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Antisemitism in the United Kingdom and its relevance to Israel

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The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the UK or its Ministry of Defence.

**Abstract**

In recent years, antisemitic attacks across Europe have created a widespread sense of fear and insecurity among Jewish communities. They have also underscored the urgent need for greater efforts to address antisemitism[[1]](#footnote-1). Indeed, hostile acts targeting Jewish individuals or persons perceived to be Jewish challenge the values of free, democratic and inclusive societies.

Sadly, evidence suggests that antisemitism is still prevalent within the UK. Worryingly, it also permeates the highest echelons of society, including the political arena. Allegations of antisemitism in the UK Labour Party since [Jeremy Corbyn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeremy_Corbyn) was first elected as [Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labour_Party_%28UK%29) leader in September 2015, have only served to highlight the pervasive nature of the problem at the national level. This has been further compounded by controversial comments by a number of his Members of Parliament and supporting organisations.

The paper will therefore seek to identify why this is the case as well as analysing the rise of the far right, the views of some British Muslim groups (particularly Islamist elements) as well as historic, domestic and political tensions. It will conclude with the consideration of Israel’s Foreign policy, its priorities and the potential impacts, particularly when dealing with countries who have both a Diaspora and issues with antisemitism.

**Table of Contents**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | Abstract | 1 |
| 2. | Acknowledgements | 4 |
| 3. | Background | 6 |
| 4. | Chapter 1 - What is Antisemitism? | 9 |
| 5. | Chapter 2 - Antisemitism in the UK | 21 |
| 6. | Chapter 3 - Israel’s Policies and Reaction to Antisemitism in the UK | 55 |
| 7. | Summary and Conclusions | 68 |
| 8. | Bibliography | 73 |

**Acknowledgements**

This paper is an important journey in my understanding and awareness of, *inter alia*, the history of antisemitism in the UK, the contemporary forms and its pervasive nature. Importantly it has highlighted the challenges of dealing with such a scourge, and provided an insight into how those in the Diaspora are affected. It is particularly relevant given my next appointment as the Defence Attaché, Tel Aviv and something which I hope I can use to inform better personal judgement, education and awareness.

I would like to thank and acknowledge the support from those who have supported my work during this period. First and foremost, huge gratitude goes to my Academic Advisor, Professor Jonathan Rynhold at Bar Ilan University, Tel Aviv. Not only did he provide sage advice, but he focused my ideas, mentored me through the process, and showed undue patience with my drafts. Secondly, to an expert ally in Lev Topor, a PhD student at Bar Ilan who probably knows more about antisemitism in the postcolonial Left than most British people. His suggestions on reading lists, also made life much easier. Finally, to Dr Anat Stern, my Israeli National Defence College Academic Supervisor whose expertise in many things, but crucially critiquing Final Papers has helped develop a product that may hopefully hold its own amongst the panoply of Mabal dissertations.

**Background**

The 2011 UK census suggested that there were nearly 267,000 Jewish people living in the UK, with around two-thirds (178,000) living in London. Other significant Jewish populations in England can be found in Greater Manchester, Leeds, Gateshead, Brighton, Liverpool, Birmingham and Southend. There are smaller representations in Scotland (predominantly Glasgow) and Wales, with less than 200 recorded as living in Northern Ireland. The total number of Jewish people represents approximately 0.5% of the UK population. However, some consider this to be an underestimate, with the Jewish Virtual Library[[2]](#footnote-2) suggesting that the actual figure is around 290,000. Based on the census figures, the UK has the fifth largest Jewish population in the world, and the second largest population in Europe (after France).

The British Jewish population has a substantially older profile than the general population. In England and Wales, the median age of male Jews is 41.2, while the figure for all males is 36.1; Jewish females have a median age of 44.3, while the figure for all females is 38.1. As at 2015, approximately 6% of the British Jewish population held an Israeli passport. In addition, there are around c454 synagogues in the UK compared to c50,700 churches[[3]](#footnote-3) and c1,750 mosques[[4]](#footnote-4).

It is against this backdrop that hate crimes and threats motivated by antisemitism have a profound impact, not just on the victims of specific attacks, but also on the daily lives of Jewish individuals and communities. The message is meant to portray that these communities should be denied the right to be part of society. Where they go unpunished, hate crimes challenge the rule of law and are also destructive to both individual freedoms and community safety. They are also among the most dangerous manifestations of intolerance and instil fear far beyond the boundaries of a municipality or state and, therefore, have the potential to escalate, creating civil unrest and ultimately threatening national security.

Ergo, most nations have committed themselves to recognise, record and report antisemitic hate crimes as well as endeavouring to prevent and protect against attacks directed at said persons or groups. This includes the UK. However, despite a range of initiatives, there is still an increasing prevalence of antisemitism within the UK.

**Chapter 1**

**What is Anti-Semitism?**

There has been much national debate, confusion, obfuscation and ignorance about what constitutes antisemitism. In part, by groups who wish to denounce, criticise or attack Jews and the State of Israel. Therefore, in order to objectively analyse antisemitism, it is important to understand the definition.

**Definition of Antisemitism.** Following the racially motivated murder of the Black teenager, Stephen Lawrence from London in 1993, the Government initiated an inquiry into accusations of racism in the Metropolitan Police Service and Crown Prosecution Service. The resulting Macpherson Report became one of the most fundamental reports in the course of modern British criminal justice history. One of the key recommendations was that the definition of a racist incident should be “any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person,” and asserted that crimes and non-crimes of this nature must be reported, recorded and investigated with equal commitment[[5]](#footnote-5). In its 2009 Antisemitic Discourse report[[6]](#footnote-6), the Community Security Trust (CST)[[7]](#footnote-7) defined incidents against Jews as being antisemitic only where it can be objectively shown to be the case, and this may not always match the victim’s perception as called for by the Lawrence Inquiry[[8]](#footnote-8). In a later CST report of 2014, the conditions previously stated were revoked and it adopted the recommendation of the UK 2009 All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism. This stated that it was not enough for a perpetrator to state “I am not a racist,” if their words or deeds are deemed to be racist, further noting that it is the Jewish community who is best placed to determine what does and does not constitute antisemitism.

There are also a number of descriptions of Antisemitism in use, including one established by the former European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), since replaced by the Fundamental Rights Agency[[9]](#footnote-9). Importantly, in May 2016 the UK, along with 30 other International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) member countries adopted a working definition of antisemitism, based broadly on the EUMC work, but with minor amendments, as follows:

*Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.[[10]](#footnote-10)* The definition also included a number of contemporary examples of antisemitism.

**Categories and Classifications.** Separately, there are a range of different opinions on the main categories of antisemitism and classification of attacks. However, common categorical themes all include Religious or ‘classical’ antisemitism, Race based antisemitism and Political antisemitism[[11]](#footnote-11). Some organisations and commentators go further and also consider nationalistic and economic antisemitism as well as cultural hatred[[12]](#footnote-12).

In the UK, the CST uses six types of anti-Semitic incidents when recording attacks[[13]](#footnote-13): extreme violence, assault, damage and desecration of property, threats, abusive behaviour and anti-Semitic literature. Given the various quoted types of antisemitism and categorization of attacks, it would be useful to adopt international standards, in order to facilitate comparison and interpretation.

**Religious Antisemitism**, is perhaps one of the oldest forms of prejudice against Jews. As Christianity became the dominant religion in Europe, the discrimination and persecution of Jews took many forms including the imposition of heavy taxes, limiting employment opportunities and expulsion through to evil acts such as rape, torture and murder. Similarly, for some of those who follow Islam, there is a perception that the Jews betrayed the prophet Mohammad when he first entered Yathrib (Medina), which set the subsequent backdrop for religious and ideological differences between the two faiths. Of course there are other religions including Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism but the level of recorded contemporary antisemitism from these groups is negligible.

**Political Antisemitism** manifested itself in the late 18th Centuryduring thelegal emancipation of Jews. It was a period when social and political rights were being transformed and equality and integration of Jews into wider society was being accepted. This type of hatred has many different forms but generally focuses on the collective identity of Jews rather than the individual.

