d).

An over-extensive Israeli approach to struggling against antisemitism in the diaspora could be problematic for three reasons. First, it could impinge on the sovereignty of other countries and their duty to protect their local Jewish communities. Second, Israel’s amplification of the phenomenon at times leads to public and political debate, which perversely fuels antisemitism. Third, Israel’s involvement can reinforce antisemitic conspiracies that Jews in the diaspora have dual loyalty—to the country where they live and to Israel. This allegation is further strengthened when Israeli leaders call on the victims of antisemitism to immigrate

to Israel for their protection. Since there is no precise formula for proportional Israeli involvement, in light of these three issues, a key directive is for the State of Israel to try and coordinate related efforts with local Jewish communities.

In answer to the interview question about effective and suitable channels for Israeli action, the following five avenues surfaced:

- a. Education:** Internally, it is important that Israeli pupils are taught about Jewish life in the diaspora and the challenges of antisemitism and anti-Zionism, as a means to increase their awareness and the solidarity and involvement of Israeli society on issues concerning Jewish communities worldwide. Externally, Israel can provide information, draft curricula, encourage research and teaching of the subject, serve as a meeting place for international and Israeli researchers, and organize forums on related issues. All this can be done with the help of professionally renowned institutions such as Yad Vashem and well-known and respected Israeli and international scholars in the field of antisemitism.
- b. Collecting data and monitoring antisemitic incidents:** Although official US state agencies collect information and monitor antisemitic incidents within its territory (and elsewhere in the world), Israel can contribute to these efforts, particularly in the digital domain. For example, the reports of the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs were praised by former US Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combating Antisemitism, Elan Carr, who noted that although the office of the US Secretary of State collects its own data on antisemitism, it considers a range of sources in formulating its policies. Retrieving data from across the internet (including the dark web) requires the involvement of state entities, and on this matter Israel has added value.
- c. Security:** The State of Israel can provide advice and assistance on means and methods of protecting Jewish communities and institutions.
- d. Diplomacy:** Israel can promote the endorsement of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism by states and organizations and particularly by social media networks, to guide and encourage more assertive action against hate speech.
- e. Building coalitions and connections:** Although antisemitism is unique, it should also be treated within the context of the wider struggle against racism and hatred of other minorities. As such, Israel should spearhead efforts to build coalitions with states and civil society

activists, who are partners in the fight against racism, and antisemitism therein.

In terms of what to avoid, interviews repeatedly surfaced about the importance of Israeli leaders in refraining from excessively labeling events, incidents, or actions as antisemitic—especially when they are not—to avoid cheapening the term and using it to tarnish political opponents.

## **2. Collaboration (or lack thereof) among the many different players involved in the struggle against antisemitism**

One of the big problems . . . is that there are many organizations and ministries linked to the fight against antisemitism, very many, but there is no coordination. We lack an integrative element, a roundtable. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is involved, also the Ministry for Strategic Affairs, also the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, and many more, including national institutions and private organizations. We have to think how to integrate this struggle. It's not the same as seven-eight years ago, when we said, antisemitism, frowned and said, maybe (Yaakov Hagoel, World Zionist Organization, Committee for Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs, 2020c).

The question of coordination and collaboration between government ministries surfaced several times in the proceedings of the Committee for Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs and the Subcommittee for Israel-Diaspora Relations. Based on both public meeting protocols and interviews conducted as part of this research, it is evident that government ministries are generally aware of each other's work, and the areas of concern of each ministry are fairly separate, with occasional collaborations. Moreover, the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs set up an interministerial forum that meets when deemed necessary, and as such integrates all government activity in the fight against antisemitism.

Nevertheless, there are gaps in the cooperation between ministries due to the lack of a coordinating body to flesh out an overarching strategy and synchronize efforts. In other words, occasional roundtable meetings and partial sharing of information cannot suffice when tackling such a comprehensive, global, and complex phenomenon with many players and a broad swath of opinions.

## **3. Quantifying and measuring efforts**

This is not something that can be measured. Ladies and gentlemen, the problem of antisemitism is constantly growing. We are dealing with it, and perhaps we are preventing a further increase, but it's very hard to measure success or failure in

this matter. So there is no process of measuring our investment. That's the final outcome of this matter and that's also natural. I'm not accusing anyone, but it needs to be known (MK David Bitan, Chair of the Committee for Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs, 2020c).

