

# ANTISEMITISM WORLDWIDE REPORT FOR 2023



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Contemporary European Jewry**  
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# THE ARAB WORLD

## A TALE OF HATE AND DARKNESS

Following the October 7 attack, there has been a significant surge in antisemitic expressions in Arab discourse. It involved the demonization of Jews in religious terms, the propagation of conspiracy theories alleging, among other things, the existence of Jewish control over global media, and narratives that deny or distort the scope and nature of the war crimes committed by Hamas.

Between October 7 and October 31, CyberWell, a non-profit organization monitoring antisemitism on social media, reported that in comparison to previous months, the levels of content identified as highly antisemitic had doubled.<sup>1</sup> A late December 2023 report from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) highlighted a similar rise in antisemitic political cartoons in the Arabic press, further evidence of the surge in such sentiments.<sup>2</sup>

Arab antisemitic expressions following the October 7 attack extended well beyond the borders of Gaza. They involved officials in various states, including those that have signed peace or normalization treaties with Israel, as well as religious leaders and institutions, political groups and parties, media corporations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and social media users.

The Egyptian al-Azhar, one of the most prestigious religious institutions in Egypt and the wider Sunni Muslim world, is affiliated and financially supported by the Egyptian State. Following October 7, scholars at the university launched an antisemitic campaign, referring to Israel as the “Zionist enemy.” Al-Azhar’s official social media pages characterized Israel as a “bloodthirsty wolf” that delights in “eating the flesh and drinking the blood” of children, women and the innocent.<sup>3</sup> One scholar, Sheikh ‘Abd al-Hamid al-Atrash, called for boycotting international companies owned by Jews and those collaborating with Jews, whom he referred to as “treacherous people.”<sup>4</sup>

Another Al-Azhar scholar, Muhammad ‘Umar al-Qadi, the institution’s Dean of the Faculty for Islamic and Arabic Studies, wrote on his Facebook page that “[In speaking of] resistance, I refer to the jihad fighters in Palestine, who defend their honor and land, those who fight their

<sup>1</sup> CyberWell, “Israel-Hamas War: Trending Antisemitic Narratives & Calls to Violence,” November 2023, <https://cyberwell.org/reports/>.

<sup>2</sup> Anti-Defamation League, “Antisemitism in Arab Cartoons during the Israel-Hamas War: A Chronology of Dehumanization of Jews and Demonization of Zionism and Israel,” ADL, December 21, 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/antisemitism-arab-cartoons-during-israel-hamas-war-chronology-dehumanization-jews>.

<sup>3</sup> Al Azhar (@AlAzhar), “Laqad tahawwala al-‘adu al-sahyuni...,” X, November 1, 2023, <https://twitter.com/AlAzhar/status/1719723797735985469>; For further a review of these views see Ofir Winter and Michael Barak, “Al-Azhar’s stance: A Blow to the Global Fight Against Terror – Opinion,” *The Jerusalem Post*, November 8, 2023, <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-772171>.

<sup>4</sup> “Ma Hukm al-‘Aml fi Sharikat Yamtalikuha al-Yahud?.. Azhari Yajibu,” *Cairo 24*, n.d., <https://www.cairo24.com/1888808>.

enemies and ours, specifically the Jews [...] I pray for Allah's support for His soldiers and His camp, and for victory to be bestowed upon our brethren in Gaza, Palestine, and other Muslim nations against their enemy and ours, the foe of both Allah and humanity, those cursed descendants of apes and pigs.”<sup>5</sup>

The Moroccan Islamist-oriented Justice and Development Party (PJD) also engaged in spreading hate. Abdelilah Benkirane, the PJD's Secretary-General and former Prime Minister of Morocco, derogatorily referred to Jews as “idiots” and “enemies of the believers,” claiming that they had been “cursed by God and subjected to humiliation for 2,000 years.”<sup>6</sup> Besides expressing support for Hamas, such statements are part of an effort to regain public support in Morocco after the PJD's electoral defeat two years earlier.