**Race / Nationalistic / Far-Right Antisemitism.** There are several terms used to describe this type of antisemitism but ironically Judaism is not a race. Neither do Jewish people originate from a single grouping. Research[[14]](#footnote-14) suggests that most global racial attacks are initiated by neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and Christian Identity adherents rather than any other group. They tend to view Jewish people as trying to exert control through the media, and economy. Playing upon fears of migration and the dilution of the national race is also a favoured practise.

**Antisemitic Tropes and Conspiracy Theories.** Generally, conspiracy theorists are motivated by their necessity to explain negative events, find scapegoats, or fulfil paranoid fears and fantasies. For many people who have suffered from recurrent crises–financial losses, lethal diseases and natural disasters, it is difficult not to understand the origins of such evil. The most terrifying explanation is preferable to uncertainty and mystery. Some antisemitic [canards](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/canard) date back to the birth of Christianity. Indeed, in the Middle Ages whenever a Christian child disappeared or was found dead, Jews were held responsible. They were accused of [using the blood of these children](https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/blood-libels/) for their [Passover matzah](https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/passover-pesach-101/). New spins on the blood libel are alive today[[15]](#footnote-15). In March 1997, Nabil Ramlawi, the PLO representative to the UN in Geneva accused Israel of a sinister plot to kill Palestinian children. “The Israeli authorities infected by injection 300 Palestinian children with the HIV virus during the years of the intifada.” Israelis have been similarly accused of spreading mad cow disease to Palestinians through British-made milk chocolates, killing Arab children to get their organs, and sending AIDS-infected Israeli prostitutes to contaminate the West Bank.

However, the publication of [The Protocols of the Elders of Zion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Protocols_of_the_Elders_of_Zion) in 1903 is widely considered to mark the beginning of contemporary [conspiracy theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conspiracy_theory) literature. The major myths accused Jews of trying to control the world as well as that "the Jews control the media.” Editorial Director of the newspaper [*The Forward*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Forward), in 1997 published a study of this myth regarding the United States[[16]](#footnote-16),concluding that, although Jews do hold many prominent positions in the US media industry, they "do not make a high priority of Jewish concerns" and that Jewish Americans generally perceive the media as anti-Israel. The [Anti-Defamation also League](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti_Defamation_League) also documented various antisemitic tropes concerning Jews and banking[[17]](#footnote-17), including the cliché that world banking is dominated by the [Rothschild family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rothschild_family). This can be traced back to the [prevalence of Jews in the money-lending profession](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antisemitism_in_Europe_%28Middle_Ages%29) in Europe during the Middle Ages, due to a prohibition against Christians in that profession.

Sadly, these common myths and false stereotypes are still prevalent today and show no sign of losing momentum. Evidence suggests (as covered later) that they manifest themselves predominantly in online abuse, and are not exclusive to a particular type of perpetrator. Moreover, within extremist circles this form of hatred and abuse remains a unifying power between otherwise opposing groups.

**Anti-Zionism.** The first definition of Zionism, *a national home for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel*, was proposed in the Basel Programme (the first manifesto of the Zionist movement in August 1897) and later adopted at the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland the same month. The opposition to this policy can take many forms, particularly ones with an ideological dimension. These include Christian, right-wing, left-wing anti-Zionism and Jewish assimilation. The resulting hatred can be attributed to feelings that the Jews committed deicide or to denying the Holocaust. The latter is often used because they think that this provides Israel with some form of immunity from criticism. It is also often associated with perceptions of anti-Imperialist sentiment, neo-liberalism and global capitalism. Other types of anti-Zionism include perpetrators who make no distinction between antisemitism and anti-Zionism and are quite clear that an attack on Zionists is an attack on Jews. Sometimes Zionist/Zionism is also seen as a valid interchangeable word, almost as a proxy for Jew/Judaism.

There is also a complex relationship between antisemitism, anti-Zionism and anti-Israel criticism, with oppressors conflating the terms either through ignorance or to suit their purposes. It also makes it hard to distinguish from one another. More often than not, comments against Israel and Zionism can cross the boundaries of legitimate criticism and become antisemitic in nature. For example, disapproval of one or even many of Israel’s policies is not unlawful. As pointed out by Professor Alan Johnson, in his latest analysis for Fathom[[18]](#footnote-18):

* It is not antisemitic to criticise Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, to call for its withdrawal or to call for the creation of a Palestinian State alongside Israel;
* It is not antisemitic to criticise the expansion of settlements in the West Bank;
* It is not antisemitic to criticise Israel’s efforts to deter Hamas rockets and terror as ‘disproportionate’;
* It is not antisemitic to criticise the inequality and discrimination faced by the Arab minority within Israel.

These cannot also be considered anti-Zionist views, whereas blanket criticism of Israel’s existence or the insistence on policies that would cause Israel to cease to exist is both anti-Zionist and antisemitic. Placing higher standards on Israel in comparison to others also translates to illegitimate attacks on both the nation and the people. Conversely, perpetrators argue that calls of antisemitism are used to silence political debate and freedom of speech and generally deny their bigotry, endeavouring to operate undercover of a political critique (unlike racial and religious antisemites). This includes the Palestinian conflict and Israeli (security) policies, which often draw left-wing criticism veiled in the language of human rights.

**Antisemitic Anti-Zionism.** In a presentation given to the *Pears Institute for the study of Antisemitism, in November 2015*, Alan Johnson spoke of Antisemitic anti-Zionism. He raised the issue that in parts of the political left, visceral criticism of both Israel and Zionism were so distorted that they had become the tropes, images and ideas of classical antisemitism. In some cases, the *political discourse did not even countenance* two states for two peoples, but the abolition of the Jewish homeland; not Palestine alongside Israel, but Palestine instead of Israel. Demonization of Zionism is also a prevalent theme. ‘Zionism is racism’; Israel is a ‘settler-colonialist state’ which ‘ethnically cleansed’ the ‘indigenous’ people, went on to build an ‘apartheid state’ and is now engaged in an ‘incremental genocide’ against the Palestinians. These tend to be some of the more common tropes witnessed today.

Usefully, the CST has endeavoured to gauge when anti-Zionism and anti-Israeli sentiment becomes antisemitic by the interaction of a number of factors[[19]](#footnote-19) including the target, motivation, and content, response to concerns and whether the behaviour is repeated by the offender. These appear to be relevant yardsticks. They can also help to distinguish whether or not the antisemitism is conscious or not. While one could argue that the majority of these offenders do so consciously and sometimes in a Machiavellian way, there are individuals who do so unwittingly, through ignorance and a lack of understanding. A relatively recent example being the Labour MP Naz Shah. Prior to her becoming an MP (in 2016) she had made a number of antisemitic comments including one suggesting Israel should be moved to the United States. In a subsequent interview, apologizing for the controversy, she blamed her "ignorance", stating that she is not antisemitic but what she promulgated was.

Ergo, antisemitism does not need to be conscious, but some salvation might lie when, through greater education and understanding, offenders atone and cease this type of behaviour. This, however, is likely to be the exception rather than the norm.

**Chapter 2**

**Anti-Semitism in the UK**

**The roots of UK antisemitism.** Antisemitism in the UK originated with the arrival of Jews in the country soon after the [Norman Conquest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_conquest_of_England) in 1070. During this time Jews experienced religious intolerance and it is thought that the [blood libel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood_libel) led to [massacres](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/York_Massacre) and increasing discrimination. The Jewish presence continued until [King Edward I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_I_of_England)'s [Edict of Expulsion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edict_of_Expulsion) in 1290.

Jews were readmitted to the UK by [Oliver Cromwell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oliver_Cromwell) in 1655, though it is believed that those with a secret allegiance to Judaism lived in England during the expulsion. Jews were regularly subjected to discrimination and humiliation which waxed and waned over the centuries, before gradually declining.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, the number of Jews in Britain greatly increased due to the exodus from [Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia), which resulted in a large community forming in London. In the aftermath of the [Holocaust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust), undisguised racial hatred of [Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jews) became unacceptable in [British society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_society). However, outbursts of antisemitism emanating from [far right groups](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Far_right_in_the_United_Kingdom) continued.