The ability to measure goals and objectives—a necessary condition for learning and fine-tuning activities—is dubious in most efforts that address antisemitism. There are three reasons for this. First, there is variance in baseline issues concerning the phenomenon of antisemitism among players in the field. These include diverse methods of collecting data; the lack of a central, shared pool of information; and different definitions used by the different players to describe antisemitism. Thus, there is no clear and consistent picture of the phenomenon of antisemitism in general and in the US in particular. In other words, the extent of the problem is subject to interpretation. Second, it is hard to measure the effectiveness of any activity when it is impossible to measure causality and to assign weight to the many variables involved in activities designed to combat antisemitism. Third, some counterefforts have no immediate effect but set long-term processes in motion; it then becomes difficult—if not impossible—to find the starting point of the process or track progress regarding goals set.

To overcome these difficulties, the players involved have learned to differentiate between long-term goals, which are harder to measure, and short-term objectives, which are indeed assessed. Examples of metrics for short-term objectives include the number of participants in events, conferences, and educational activities; the growing networks of program graduates; the extent of exposure to campaign messages and informative and educational initiatives; changes in attitudes among the general public, specific groups, and participants in educational activities; and the degree of participants' involvement in follow-up activities.

Thus, even if there is an obvious inherent difficulty in measuring whether overarching goals are achieved, it is important to continue activities and measure quantifiable variables, while continuing to search for additional tools and assessment methods.

## **Conclusion and Policy Recommendations**

The analysis raises three main insights regarding Israel's response to antisemitism in the US. **First**, the classical paradigm, whereby Israel's response to antisemitism in the diaspora is limited to encouraging immigration, is no longer central to Israel's approach. Israel has increasingly recognized that Jews have the right to choose to live outside Israel, without this detracting from the state's moral and ethical obligations toward them. During the 23rd Knesset, there was even a

proposal for a government bill (which eventually was not voted on) stating that the Israeli government must consult representatives of the Jewish world on issues affecting the Jewish diaspora.<sup>3</sup> **Second**, experts agree that there is a rise in antisemitic incidents in the US and that this negatively affects Jewish communities' sense of security. Members of the Israeli establishment share this view, and there is a general desire to increase Israel's engagement and involvement in the subject. The linkage between expressions of anti-Israel hatred and antisemitism is another reason that Israeli officials show greater interest in the struggle against antisemitism. **Third**, at this stage, the Israeli establishment clearly has limited ability to address the challenge of antisemitism in the US. Unlike Jewish communities elsewhere, the American Jewish community is hesitant to cooperate with Israel and opposes active Israeli involvement in dealing with local antisemitism. The American Jewish community generally perceives itself as being fully capable of dealing with the challenge of antisemitism, and is wary that Israeli involvement will encourage disputes and accusations of dual loyalty. Nonetheless, it appears that American Jewry does seek expressions of support and solidarity from both the Israeli government and the Israeli public regarding antisemitic challenges they face.

Given the gaps in the Israeli establishment's struggle against antisemitism in the US (and in general), the following recommendations are proposed:

- **Formulate an overall strategy for Israel's role and action in the fight against antisemitism:** There is a need for a comprehensive government strategy to define the objectives of Israeli action, including means required and preferred directions for action—to serve as a working plan for all entities involved in this issue.
- **Reorganization and concentration of efforts:** The current disparate approach adopted by the several government ministries and the national agencies involved in this issue necessitates synchronizing a joint assessment, planning and coordinating activities, burden-sharing and collaborating efforts as well implementing and reviewing activities. It is recommended to designate a high-level government entity that will orchestrate all government action on combating antisemitism—either by establishing a specific government authority or creating some other mechanism to pool resources and coordinate actions.

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<sup>3</sup> The bill was submitted by former member of Knesset Tehila Friedman and promoted by former Minister of Diaspora Affairs Omer Yankelevich (Lexner, 2020).