These remarks reflect religiously motivated antisemitism, drawing on Islamic texts and traditions to portray Jews and Israelis as foes of both Islam and humanity. This narrative often recalls historical grievances, notably through the slogan “Khaybar, Khaybar, Jews, Muhammad's army will return,” which incites violence by referencing the seventh-century Battle of Khaybar, where Muhammad's forces defeated Jewish tribes. Demonstrations following Friday prayers on October 13 and October 27 at the al-Azhar campus featured chants of “with spirit and blood we will redeem you, al-Aqsa,” alongside the Khaybar slogan, underscoring the entrenched hostility and call for violence against Jews.<sup>7</sup>

Another aspect of antisemitic discourse in the Arabic press and social media following October 7 was the widespread use of antisemitic imagery through caricatures and AI-generated images. Portrayals dehumanized or demonized Israelis and Jews by depicting them as animals, monsters, or Nazis. For instance, Hespress, a popular Moroccan news website, featured a caricature in early November showing Israel or the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) as a rat adorned with an American flag earring and with its tail chopped off by a cleaver labeled “Gaza.”<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the Egyptian news portal Roz Al-Yousuf published a caricature portraying Israel as a monstrous snake devouring a bleeding Gaza as part of a campaign inviting artists worldwide to submit caricatures about the Gaza war.<sup>9</sup>

Similar caricatures have also appeared in publications across Gulf countries. For example, a caricature published in Bahrain portrayed a demonic figure with the Star of David on its

<sup>5</sup> MEMRI, “Virulent Incitement by Al-Azhar: Praise for Palestinian Jihad Fighters; Israel is Destined to Perish; U.S. is the Greatest Satan; Jews are Descendants of Apes and Pigs,” MEMRI Special Dispatch no. 10952, November 10, 2023, <https://www.memri.org/reports/virulent-incitement-al-azhar-praise-palestinian-jihad-fighters-israel-destined-perish-us>.

<sup>6</sup> Rym Bousmid, “Au Maroc, Benkirane et le PJD dérapent (encore) au sujet de la guerre Israël-Hamas,” *Jeune Afrique*, November 22, 2023, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1507000/politique/au-maroc-benkirane-et-le-pjd-derapent-encore-au-sujet-de-la-guerre-israel-hamas/>.

<sup>7</sup> “Bil-Ruh Bil-Damm Nafdiki Ya Filastin,” *al-'Arabiyya Misr*, October 13, 2023, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBhV\\_JIPp1Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBhV_JIPp1Y).

<sup>8</sup> Hespress, “Khasa'ir Isra'il,” November 4, 2023, <https://www.hespress.com/%d8%ae%d8%b3%d8%a7%d8%a6%d8%b1-%d8%a5%d8%b3%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%a6%d9%8a%d9%84-1259744.html>.

<sup>9</sup> MEMRI, “Cartoons in Egyptian Media Portray Israel, U.S. as Wading in Gazan Blood, Netanyahu as Hitler,” MEMRI Special Dispatch no. 10961, November 16, 2023, [https://www.memri.org/reports/cartoons-egyptian-media-portray-israel-us-wading-gazan-blood-netanyahu-hitler#\\_edn8](https://www.memri.org/reports/cartoons-egyptian-media-portray-israel-us-wading-gazan-blood-netanyahu-hitler#_edn8).

forehead, removing a mask labeled “humanity,” suggesting a duplicitous nature that hides malevolent intentions behind a veneer of civility. In Qatar, another caricature depicted Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu as Adolf Hitler, drawing a direct parallel between Israeli leadership and Nazi atrocities.