**Antisemitism Today.** The nature of incidents occur for a variety of reasons and contexts, while there are also a wide range of offenders and motives. The recording of incidents can also be problematic. In some cases, victims do not want to report attacks to the Police but will inform Jewish charities and organisations. Furthermore, due to data protection, the Police are mandated to remove potentially useful data before release, such as age, gender and ethnic appearance. Neither do some attacks have a specific victim or the offender is unknown. This is particularly prevalent with online incidents and graffiti in public places. As a result, it can be challenging to accurately interpret statistics. It can also be difficult to determine whether there is a spike in attacks or there is a heightened awareness of antisemitism and a change in reporting habits. Nevertheless, across a range of monitoring organisations, there is consensus that spikes in activity are often related to specific events between Israel and Middle Eastern neighbours. These are often referred to as trigger events.

Records of UK antisemitic incidents began to be compiled in 1984, and there have been numerous studies conducted. The main authoritative source remains the CST and is viewed by the Government and National Police as a model of a minority–community security organisation. Such is its standing that the annual survey it produces on antisemitic incidents is used widely as a key reference document, informing such bodies as the House of Commons, Home Affairs Committee. Other notable authorities include the Jewish Policy Research and the Antisemitism Policy Trust.

The last completed annual survey in 2018[[20]](#footnote-20) saw a 16% increase in antisemitic events over 2017. Worryingly, there were a total of 1652 incidents, the highest ever recorded since the CST commenced in 1984. The validity of subsequent reporting is evidenced in part by the fact that the CST excluded 27% of potential incidents reported to it in 2018 because of a lack of evidence[[21]](#footnote-21). Generally, it is felt that the level of hate crimes across Europe has risen, partly due to the migration crisis. In the UK, the EU referendum of 2016 and the controversy of antisemitism within the Labour Party has perhaps emboldened offenders, but also prompted more people to report these type of crimes. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that more reports from security guards at Jewish locations are being filed than ever before.

Albeit determining the nature of attacks can be challenging, there were 270 attributed to Far-Right, anti-Israel or Islamist beliefs, accounting for 16% of the total. The greatest number of offences came from those with anti-Israel beliefs (173), followed by the Far-Right (84) and 13 displaying Islamic tendencies.

In 2018 the CST recorded 384 antisemitic incidents that involved the use of social media and were mainly attributed to threats and abuse. It represents about 1 in 5 of the overall total of 1,652 antisemitic incidents. This is an increase of 54 per cent from the 249 antisemitic incidents recorded the previous year. Given the CST does not proactively ‘trawl’ social media platforms, their figures are only indicative. It is therefore likely that the total number of antisemitic posts, comments and tweets in the UK for 2018 is far higher. Separately, a survey of thousands of left-wing social media accounts by Hope Not Hate found that nearly a fifth promote or engage in antisemitism. Combining the two, this perhaps now indicates the likely main source of future antisemitism.

Evidence also suggests that there are no discernible patterns to antisemitic incidents. The threat spectrum spans communities, individuals, organisations and infrastructure. It can also take several forms including physical attacks, verbal, written abuse or material promulgated online or as leaflets and posters. Neither is there a clear correlation between the ethnicity of offenders and the type of incident. Currently, the most common type of incident remains verbal abuse directed at random Jewish people in public i.e. being shouted at in the street[[22]](#footnote-22).

However, other spikes in recorded incidents have occurred during high profile events and gatherings. For example, the key commemorations of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in September often results in a greater public visible presence of Jewish people. There was also a connection between an increase in incidents and the prominence of ongoing arguments about antisemitism in the Labour Party[[23]](#footnote-23). The Enough Is Enough demonstration in March 2018 took place after Mr Corbyn was revealed to have defended the artist behind an antisemitic mural (Figure 1), and the continued row last summer over Labour’s reluctance to adopt the IHRA definition seemed to have sparked an increase in antisemitism in the following weeks. As a result, there were approximately 150 antisemitic incidents in 2018 that took place in the context of arguments over alleged Labour antisemitism.

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Figure 1. Antisemitic Mural in London by the LA Based painter Mear One.

**Antisemitism within the General Population.** The 2017 Jewish Policy Research report[[24]](#footnote-24) found that antisemitism exists in society at different levels of intensity and in different forms – known as the ‘elastic view”. It noted though that counting antisemites and measuring antisemitism are distinct. While it is assumed that the number of antisemites within the UK population is small (less than 2.4%), the number who hold antisemitic views but are not hostile is prevalent. Data indicates that 30% of people hold at least one antisemitic view, albeit a large proportion polled also agreed with one or more positive statements about Jews. Fortunately, most Jews do not come into contact with fervent antisemites. Most incidents are opportunistic and are comments that make the victim uncomfortable. Regarding violent attacks against Jews, 4% of the British public believes that it is ‘often and sometimes’ justified in defence of their own religious and political views. This contrasts with 7% against immigrants, 7.5% against Muslims and rises significantly to 27% against Islamist extremists. Reassuringly, approximately 70% of the UK population has a favourable view/opinion of Jews and do not harbour antisemitic views at all. This is also similar to the level of sentiment expressed toward Hindus.

The stronger anti-Israel views an individual has, the more likely they are to express antisemitic views. Yet the report acknowledges that anti-Israel and antisemitism exist both separately and together. Of those who are not opposed to Israel only a minority hold antisemitic views. Yet the majority who are opponents of Israel generally hold at least one antisemitic view.

The left of the political spectrum (that includes slightly left of centre, fairly left wing and very left wing) exhibit higher levels of anti-Israeli sentiment than average but display the same amount of antisemitism as the general population. Conversely most antisemitism comes from right wing individuals and groups.

The Campaign Against Antisemitism[[25]](#footnote-25) published the findings of a representative National poll in which just over 3400 people were canvassed. The results indicated that at least half of British adults consulted believed one of the antisemitic statements shown to them to be true. This included erroneous statements that Jewish people chase money more than others (1 in 4 or 25%, rising to 39% for UK Independence Party voters) and they also have more power and influence in the media. However, the general perception is that the majority of people questioned were not antisemitic per se, but had picked up on stereotypes. This suggests that there is a large element of unconscious antisemitism within UK society.

**Conspiracy Theorists.** Separately, people on different parts of the political spectrum have been accused of talking about the “Jewish lobby” or “Israel lobby” in terms that evoked antisemitic conspiracy theories. Examples of this phenomenon involved both Nigel Farage, the former leader of the UK Independence Party who stated on his LBC radio show[[26]](#footnote-26) that the ‘Jewish Lobby’ has a disproportionate amount of power in the US’, and the Al Jazeera TV network in 2017. The latter broadcast a four-part documentary, called *The Lobby*, that claimed to expose how “*The Israeli* *government is in the midst of a brazen,* *covert influence campaign in Britain,”* via a *“lobby network that enjoys strong support* *from the Israeli government by way of the* *Israeli embassy in London.”* This programme echoed traditional antisemitic conspiracy theories about Jewish and Zionist manipulation of politics through the use of financial influence or intimidation, but produced little evidence to substantiate its claims. The Grenfell Tower tragedy (June 2017) was also used by conspiracy theorists from different backgrounds to claim that “Zionists” or Jews were directly or indirectly responsible for the fire[[27]](#footnote-27) that killed 72 residents[[28]](#footnote-28) of the tower in West London.

**Religious Antisemitism.** Analysis from the main UK reporting sources addresses all types of antisemitism. However, recorded acts of Christian religious attacks and hatred is difficult to find. Ergo it could be assumed that it has waned significantly to a point of being negligible. Conversely, Muslim and Islamic attacks are still prevalent within UK society. Albeit there are few specific surveys on Muslim based antisemitism, general reporting indicates that antisemitism attitudes are more common in Muslims than the wider population. The ISGAP[[29]](#footnote-29) [report](https://isgap.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Jikeli_Antisemitic_Attitudes_among_Muslims_in_Europe.pdf) by Jikeli in May 2015 put “the percentage of Muslim perpetrators of antisemitic acts in the UK at between 20 and 30 percent, while the percentage of Muslims in the general population stands at 5 percent.” However, statistically, those of European background are responsible for over twice as many incidents as those of a Muslim background[[30]](#footnote-30).