- **Measurement and assessment:** Given the gaps in measuring and assessing antisemitism and the effectiveness of the steps taken to combat it, it is recommended that the various bodies work together on defining metrics for assessment and establishing systematic methods for periodical strategic assessments. Efforts to this end can be externally assisted by researchers and experts whose assessment can serve as a base for the formulation of ongoing decisions and action on developing issues.
- **Israel's role in the global fight against antisemitism:** By virtue of its obligations to the security and future of the Jewish people as a whole, Israel must spearhead global efforts against antisemitism, assist relevant international bodies, and clearly express moral positions against hatred and racism in general. Simultaneously, the responsibility for the security of Jewish citizens in other countries lies with their own governments. Therefore, Israel is required, above all, to encourage the local governments (in cooperation with the Jewish communities) to take action wherever antisemitism rears its ugly head, all the while readily providing any assistance needed. Israel must find ways to cooperate and strengthen the bond with the American Jewish community vis-à-vis the struggle against antisemitism, notwithstanding the political sensitivity of the issue and concerns over Israeli interference in internal US affairs. One important channel of activity is to reinforce joint action with American Jewry to tackle the problems of small Jewish communities outside the US, including antisemitism.
- **Focus on Israel's relative advantages:** The analysis highlights areas where there is a connection between Israel's existing or potential abilities and the needs and demands of American Jewish communities (or at least some of them):
  - a. The increase in violent antisemitic incidents in the US in recent years has led to large investments in safeguarding and securing Jewish institutions, a subject on which Israelis have extensive knowledge and experience.
  - b. The issue of fighting antisemitism and hate speech online, which has no clear geographical boundaries, is another potential area where Israeli abilities, combined with US prominence and the ability of American Jewish organizations, can influence the policies of leading social media platforms and a range of digital services. Joint activity in this realm can focus on monitoring antisemitism,

developing methodologies for measurement and assessment, reporting to the digital platforms, and promoting response mechanisms in terms of legislation, regulation, and enforcement.

- c. The field of education presents many opportunities and is fertile ground for strengthening cooperation between Israel and Jewish communities and organizations in the US. In addition to the already existing widespread activity, new directions include joint development (by Israeli bodies and Jewish communities) of syllabi and training programs (designed for Israelis, as well as Jews and non-Jews outside Israel) on subjects such as Holocaust remembrance, antisemitism and hate speech, Jewish and Israeli culture, Israel and the Middle East. Additional recommended activities are introducing content on the lives of Jewish communities outside of Israel into the Israeli education system; supporting collaborations between schools and leading research institutions in the field in Israel and the US; and implementing joint courses for pupils and teachers in Israel and the US.
- d. As part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen international, political, and professional mechanisms and processes involved in the fight against antisemitism, Israel can strive to become a hub for policy and action-based networks that tackle the issue from different angles, including research, digital and social media, education, and foreign and community relations.

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**Appendix: List of Analyzed Discussions of the Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs Committee and of the Subcommittee for Israel-Diaspora Relations, 23rd Knesset**

Name of Discussion	Date
1. Survey by the Minister of Immigration and Absorption, Knesset Member Pnina Tamano	June 10, 2020
2. Survey by the Chairman of the Jewish Agency Mr. Isaac Herzog	July 6, 2020
3. Trends and Rising Antisemitism in the World in the Shadow of COVID-19	July 6, 2020
4. Survey by the Minister of the Diaspora, Knesset Member Omer Yankelevich	July 20, 2020
5. Antisemitism on Social Networks	July 29, 2020
6. Antisemitism on Social Networks	Aug. 8, 2020
7. Preparations by Government Ministries for the Immigration and Absorption of North American Jews	Aug. 10, 2020
8. Establishing a Subcommittee on Relations Between Israel and the Diaspora	Sept. 14, 2020
9. Antisemitism and Other Challenges Facing Jewish Students in Diaspora Campuses in the Shadow of COVID-19	Sept. 15, 2020
10. Antisemitism on Social Networks	Oct. 14, 2020
11. Maintaining Links with Israel, in the Absence of Visits to Israel by Young People (Birthright, Massa, etc.) during the COVID-19 Pandemic	Nov. 3, 2020
12. The Fruits of Despair of Antisemitism and Assimilation: A Thousand Year Low in the Number of Jews in Europe	Nov. 11, 2020
13. Session Attended by Figures Active on Behalf of Israel, Based on the JNS List: Appreciation, Learning, Analysis of Trends, and Preparations for 2021	Nov. 24, 2020
14. Marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2021	Jan. 27, 2021

- 15.** Safer Internet Day—Presentation of the Outline of Government Programs on the Subject of Online Hate Speech Fe 2, 2021