*A caricature titled “The Ugliness of Artificial Beauty” featured on Al-Bilad (Bahrain), November 26, 2023<sup>10</sup>*

Conspiracy theories were also common in the post-October 7 discourse, casting Jews as global manipulators of politics and economics. Jews were depicted as self-serving, cunning and the enemies of civilization, allegedly dominating the West, especially the United States, or colluding with colonial powers. Muhammad ‘Ali al-Houthi, a member of the Houthi Supreme Political Council, echoed this sentiment on his Telegram channel, stating, “Throughout history, Jews are known to only love themselves, constantly striving to uproot all of humanity so that they alone may remain.”<sup>11</sup>

During a parliamentary session on November 21, Egyptian MP Diya’ al-Din Dawud called for Egypt to sever ties with Israel, describing it as “a Nazi country” and “the successor of past colonialism, and the ally of present-day colonialism. It is the ally of all the colonialist regimes in an attempt to destroy the region, with Egypt being the top prize.”<sup>12</sup> In Morocco, MP Nabila Mounib accused Jews of trying to infiltrate the Moroccan Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs<sup>13</sup> and charged Israel with exacerbating tensions between Morocco and Algeria.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The caricature is featured in the ADL’s report. See ADL, “Antisemitism in Arab Cartoons during the Israel-Hamas War.”

<sup>11</sup> MEMRI, “Yemen’s Ansar Allah Movement (Houthis) Promotes Antisemitism Between Attacks on Israel,” Jihad and Terrorism Threat Monitor, December 6, 2023, [https://www.memri.org/jttm/yemens-ansar-allah-movement-houthis-promotes-antisemitism-between-attacks-israel#\\_ednref1](https://www.memri.org/jttm/yemens-ansar-allah-movement-houthis-promotes-antisemitism-between-attacks-israel#_ednref1).

<sup>12</sup> DMC, “Al-na’ib Diya’ al-Din Dawud: al-quwat al-musallahah al-Misriyyah tahuzzu bi-da’am sha’bi didd ayi tahdid,” YouTube (14:26), November 22, 2023, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WeG8mKcoG0E&ab\\_channel=dmc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WeG8mKcoG0E&ab_channel=dmc).

<sup>13</sup> Muhammad Adel Al-Tato, “Munib tahadhar min ‘ikhtiraq Isra’ili’ li-wizarat al-awqaf wa ‘sahyinat’ al-makun al-yahudi bi-al-Maghrib,” Al3omk, November 8, 2023, <https://al3omk.com/886054.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Hafeez Al-Sadiq, “Nabila Munib tatahham ‘al-dhubbab al-iliktruni al-sahyuni’ bi-ta’jij al-tawtur bayna al-Maghrib wa-al-Jaza’ir,” Le360, February 7, 2024, <https://ar.le360.ma/politique/NJ6CMF4WFJEQHDZGCNRVTBCCRA/>.

The discourse following the October 7 attack and the subsequent war has also involved glorifications and justifications of the Holocaust. Often, such hate is accompanied by implicit or explicit calls for violence against Jews or Israelis. Social media has seen a flood of messages in Arabic proclaiming that “Hitler was right”<sup>15</sup> and expressing sympathetic views towards the Holocaust, suggesting that the extermination of Jews was justified.

Parallels were drawn between Israel and Nazi Germany, asserting that the conflict in Gaza constitutes genocide, comparable to or even worse than the Holocaust. The comparison of Israel and the IDF to Nazis, while not new, has gained more traction in the aftermath of October 7, with media outlets and social media users throughout the region referring to the war as a new “Holocaust” allegedly perpetrated by Israel. Such comparisons serve to trivialize the historical reality of the Holocaust and promote a narrative that aligns Israel’s actions in Gaza, aimed at a terrorist organization using civilians as human shields, with the systemic extermination of Jews perpetrated by the Nazis.