**Muslim Antisemitism.** Albeit the sample selection was limited[[31]](#footnote-31), one study has investigated antisemitism amongst young Muslims in London. The survey was mainly conducted in the borough of Tower Hamlets, an area with a Jewish population of less than 1%, yet has the highest percentage of Muslim residents in England and Wales – 38 per cent. Those who took part were predominantly from South East Asia[[32]](#footnote-32), North Africa or were Black Africans, but notably were not from the Middle East. Acknowledging that Islam is not a homogenous denomination and that there are different interpretations of the religion, there were common factors in the genesis of their antisemitism. These included influences from family and friends, the media, Muslim organisations, perceptions of Islam and the Muslim identity. The study also deduced that it wasn’t necessarily the religiosity of the individual but their interpretation of Islam that determined their degree of antisemitism. The more conservative the interpretation, the more likely the prevalence of antisemitic views.

Of note, 47% of the group said they had an unfavourable view of Jews compared to 7% of the UK population. The stark contrast is unclear, but it could be either a blatant resentment or that antisemitism within the wider population is more latent and opaque. The sample group also displayed four patterns of antisemitism; classical/Religious, resentment related to Israel, Muslim/Islamist antisemitism that endeavours to justify an enmity towards Jews and one which entirely omits an argument.

A number of respondents used the Middle East conflict to express antisemitic views as well as historical differences between Islam and Judaism. Natural prejudices were also prevalent and it was thought that whilst it didn’t directly lead to antisemitism it enhanced or emboldened their views.

In another study[[33]](#footnote-33) that sought views on the UK’s Muslim populations’ attitudes toward Israel and the Jews, responses show that Muslims are more negative about Israel and/or the Jews than the general population. The study also separates out the answers from religious Muslims which isn’t often conducted. It found that there is a strong correlation between antisemitic and anti-Israeli attitudes. Among Muslims who replied in the affirmative to seven out of nine questions which indicate antisemitic attitudes, 87% also held anti-Israel attitudes. The report also concluded that non-religious Muslims are the least likely group among all Muslims to hold antisemitic or anti-Israel attitudes. The percentages among them come closer to the levels of the general population although they still remain above average. However, 60% of Muslims regardless of religiosity agreed with the statement ‘A British Jew is just as British as any other person.’ Similar questions were posed to British Christians. It found that the Christians’ negative opinions about Jews rarely exceeded those of the general population.

**Far Right Antisemitism.** Antisemitic views are more prevalent in Far-right individuals and organisations; 2-4 times higher than the general population and any other group within UK society[[34]](#footnote-34). Driven by xenophobia and nationalistic ideology they are also more likely to commit a range of antisemitic attacks. Fortunately, they remain on the margins of the political spectrum and therefore are unlikely to gain a place on the national constitutional stage. Nevertheless, these racist attacks driven by sheer prejudice are unfortunately a growing trend, as reinforced by the 2018 CST report.

**Common Antisemitic Themes.** Needless to say antisemitism has a number of basic tenets[[35]](#footnote-35). It has a core demonology, which looks to portray Jewish people as something different. It could either be as powerful, malign, scheming and controlling ethnicity that holds nothing sacred in pursuit of its own interests. It can also be viewed by ideological offenders as an obstacle to their utopian ideas. Secondly, antisemitism tends to transform over periods of time. It started with medieval priests, then Enlightenment philosophers before the Nazi SS – each told a different story in order to persecute the Jews. Arguably the latest form is the demonization of Israel, as a result of the creation of it. Previously it was the ‘Jew’, now it is the ‘Zionist’ who takes the ire for allegedly controlling the world for Jewish purposes. It also offers an explanation of the world to the antisemite. At the same time, it is delusional. The consequences though can be extremely serious and move quickly from discourse to violence during periods of civil and social unrest if left unchecked.

**How Anti-Zionist Antisemitism affects British Jews.** Not all anti-Zionists are antisemites and anti-Zionism is not necessarily antisemitic. However, some common tropes are not just critical of Israel and Zionism but are eviscerating and hostile[[36]](#footnote-36), claiming Israel is more apartheid than apartheid South Africa or that Zionism is simply racial exclusion. Nevertheless, any prejudice against Zionists as a political group can translate into hostility to Jews who do not distance themselves from Israel. Jews seeking equality in such settings can be pressured to make clear their opinion on Zionism or Israel, regardless of whether they wish to do so or not. Failure to show sufficient division from Zionism and Israel risks adversely impacting the individual.

As Alan Johnson points out[[37]](#footnote-37) within UK society there are political agendas, discourse and movements. This results in antisemitism masquerading or being ‘dressed up[[38]](#footnote-38)’ as anti-Zionism in a number of ways. By far the most common are the political groups, organisations and movements that seek to abolish the Jewish homeland. Consistent with the themes mentioned earlier, the ‘Zionist’ is our misfortune has replaced the old antisemitic trope, the ‘Jew’ is our misfortune. Similarly, ‘free of the Jewish State’ has replaced ‘free of the Jew’. Other perpetrators, and not exclusive to the far right, use discourse to demonise Israel as Nazi in its approach. Common canards include accusing Israel and Zionist of using violent force and starting wars. A third cohort try to depict it as a pariah state in order to bring it down.

A number of perpetrators also promote the crude idea that the world is divided into 2 camps: the good oppressed versus the bad oppressors, defining it as a legitimate struggle. Other, topical examples include: a left-wing poet, Tom Paulin, who compares the Israeli Defence Forces to the Nazi SS. There is also a left-wing Church of England vicar, Stephen Sizer, who links to an article saying the Jews committed the 9/11 attacks. The left-wing comedian, Alexei Sayle, jokes that Israel is “the Jimmy Savile[[39]](#footnote-39) of the nations.” Jenny Tonge, a left-leaning peer demanded an enquiry into whether the rescue mission sent by Israel to Haiti in 2010 had a secret agenda of harvesting organs for Jews in Israel. There are also trade unions breaking links with Israel and only Israel, left-wing protestors shouting down the Israeli theatre troupe at The Globe theatre, London and only the Israeli group. There also seems to be a theme – the left-wing (which will be covered in more detail later). Given the broad, pervasive, public nature of this behaviour it is very difficult for British Jews to avoid the innuendos, discomfort and harassment during everyday life.

Interestingly, the defences used by antisemitic Anti-Zionists are outlined in David Hirsch’s book on Contemporary Left Antisemitism. He explains that the *Livingstone Formulation[[40]](#footnote-40)* is used widely by those accused of such crimes. In short, they claim that that they are being unfairly targeted in order to delegitimize their criticisms of Israeli human rights abuses. They also claim it is a specifically Jewish form of playing the race card. Alan Johnson further explains[[41]](#footnote-41) that it is used by offenders to deliberately refuse to engage with claims of antisemitism, before making counter accusations.

**Political Antisemitism and the Labour Party.** Adopting antisemitism policies is an inter-party issue that also concerns the ruling Government. The associated challenges are not exclusive to the Labour Party, but they do have a significantly greater problem of contemporary antisemitism within their ranks. One could argue that the reason why the Labour Party is so afflicted by antisemitism is due to its values. Ever since the late 19th Century it has espoused a post-colonial view, championed Human Rights and liberalism while supporting the weak. Given there are a broad spectrum of views within the Party, these can sometimes manifest themselves in an intensive, fervent and radical manner. It is these views that often lead to criticism of Israel and generate antisemitism.

Of note was that during the early 20th Century, the Labour Party did support Jewish self-determination. Echoing their principle of support for the oppressed. However, the turning point came during the 1973 Six Day War, when the leadership supported Edward Heath’s Conservative Government in implementing an arms embargo for the warring factions. The Labour Party viewed the actions of Israel as a colonial, imperial aggressor and in the eyes of the left, Israel had transformed itself into a strong, dominant player.

UN Resolution 3379 that was passed in 1975 declaring Anti-Zionism as racism further reinforced Labour perceptions that Israel was an adept, powerful nation. Ties were virtually severed when Mapai, the Israeli ruling left party lost to the Likud right in 1977. However, the massacres at Sabra and Shatila during the 1982 Lebanon Wars exacerbated the level of opposition and anti-Israel sentiment. During his visit to Israel in 1987 Neil Kinnock[[42]](#footnote-42) stated that Israel had a right to self-defence, but he went on to declare that it violated Human Rights and that the Palestinian Authority had suffered under the Israeli rule of the West Bank.

During the Labour Government led by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown (1997 – 2010), relations improved and this can be perhaps attributed to the fact that these leaders were moderates of the Left. Indeed, through their actions, they managed to reduce the union militancy and expel a number of extreme left-wingers from the party. This resulted in an executive that did not necessarily have to answer to the will of its membership and was more able to adapt to changes in the external environment be they domestic or global. Indeed, during the 2006 Lebanon War, the ideological right of the Party supported Israel and the principle of Zionism, while the leftist element continued to criticise and oppose. The Stop the War Coalition, an advocacy group with strong links to the Left, has also been vociferous in emphasizing support for what it sees as the weaker Muslim populations.

Rather surprising was the stance taken by the British Jewish MP, and Labour Party Leader, Ed Miliband. In October 2014, he backed the Party vote on recognizing Palestine as a State. This also followed some open and public criticism of Israel, saying that it had violated Human Rights on a number of occasions. Albeit this was a symbolic vote, if the Labour Party does accede to power in the future, it could become a stated Government policy.

However, the current problem within the Party is more serious and significant. It is also creating schisms, and some notable MPs have now resigned over its inability to address antisemitism. The much respected Frank Field MP, an advocate for social reform resigned in September 2018. He was quoted as saying that the Party risked becoming a “force for antisemitism” and had allowed a “culture of nastiness, bullying and intimidation” to develop. More recently, Luciana Berger, a British Jewish MP resigned in February 2019 stating that the Labour Party was “institutionally antisemitic” and cited Jeremy Corbyn as failing to address hatred against Jewish people within the Party’s ranks. Another six Labour MP’s followed, citing their party's Brexit stance along with the leadership's handling of anti-Semitism including Ms Joan Ryan MP, Chair of the Labour Friends of Israel Group.

As reported in the London Evening Standard on 7 March 2019, a preliminary inquiry has also been ordered into the Labour Party affairs by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission. This was after the Campaign Against Antisemitism submitted complaints and the Jewish Labour Movement handed over 1000 pages of testimony alleging illegal discrimination against people because of their “ethnicity and religious beliefs.”

Part of the issue within the Labour Party today, is that it is dominated by the far left, who succumb (either consciously or not) to a degree of antisemitism borne from their criticism of Israel and its policies. Sometimes, it results from non-racial, legitimate disapproval, but there are those who clearly use it as an alibi. It is either done to accuse Israel of Human Rights violations, being an imperial state with hegemonic tendencies or rejecting the rights of Palestinians. There are also those within the Party that are just naturally prejudice and commit acts of racial antisemitism.

In his most recent research[[43]](#footnote-43) into the Labour Party, Alan Johnson reinforces Luciana Berger’s view that the Party is institutionally antisemitic. With a magnum opus of examples, he states that it has failed to understand, and is host to various forms of contemporary antisemitism[[44]](#footnote-44). Neither has it developed the appropriate and professional processes to deal with the problem. As a result, it has now become much more difficult to resolve than had been assumed.

Against these dynamics the Labour Party has also experienced an excruciating process of trying to define antisemitism rather than adopt the IHRA definition. The reason being is that the hierarchy, and specifically Jeremy Corbyn wanted greater leverage to criticise Israel and its right to existence. Nevertheless, after almost 2 years the Party did adopt the IHRA definition in full, but not without issuing a further statement of ‘clarification’ that read, “this will not in any way undermine freedom of expression on Israel or the rights of Palestinians.” This followed a statement that the leader himself proposed declaring that it should not “be regarded as antisemitic to describe Israel, its policies or the circumstances around its foundation as racist.” His proposal did not gain support and it has renewed claims that the left-of-centre party has become hostile to Jews under Jeremy Corbyn, a long-time supporter of the Palestinian cause and an opponent of Israel. It has almost normalised antisemitic beliefs to the point that it is rife within the membership of the Labour Party. Indeed, only recently the party's general secretary, Jennie Formby, revealed the alleged cases of antisemitism for the past 10 months[[45]](#footnote-45) totalled 673[[46]](#footnote-46). The figures were only released after she was pushed by MPs for specific details. It is claimed that 96 members were immediately suspended from the party for their conduct and 12 were expelled. However, the veracity of the figures has been called into question by the Labour MP Dame Margaret Hodge, who herself had submitted 200 examples.

These views also call into question the accuracy of the internal Chakrabarti Inquiry that was published in June 2016. It was initiated to investigate allegations of [antisemitism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antisemitism) and other forms of [racism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racism) in the Labour Party. Chaired by barrister [Shami Chakrabarti](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shami_Chakrabarti), the inquiry was launched following comments made by two high-profile Labour figures, [Naz Shah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naz_Shah) and [Ken Livingstone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Livingstone) that were deemed to have been antisemitic in nature.

The inquiry found that the Labour Party was “not overrun” by antisemitism, Islamophobia or other forms of racism, but that, “as with wider society”, there was evidence of “minority hateful or ignorant attitudes and behaviours festering within a sometimes bitter incivility of discourse.” Some of the recommendations appeared to be little more than statements of the obvious, such as the assertion that “Labour members should resist the use of Hitler, Nazi and Holocaust metaphors, distortions and comparisons in debates about Israel-Palestine in particular”, or that “racial or religious tropes and stereotypes about any group of people should have no place in our modern Labour Party.” Ms Chakrabarti ruled out life bans for Labour Party members, and proposed time limits (of no more than two years) on the bringing of disciplinary charges.

However, in early August 2016, it was announced that Ms Chakrabarti, who joined the Labour Party shortly after being appointed as Chair of the “independent” inquiry into antisemitism, had been nominated by the Labour Leader for a peerage, which she had accepted. The decision led Labour colleagues and other observers to question publicly the independence of the inquiry[[47]](#footnote-47).

Further canvassing of Labour members on antisemitism has taken place and some appeared divided over whether they felt that media coverage was reflective of a genuine problem within their Party, or simply a way of attacking Mr Corbyn’s leadership. Only one in 20 members surveyed by YouGov for The Times believed that antisemitism was a bigger problem in Labour than in other parties. Almost half (49%) believed that Labour did not have a problem with antisemitism, and that it had been created by the press and Jeremy Corbyn’s opponents to attack him (the Livingstone Formulation again). Around a third agreed that the issue was being used to attack Mr Corbyn, but also felt that antisemitism was a problem within the Labour Party[[48]](#footnote-48). A further poll of Labour members who joined after the 2015 General Election found even greater support for the notion that the antisemitism row had been fabricated by Mr Corbyn’s detractors, with 55% of respondents agreeing with the notion that antisemitism within their Party was “not a serious problem at all, and was being hyped up to undermine Labour and Jeremy Corbyn, or to stifle legitimate criticism of Israel.” Around a third thought that it was a genuine problem, but that its extent was being “deliberately exaggerated to damage Labour and Jeremy Corbyn, or to stifle criticism of Israel”; and only 9% agreed that antisemitism was “a serious and genuine problem that the party leadership needed to take urgent action to address.”[[49]](#footnote-49)

**Jeremy Corbyn.** It has been well documented[[50]](#footnote-50) that Jeremy Corbyn previously called Hezbollah “friends” and said Hamas, also his “friends,” were devoted “to long-term peace and social justice.” (He later said he regretted using that language.) Of equal concern was when he invited the Islamist leader Raed Salah, who has accused Jews of killing Christian children to drink their blood, to Parliament, and opposed his extradition from the UK. The Labour Party leader is also a patron of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and an early supporter of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. His office now maintains that he does not support BDS. The consensus in Labour Party circles (as stated above) is that the antisemitism crisis is a cynical political attack on Jeremy Corbyn because he supports the Palestinian cause. The Labour leadership knows it has a problem, but they consider it a political, not a moral issue. The other concern is not that Jeremy Corbyn is necessarily antisemitic himself, but that he has a record of condoning others when it comes to the antisemitic criticism of Israel. He also has an absolute personal conviction that he is an anti-racist and loathes the extremist nationalist identity politics that gave us Nazism. Therefore, in his eyes it is impossible for him to be antisemitic.