For example, the PJD party has urged the Moroccan government to sever ties with Israel, noting the “tremendous suffering of the Palestinian people in its struggle against the Nazi and racist policies of the [Zionist] enemy.” Similarly, on October 19, the Egyptian newspaper *al-Yawm al-Sabi’*, which is affiliated with the government, described the war in Gaza as “the Gaza Holocaust.”<sup>16</sup> An op-ed in *Akhbar al-Khaleej*, a Bahraini newspaper recognized for its pan-Arab stance, contended that “what the Palestinian people have endured for the past 75 years is their own Holocaust [...] eclipsing Zionist narratives and legends about the Jewish Holocaust. The Zionist entity is accused of committing crimes unparalleled globally, making the Palestinian Holocaust a thousand times more horrendous.”<sup>17</sup>

The events of October 7 were denied in the spirit of Holocaust denial. One notable example is Queen Rania of Jordan’s interview with CNN on October 25, 2023, in which she repeatedly questioned the evidence Israel provided regarding the massacre.<sup>18</sup> Her apologetic views attempted to maintain the portrayal of Palestinians as victims in global media and discourse, seeking to reconcile the dissonance between sympathy for the Palestinian cause and the crimes committed by Hamas on October 7.

Narratives that deny, distort or justify the October 7 massacre frequently merged with allegations that Israel propagates a false narrative that dominates Western media and aims to justify an all-out military assault on Gaza. These narratives sometimes falsely accused the IDF of being responsible for the majority of Israeli civilian casualties, disregarding the fact that much of the evidence for the massacre was recorded by Hamas itself and that its militants use civilians as human shields.

<sup>15</sup> CyberWell, “Israel-Hamas War.”

<sup>16</sup> *Al-Yawm al-Sabi’*, “Holokost Gaza.. Dabh al-Insaniya fi Mustashfa al-Ma’mdani.. Ghadan bi-‘al-Yawm al-Sabi’,” *al-Yawm al-Sabi’*, October 18, 2023, <https://rb.gy/j4azmd>.

<sup>17</sup> Fawzia Rasheed, “Al-Holokost aw ‘al-mahraqa al-filastiniyya’ wasqot al-gharb!,” *Akhbar al-Khaleej*, October 22, 2023, <https://akhbar-alkhaleej.com/news/article/1345747>.

<sup>18</sup> Sana Noor Haq and Claire Calzonetti, “Queen Rania of Jordan Accuses West of ‘Glaring Double Standard’ as the Death Toll Rises in Besieged Gaza,” CNN, October 25, 2023,” <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/10/24/middleeast/queen-rania-jordan-amanpour-interview-intl/index.html>.

Justifying or excusing the Hamas attack frequently aligned with its glorification and with calls for additional violence against Israelis or Jews globally. This was particularly evident on social media, where the Arabic hashtag Tufan al-Aqsa (Al-Aqsa Storm) was used to share graphic content celebrating the killing, torture, maiming, and kidnapping of Israeli victims.

While condemnations of the rampant antisemitic discourse were not common, they existed. Several Arab intellectuals, including Egyptian author and civil rights activist Dalia Ziada, strongly condemned Hamas' actions, criticizing the unjustified violence and atrocities committed against innocent Israeli civilians. In her media interviews, Ziada raised questions about how any person with a conscience could overlook or justify acts of murder, rape and kidnapping simply because the victims are Jews. She denounced such indifference as "insane." She underscored her commitment to speaking out against these injustices and to standing up for the Jewish people, rejecting calls from her critics to remain silent.<sup>19</sup> She contested Hamas' portrayal of the attack as religiously justified by Islam and spoke out against the recent increase in Arab antisemitism, particularly evident on social media.<sup>20</sup>

Antisemitism in the Arab world reached a new high – or, actually, low – following October 7. Yet the phenomenon is not new. The vicious flood of hatred has deep roots.