The fact that he also promotes or certainly does not prevent discourse with these types of organisations, who denounce the right of Israel to exist is concerning. In this sense he is legitimizing an approach that normalizes dialogue with terrorist groups. Although he set a precedent with his links to the Irish Republican Army leadership (another terrorist organisation), therefore his actions are hardly unexpected.

However, he could help to fundamentally change the attitude within the Party, with a change of approach. If he is a fully convicted anti-racist and pacifist, he should focus on bringing together all those in Israel and the Palestinian Authorities who promote peace and mutual recognition. There are a multitude of organisations including the Alliance for Middle East Peace, Darkenu, Zimam Palestine, Taghyeer Movement, Roots / Shorashim, the Blue-White Future Group, Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF), MEET, The Peres Centre for Peace, the Abraham Fund, the Geneva Initiative and many others. Yet, as Denis MacShane (a former Labour MP) points out[[51]](#footnote-51), there is a shuttle service of trips to the West Bank for MPs to hear the Palestinian point of view. By contrast, Israeli public diplomacy is weak and relies too much on preaching to the already converted in the Jewish community. In nearly two decades as an MP, had he wished, he could have taken the opportunity to regularly visit the West Bank. By contrast, he was never once asked to undertake a trip Israel on behalf of the Party. Therefore, reaching out to all those who share true Labour values would be a good start and a totemic gesture.

**BDS.** The founding of BDS in 2005, sought to take disparate campaigns to pressure Israel and united them around various demands for Palestinians. It is traditionally active within University campuses where social liberalism and “openness to experience” are prevalent. Whilst it is not necessarily antisemitic per se, it has been forced to ratify measures to ensure its actions do not target Israeli citizens, particularly students. It has also promised not to impact upon the provision of kosher food and religious items, and to safeguard a zero-tolerance approach to antisemitism/hostile environments during campus BDS debates. However, whether this results in safe, inclusive learning environments remains to be seen.

At local government level, a number of councils have passed motions supporting BDS in boycotting goods originating from Israel including [Leicester City Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leicester_City_Council) (2014), [Swansea Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swansea_Council) (2010), and [Gwynedd Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gwynedd_Council) (2014). Legal action against the councils brought by Jewish Human Rights Watch (JHRW) was subsequently dismissed by both the [High Court](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_Court_of_Justice) and then the [Court of Appeal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Court_of_Appeal) in July 2018. The councils were also cleared of antisemitism over the Israeli goods boycott. This had been preceded in February 2016, by the British government banning the boycotts of Israeli goods by public authorities, stating they would face severe penalties should they take such measures, as the government deemed these boycotts damaging to community cohesion and Britain's national security.

The rationale put forward by these councils was *inter alia*, the Israeli military action in the Gaza strip and their views on the Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Two out of the three councils are Labour led, while Gwynedd has been held by Plaid Cymru (a Welsh Nationalist party). Leicester City Council felt that it had a right to represent the views of its electorate, which has a diverse, cosmopolitan population with some large minority religious groupings.

However, no one else has followed suit, which suggests that these councils did so because of the views of councillors who felt compelled to pursue the action and/or they were acting on behalf of their electorate. Given there are over 418 [principal councils (unitary, upper and second tier) in the UK](http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN07104#fullreport)[[52]](#footnote-52), this puts the level of official BDS support within the local government in perspective.

**UK Government Stance.** A key document on Antisemitism is the 2016 House of Commons Home Affairs Committee Report. It was prompted by concerns of an increase in prejudice and violence against Jewish communities in the UK as well as an increase in far-right activity. As a result, a number of key conclusions and recommendations were made that has helped to inform Government policy and assist the Jewish Diaspora within the UK.

It deduced that people should not be prevented from criticising the Israel Government but any criticism had to be placed in context and not judged against double standards. Whilst it was acknowledged that Zionist (or worse, Zio) is sometimes used as a term of abuse, ‘Zionism’ as a concept remains a valid discussion for debate. Separately, it was noted that antisemitic reporting by some police forces in the UK is almost non-existent, despite there being in some cases thousands of Jewish people living within the community. It recommended that the cause of this assumed under-reporting be investigated. However, for those incidents that were reported, the actions by the authorities, including prosecutions was commended, as well the amount of direction and guidance promulgated on religious and racial hate crimes. The engagement with Jewish communities, organisations, and funding of protection for synagogues was found to be extremely positive and should continue, as well as the Holocaust education and commemoration work. It was recognised though that antisemitism had now, worryingly moved into political discourse and that the situation needed to be monitored closely by the Government, police and Crown Prosecution Service in order to ensure a zero-tolerance approach to this problem. Social media also came in for particular criticism, particularly Twitter, after the significant number of malicious attacks on the British Jewish MP, Luciana Berger. It was also determined that greater jurisdiction must be brought to bear by companies to remove this form of online hatred.

**Other Types of Hate Crime.** To put antisemitic attacks into context, the number of recorded hate crimes in the UK has more than doubled in the past five years[[53]](#footnote-53). According to the Home Office this is likely to be related in part to Brexit sentiment, the spate of terrorist attacks in 2017 and improvements in the way police record hate crime.

Specifically, hate crime offences recorded by the police in England and Wales rose by 17% to 94,098 in the 12 months to March 2018. This represents an increase of 123% since 2012-13, when 42,255 hate crimes were recorded. Religious hate crime increased by 40% in the two years to March 2018, to 8,336 incidents. The Home Office said this was likely to be due to offences after the [Westminster](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/westminster-attack--news-), [London Bridge](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/london-bridge-attack) and [Manchester Arena](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/manchester-arena-explosion) terrorist attacks. Indeed, Religion was the motivating factor in 9% of recorded hate crimes, while race was the major factor in 76% (71,251 incidents). While the table below does not include figures from the London Metropolitan and Lancashire Police forces (sizeable data sources), it indicates that the majority of religious hate crimes are directed at Muslim groups.

|  |
| --- |
| **Number and proportion of religious hate crimes recorded by the police1, by perceived religion** |
|
|  |  |  |
| *Numbers and percentages* | **England and Wales, recorded crime** |
| **Perceived religion of the victim** | Number of offences | % |
|   |   |   |
| **Buddhist** | **19** | **0** |
| **Christian** | **264** | **5** |
| **Hindu** | **58** | **1** |
| **Jewish** | **672** | **12** |
| **Muslim** | **2,965** | **52** |
| **Sikh** | **117** | **2** |
| **Other** | **311** | **5** |
| **No religion** | **237** | **4** |
| **Unknown** | **1,174** | **21** |
|   |   |   |
| Total number of targeted religions | 5,817 |   |
|   |   |   |
| **Total number of offences** | **5,680** |  |
| *Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office* |  |  |
| 1. Excludes data from the Metropolitan and Lancashire police forces.  |
| 2. In some offences more than one religion has been recorded as being targeted.  |

**Chapter 3**

**Israel’s Policies and Reaction to Antisemitism in the UK**

**UK / Israeli Relations.** First and foremost, it is important to set the context of the relationship between the UK and Israel, in order to understand the potential reactions to antisemitism. Suffice to say, at Governmental level diplomatic ties are well established. The UK also views its links with Israel as an opportunity to promote security, prosperity and well-being, as well as regional peace[[54]](#footnote-54).

That is not to say that there have not been differences of opinion (on occasion).Indeed, the UK position to promoting peace between Israel and the Palestinians is via the Two State Solution[[55]](#footnote-55), which is not a view shared by the Israeli government.There are also variances when it comes to the construction of settlements on land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Other disagreements have resulted from the Israeli commemorations of the [King David Hotel bombing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_David_Hotel_bombing)[[56]](#footnote-56) and UK measures to distinguish whether imported produce from the [West Bank](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Bank), was made by Palestinians or in Jewish settlements[[57]](#footnote-57).

While these issues have the potential to create friction, they have not prevented extremely successful commercial relations. Indeed, the recent trade continuity agreement[[58]](#footnote-58) between the two nations which is worth £4 billion also makes Israel one of the UK’s largest trade partners in the Middle East.

**UK Government Stance on Antisemitism.** Importantly, the Government’s response to antisemitism should offer reassurance. Notably, Prime Minister Theresa May's speech[[59]](#footnote-59) at the United Jewish Israel Appeal dinner in September 2018 reinforced the fact that the UK is taking the threat of antisemitism extremely seriously. The salient message was focused on supporting Jewish communities and rooting out the scourge of it. She also committed to continue the funding of £13 million each year to support the work of the CST and the establishment of a National Holocaust Memorial next to the Houses of Parliament.

This is particularly important during a period when attacks against British Jews are on the rise. It is clear that the good bi-lateral relationship, which has survived minor frictions in the past, is built on the ultimate security and protection of the Jewish diaspora. The key, from the Government’s perspective is to be proactive in the fight against antisemitism. It also ensures that at national level Ministers are alive to the issues and concerns of the Jewish community and can respond quickly.

During an escalation of antisemitism, it is likely that Israel would look to the UK (in the first instance) to take the appropriate action[[60]](#footnote-60). It would also be wrong to speculate on outcomes in a worsening situation, albeit the first response would usually be diplomatic dialogue. In addition, and anecdotally, any direct involvement from the Israeli intelligence services is likely to be limited to information sharing, particularly given bi-lateral relations are good.

**Consequences of a UK Labour Party Government.** In the current climate,the prospect of a Labour Government is likely to cause alarm for Israel.Given the crisis within the Party, it has also broken its relationship with the British Jewish community. A recent poll for the Jewish Chronicle published in September 2018 found that 40% of British Jews would “seriously consider” emigrating if Jeremy Corbyn were to become Prime Minister[[61]](#footnote-61). Although it in no way denigrates the level of vulnerability that the Jewish community must feel, these statistics might be down to rhetorical sentiment rather than definite intentions.

In 2017, Daniel Staetsky and the Institute for Jewish Policy Research investigated[[62]](#footnote-62) whether Jewish people were leaving Europe. The report analysed six countries – France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Sweden and the UK, which account for about 70% of European Jews. It concluded there had been an increase in migration[[63]](#footnote-63), especially from France, Belgium and Italy; but in the UK, [Germany](https://www.theguardian.com/world/germany) and Sweden levels of migration were not unusual. Suggesting a definition of an exodus as 30% of the Jewish population, it said 4% of Jews in [Belgium](https://www.theguardian.com/world/belgium) and France had left for Israel between 2010 and 2015. The proportion leaving from the UK, Germany and Sweden was between 0.6% and 1.7%. Certainly and fortunately, no parallels with 1930’s Europe can be drawn.

However, the report suggested a number of reasons for the levels of emigration, noting that there are both push and pull factors. Most people feel a positive connection with their country of origin. The sheer familiarity of life and the comfort that comes from this familiarity are important pull factors in relation to people’s country of origin. Some countries, particularly Western countries, have strong economies and provide good economic opportunities, and these constitute additional pull factors. The most obvious push factors operating in countries of origin are safety issues, including antisemitism, and economic downturns. Israel can present a number of pull factors. It is considered a ‘safe haven’ for Jews coming from precarious situations; it is economically developed relative to many countries, and it provides opportunities for a meaningful and accessible Jewish religious and national life. Pre-existing social connections in Israel (family and friends) constitute an additional pull factor. On the other hand, Israel’s challenging security situation would be considered as a push factor by many, as well as its level of economic development when compared to certain Western European countries. Times of high unemployment also correspond to times of high migration and this is particularly the case in the UK vis-a-vis British Jews.

Emigration can also be due to demographic transformation of Europe, with an inflow of migrants from the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia, which has implications for European culture, traditions and politics. It is against this background of change and political reckoning that European Jews and Jewish communities try to orientate themselves. Indeed, Jews are known to move in response to a particularly acute deterioration in the political or economic situation. If Jews feel unwelcome in Europe, their movement out of Europe will serve as the first sure sign of that. Notably, in 2016 the Israeli Prime Minister, [Benjamin Netanyahu, urged European Jews to migrate en masse to Israel](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/16/leaders-criticise-netanyahu-calls-jewish-mass-migration-israel)[[64]](#footnote-64) following terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen. “Israel is your home and that of every Jew. Israel is waiting for you with open arms,” he said.

This is not the first time this has occurred. Following the collapse of the Oslo peace process and rise of antisemitism in France due to Israeli policies, Ariel Sharon made the call for *aliya*. It once again raised the issue of ‘dual loyalty’ (addressed later). However, it was met with a firm response from European politicians and Jewish community leaders who called on Jews to stay in Europe, saying terror was not a reason to emigrate.

Perhaps though Anthony Julius captures the realistic outcomes of a Labour Party government. In a recent Jewish Chronicle article[[65]](#footnote-65) he states that there wouldn’t be violence in the streets, nor would any Jewish people lose their jobs, or be discriminated against by legislation. However, there would be a sense of gloom and demoralisation. It would also make people have to justify one’s attachment to Israel (as mentioned in Chapter 2). It could also see them retire from public and political life – almost a form of exiling. Separately it is likely the funding for the security of Jewish communities would be called into question. Nevertheless, as Julius states, it is important to keep a perspective, without over-sensationalising the issue and to acknowledge that the British Jewish diaspora is absolutely equal to the challenges of antisemitism. There is also hope that the weight of criticism on the Labour hierarchy starts to confine and contain the threat. The fact that the issue is out in the open and widely discussed at national level means it is difficult to avoid.

**Antisemitism and Israeli Foreign Policy.** The Ministry of Diaspora Affairs is committed to guaranteeing Jewish life without constraints, and with a strong, meaningful and legitimate connection to Israel. Indeed, this reflects one of the objectives of the founding of the state of Israel – to serve as a beacon to the Jewish diaspora and to counter antisemitism. The Committee for Immigration, Absorption & Diaspora Affairs also provides a useful link between the Government, World Zionist Organisation and the Jewish Agency. Nevertheless, one could argue that some of the Department’s recent analysis of international antisemitism does not fully reflect the true nature of the issue[[66]](#footnote-66). There is much focus on classical antisemitism and the threats posed by radical Islam. However, anti-Zionist sentiment or hatred towards Israel, which has been gaining in prominence over other forms of antisemitism appears to be understated. It is true that the migration crisis in Europe and the opposition to it has led to collateral damage to Jews as a result[[67]](#footnote-67). However, much more prevalent is the hatred that is taking place online, within the media and by politicians of various political persuasions.

Separately, some of Israel’s foreign policy approaches could be construed as mixed messaging and being insensitive to the wider Diaspora. This can be the case where it prioritises national interests (e.g. political and financial) ahead of Jewish ones. It may be uncomfortable for Jews, who may not necessarily agree with the policies but they have an affinity with both Israel and their host nation. It thus creates a tension in their ‘dual loyalty’ and can manifest itself in a number of ways[[68]](#footnote-68). Either through seeking to promote Israel through lobbying, or having to justify the actions of the State, even if they are critical of its policies, or speaking out because it breaches their core values. One such example was the Intifada in 1987, which had an adverse and polarising effect on the Diaspora – not too disimilar to the sentiments of the Israeli general public. It was partly due to the nature of the militray force employed, but also the policies on settlements and Palestinian national rights. It also led to some very public criticism by well-known Diaspora Jews such as Woody Allen and violinist Yehudi Menuin. Following this, in 1988, was Yitzhak Shamir’s decision to change Israel’s Law of Return so that automatic immigration to Israel only applied to persons defined as Jewish by Orthodox Jewish Law. This was viewed by the non-Orthodox as a undermining their Jewish identity by Israel. It was only after pressure from a number of American Jewish groups threatening to withdraw their support for the Israeli government was it retracted.