Antisemitism has been an integral part of Arab political discourse for over a century, tracing its origins to the work of Muhammad Rashid Rida, the editor of the modernist-apologetic Islamic journal *al-Manar* from 1898 until his death in 1935. Responding to the rise of political Zionism, Rida embraced antisemitic rhetoric already at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>21</sup>

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a notorious antisemitic forgery first published in Russia in 1903, were translated into Arabic in the mid-1920s. Between 1956 and 1967, nine additional translations were published in Egypt alone, along with 50 books based on their interpretation. In 1958, Egyptian President Gamal 'Abd al Nasser gave a copy to an Indian reporter, claiming it as evidence of Europe being controlled by a network of 300 Zionists.<sup>22</sup> By the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, dozens of printed editions of the Protocols were documented, along with electronic versions of the book available online.

Mahmud 'Abbas, a founding member of Fatah and current Chairperson of the Palestinian Authority, submitted a PhD dissertation in Moscow in 1982 that questioned the existence of gas

<sup>19</sup> Ruth Marks Eglash, "For One Acclaimed Egyptian Author and Activist, Speaking Out Against Hamas has Come with a Price," *Jewish Insider*, December 18, 2023, <https://jewishinsider.com/2023/12/dalia-ziada-egypt-hamas-activist-israel-terrorism/>.

<sup>20</sup> The Sun, "Egyptian author Dalia Ziada forced into hiding for siding with Israel," YouTube (21:30), January 7, 2024, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GstN0G51TwE&t=4s&ab\\_channel=TheSun](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GstN0G51TwE&t=4s&ab_channel=TheSun).

<sup>21</sup> Uriya Shavit, "Zionism as Told by Rashid Rida," *Journal of Israeli History* vol. 34, no. 1 (2015), 23-44.

<sup>22</sup> Esther Webman, "Adoption of the Protocols in the Arab Discourse on the Arab-Israeli Conflict, Zionism and the Jews," in Esther Webman (ed.), *The Global Impact of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion: A Century Old Myth* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 175-195. On the distribution of the "Protocols" in the Palestinian society in the 1920s see also: Joseph Nevo, "The Palestine Arabs' Attitude towards the Yishuv and the Zionist Movement," in Shmuel Almog (ed.), *Zionism and the Arabs* (Jerusalem: The Historical Society of Israel and the Zalman Shazar Center, 1983), 153.

chambers and the murder of six million Jews. Published as a book in 1984, ‘Abbas attributed the Nazi Final Solution to the Zionists.’<sup>23</sup>

Antisemitic notions served as a means to dehumanize “the Zionist enemy” and frame the Arab-Israeli conflict in meta-historic and religious terms. Conspiracy theories regarding world Jewish domination provided Arabs with comforting explanations for their defeats by Israel. This despite numerical superiority, thereby absolving the Arab side of responsibility for unfavorable military outcomes. These theories suggested that Arabs and Muslims were not simply defeated by a small Zionist state but were overcome by a global malevolent power purportedly controlling the world through clandestine means.<sup>24</sup>

Islamist movements, who seek to reconstitute Islam as a comprehensive and binding framework of life and identity, have integrated antisemitic notions into their discourses since their inception in the 1920s. This stems partly from their unwavering opposition to Israel’s existence, which stands in the way of the vision for Islamic political and geographic unity, their interpretation of the conflict in religious terms, and possibly the ignorance of their leaders. As a result, antisemitism became a fundamental of their historiographies and policies.

Drawing on Islamic traditions recounting conflicts between Muhammad and the Jewish tribes of his time, Islamist texts published since the 1940s have depicted Jews as enemies of the Prophet. They have even accused them of plotting his assassination. Jews were portrayed as possessing evil and treacherous qualities, deemed violators of contracts, and therefore considered unreliable partners for peace, let alone normalization, which entails cooperation, mutual trust and rapprochement.<sup>25</sup>