Furthermore, its acceptance of specifically European and South American right-wing figures could be mistaken as a paradox when viewed through the lens of antisemitism[[69]](#footnote-69). Recent dialogue with France's Marine Le Pen, the Italian Deputy Premier Matteo Salvini, Hungary's Viktor Orban, Poland's Mateusz Morawiecki, and the newly elected Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro provide the most precise view of the nature of Israel's political alliances in the current period. Particularly concerning was Orban’s election campaign[[70]](#footnote-70) which demonised the Jewish American-Hungarian investor and philanthropist George Soros. He also sought to rehabilitate the reputation of Hungarian wartime leader Miklos Horthy, who deported hundreds of thousands of Jews to their deaths, while embracing nationalistic policies. Separately, the Polish government has come under renewed criticism for seeking to divorce itself from any state responsibility for the Holocaust. That said, the robust response to the latter from Prime Minister Netanyahu[[71]](#footnote-71) provides the expected retort of the Government in protecting Jewish and Israeli national interests. Yet conversely, the absence of a suitable represenation towards Hungary, obfuscates the narrative. As Noa Landau suggests[[72]](#footnote-72), part of the reason for these affiliations could be to use the Visegrad Group[[73]](#footnote-73) as part of a plan to challenge the EU consensus on issues concerning the Palestinians and Iran. It could also be because there are fewer of the Diapora in Eastern Europe and therefore (the direct) sensitivities might not be so acute. Engagement to prevent diplomatic isolation has also allegedly taken place with authoritarian nations. Recent dialogues with Rwanda, Togo, Chad, Guinea and Mali have been quoted[[74]](#footnote-74) as attempts to harness allies in UN voting.

However, the Israeli Government does seek to formulate an effective response to global antisemitism, partly through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs sponsored biennial conference. Attendance is considerable, with international representation from an eclectic mix of politicians, diplomats, academics and think tank groups. Generally, the topics are both thematic and geographic. Whilst there is no accusation that Israel’s diplomatic priorities affect the focus, there has been less attention paid to antisemitism in the Arab world in recent times, particularly Saudi Arabia. In the most recent ADL Global 100 Index of Antisemitism[[75]](#footnote-75), approximately 74% of Saudi Arabian respondents answered ‘probably true’ to a majority of the antisemitic stereotypes tested. Whether this perceived, reduced attention is due to behind-the-scenes cooperation between the countries in pursuit of mutual goals is difficult to tell.

Nevertheless, it is these connections that can undermine any claims of countering antisemitism when perhaps emboldening and providing legitimacy to groups, movements and individuals that pursue [far-right](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Far-right) or non-democratic agendas. Within Europe it also risks ignoring the deep concerns of Jewish leaders and the historical lesson that any government which targets minorities and undermines liberal democracy is ultimately a threat to the Jewish people. Similarly, some of the spikes in antisemitism abroad are linked to trigger events resulting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and negative perceptions of Israel’s policy in this regard. There is no question of the right to self-defence, but how far the consequences of these actions and the effects on the wider Diaspora should be considered is challenging. Some would rightly argue that Israel should represent Israeli interests first and foremost rather than foreign or wider Jewish ones[[76]](#footnote-76), but perhaps there should be a greater acknowledgement of the potential side effects. A finer balance might be achievable, which does not risk alienating the wider Diaspora and ensures it remains a positive influence.

**Summary and Conclusions**

Unfortunately, it is not just statistical evidence that indicates the increase of hate crimes and racial intolerance within the UK. One only has to follow reporting in the media and exposés on social media to understand the scale. Of note, British Jews are the second largest religious group targeted. Notwithstanding this, with greater awareness, there has been increased reporting of antisemitic incidents by individuals, charities and the police. However, the analysis that follows can be problematic. The various international categories of antisemitism, as well classification of attacks used can be slightly confusing, as well as making it difficult to draw comparisons. Therefore, a common standard by which to benchmark the issues would be helpful.

Invariably, there are a range of factors that can cause antisemitism. Recently, there has been a rise in the number of attacks attributable to Brexit (and the associated nationalistic fervour); as a result of the large scale migration into Europe; significantly, the issues within the UK Labour Party, and the ease with which social media can propagate hatred. Trigger events, specifically, increased Israeli and Palestinian tensions and periods of heightened awareness, as well as journalistic coverage of antisemitism in the UK can have a consequent effect. Given these factors, it is unlikely that there will be a reduction in the overall level of antisemitism in the short term.

A number of polls have also pointed to the fact nearly a third of the UK population hold antisemitic views, although much of this is latent. Encouragingly, nearly three-quarters of the public have a positive perception of Jewish people. That said, participant numbers within surveys are still relatively small. Therefore, in order to obtain an accurate census, the sample sizes should be much larger.

It is clear that antisemitism has also transitioned over the centuries. Furthermore, the common tropes and themes used by a wide range of perpetrators are not exclusive to the UK. Nevertheless, the Far-Right tend to be more antisemitic than any other group, while antisemitic anti-Zionist sentiment is largely the preserve of those with a left wing political view. The latter espouse an ideology that seeks to demonise and bring down Israel through what it views as an autocratic, imperialist state. Indeed, today’s hatred is more prevalent in anti-Zionist views than ever before. Most offenders have substituted the word ‘Jew’ for ‘Israel’ in their dialogue as a result of the creation of the State. They use this to portray the nation as an authoritarian, underhand force that sanctifies little in pursuit of its goals. For British Jews, not only is this is extremely unpleasant, but if they are not seen to distance themselves or denounce their associations with Israel, they can be treated like pariahs. It also makes their ability to seek rational discourse almost impossible.

The fact that antisemitic anti-Zionism has now entered main stream politics exacerbates the issue. Indeed, one could surmise that the problems have become more acute with the advent of Jeremy Corbyn and his anti-Israel, anti-Zionist ideologies. A failure to proactively address the problem, as well as take disciplinary action against guilty party members has emphasized the seriousness. It has been reinforced by a number of MPs resigning from the Labour Party as a direct result. Of further concern is that there are a large number of party members who do not recognise the issue, but believe that it has been generated to smear the Party Leader. Of interest is that Jeremy Corbyn does not view himself as an antisemite, stating that he is both a pacifist and anti-racist. But, so long as he maintains associations with those who do espouse antisemitic and anti-Zionism hatred he will find it extremely challenging to redress. Moreover, antisemitism within the Labour Party now has a national profile and it will be difficult to avoid doing nothing. First and foremost, the right culture needs to be imbued. This requires leadership and a willingness to change in order to address the shortcomings. Another important step would be to embrace the left wing and peace organisations within Israel, to promote collegiate dialogue on the conflict.

Reassuringly, the UK government is at the forefront of dealing with the problem. Significant funding and a firm commitment to address the issue within society, and in cooperation with Jewish charities has ensured a comprehensive approach. Fortunately, evidence suggests that from a trade perspective, BDS is more of a nuisance than anything else. That is not to say that holistically, more cannot be done. Tackling hate crimes through education and on social media will require greater effort, particularly given the prevalence of the latter. Nevertheless, given the good relations with Israel, there is a mutual understanding that it can be dealt with internally and successfully.

Even if the situation in the UK were to deteriorate or the Labour Party were to gain power, it is unlikely to generate an exodus of British Jews. There might be a very modest increase in *Aliyah* and general emigration. However, it is more likely that Jewish people would withdraw from public life and high profile appointments, under a constant threat of hatred. A key consideration in assisting the UK’s Jewish population is also Israel’s Foreign Policy and the recognition of trigger events. Similarly, remaining sensitive to the ‘dual loyalty’ challenge and wider diplomatic engagements in pursuit of national priorities, will help maintain the powerful voice of the Diaspora.

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6. CST (2009), p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. A British organisation that received charitable status in 1994 to ensure the safety and security of the Jewish community in the UK. It has been compiling data on UK antisemitism since 1984. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. CST (2009), p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The FRA does not provide the EUMC’s Working Definition on its website, stating it “has no mandate to develop its own definitions”, and notes that the EUMC definition was never considered an “official document”. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
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11. Which predominantly manifests itself as Anti-Zionism. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Jikeli (2009), p.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
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16. Goldberg (1997), pp. 279–304. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
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26. October 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. The fire is under public inquiry, police investigations and coroner's inquests. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. A number of those killed were believed to be undocumented subtenants, migrants and asylum seekers. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
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