Hamas’ antisemitism was thus not an Islamist novelty but a continuation of a longstanding legacy of hate. Article seven of its Charter envisions a world free of Jews at the end of times. “The Islamic Resistance Movement,” it states, “aspires to bring the promise of Allah to pass, no matter how long it takes. As the prophet [Muhammad], may the prayer of Allah and his blessing of peace be upon him, said: The time [Judgment Day] will not come until Muslims fight the Jews and kill them and until the Jew hides behind the rocks and trees, and [then] the rocks and trees will say: ‘Oh Muslim, oh servant of Allah, there is a Jew hiding [behind me], come and kill him.’”<sup>26</sup>

Following the events of October 7, this anti-Jewish *hadith* (Prophetic tradition) is read differently, evoking images of Israeli Jewish citizens<sup>27</sup> fleeing for their lives, hiding in their homes, shelters, and orchards as Hamas jihadi fighters hunt them. These atrocities perpetuate animosity between Israelis and Palestinians in the foreseeable future, hindering efforts towards peace and reconciliation.

<sup>23</sup> Uriya Shavit and Ofir Winter, *Zionism in Arab Discourses* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 48.

<sup>24</sup> Shavit and Winter, *Zionism in Arab Discourses*, 47-51.

<sup>25</sup> Ofir Winter, *Peace in the Name of Allah: Islamic Discourses on Treaties with Israel* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 41-51, 114-124, 176-188.

<sup>26</sup> *The Hamas Charter* (1988), Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies, March 21, 2006, [https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/pdf/PDF\\_06\\_032\\_2.pdf](https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/pdf/PDF_06_032_2.pdf), 15.

<sup>27</sup> While the vast majority of victims of the October 7 attack are Jewish, Muslims, migrant workers and students from Thailand, the Philippines, Nepal, Cambodia and Tanzania were also among the casualties.

The Charter, adopted by the movement in 1988 and unchanged since, frames the conflict with Zionism in Palestine as a struggle against “the Jews” (Article 32). Jews are portrayed as bloodthirsty demons plotting against humanity in general and Muslims in Palestine in particular, with Zionism compared to Nazism (Article 20). Inspired by the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, article 22 in the Charter asserts that “[the Jews] were behind the First World War, through which they achieved the abolishment of the Islamic Caliphate, made a profit and took over many of the sources of wealth [...] They were also behind the Second World War, in which they made immense profits by buying and selling military equipment, and also prepared the ground for the founding of their [own] state [...] No war takes place anywhere in the world without [the Jews] behind the scenes having a hand in it.”<sup>28</sup>

In the belongings of a Hamas military commander who participated in the October 7 massacre and was subsequently killed, a note was found with words of encouragement to his troops before battle. It urged them to remember that the Jewish enemy is “a disease which has no cure except beheading and removing their hearts and livers.” The note also mentioned the names of some of Muhammad’s Companions, heroes of early Islam, who fought against Jews in the Arabian Peninsula. Such references imply a view that the contemporary conflict with Israel is yet another chapter in a long, unending struggle against the Jews throughout time and generations.<sup>29</sup>

Hamas did not attack Israel only because it is antisemitic. However, antisemitism is an inseparable aspect of the rationale behind its war crimes on October 7, underpinning its relentless and indiscriminate enmity towards Israel and Jews. The proliferation of antisemitic expressions in Arab discourse following October 7, extending well beyond the rhetoric of Hamas and other Islamist groups, suggests that for the Middle East to achieve lasting peace, the international community must understand the origins and deep-seated nature of this hatred. It must identify and punish those who spread it and work determinedly to eradicate it.

– **Dr. Ofir Winter** and **Morr Link**

<sup>28</sup> *The Hamas Charter (1988)*, 27.

<sup>29</sup> “Documents Brought Back from the Gaza Strip Indicate that Hamas Premeditated Its Atrocities against Israelis and Kidnap and Maltreat Them,” The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, January 20, 2024, <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/documents-brought-back-from-the-gaza-strip-indicate-that-hamas-premeditated-its-atrocities-against-israelis-and-to-kidnap-and-maltreat-them/>.

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