

# Contemporary Antisemitism Case Studies

## Case Study 1: Community Security Trust Antisemitic Incidents Report January-June 2021

**Directions:** Read the case study about an antisemitic incident and discuss the connection questions that follow.

A visibly Jewish teacher at a non-Jewish school in East London was the victim of 12 separate incidents across May and June 2021. On 11 occasions, pupils at the school approached him and shouted “Free Palestine” at him, while in the twelfth case these words were written on his whiteboard. This is reflective of the kind of incidents reported in school environments, where teachers and students who are known to be Jewish have been harassed with abuse about Israel simply because of their Jewish identity.<sup>1</sup>

[The Community Security Trust further notes that:]

Shouting “Free Palestine” and “Free Gaza” on a pro-Palestinian demonstration is not antisemitic, even if it upsets or offends pro-Israel supporters. But when “Free Palestine” is shouted indiscriminately at a Jew in the street, or daubed on a synagogue wall, this is an expression of antisemitism. It protests Israel by targeting local Jews at random.<sup>2</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. What could have been done to show solidarity with and support for the teacher at the time?
  - Whose responsibility was this?
2. The teacher in this situation was targeted many times. What could have been done at the time to have stopped students from continuing to target him?
3. What can be done to prevent such antisemitic attacks from occurring in the school in the future?
  - What actions could the school take?
  - What actions could the students take?
4. Why is it antisemitic to hold Jews collectively responsible for Israel's conduct?
  - What message is this sending to Jews who are targeted like this?
  - How does it suggest others view them?
5. Can you think of any other examples in society when people have been expected to answer for the actions of a person/people just because they share some identity traits?
  - What were the consequences?
6. In your own words, write a two- to three-sentence summary of this article in your notebooks.

<sup>1</sup> Antisemitic Incidents: Report January-June 2021, Community Security Trust, 13 (accessed 24 September 2021).

<sup>2</sup> The Month of Hate: Antisemitism & extremism during the Israel-Gaza conflict, Community Security Trust, 8 (accessed 24 September 2021).

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### Case Study 2: *The Huffington Post UK*, 'Jewish Student Izzy Lenga Takes Brave Stand Against Anti-Semitism After Vile Trolling On Twitter'

(3 November 2015)

**Directions:** Read the case study about an antisemitic incident and discuss the connection questions that follow.

A When Birmingham University student Izzy Lenga found posters plastered around her campus that read 'HITLER WAS RIGHT', she tweeted a photograph of one of them with this message: 'And for those who don't think anti-Semitism is a serious issue, these were plastered over campus on Tues.' She included the hashtag of the National Union of Students. Shortly after she sent the message, the antisemitic messages to her began. Lenga decided to speak out and to make the messages visible by reposting them. Her efforts led both to more antisemitic messages and to an online campaign in support of her.

The following text is extracted from a *Huffington Post UK* article telling Izzy Lenga's story:

When Jewish student Izzy Lenga saw pro-Hitler posters plastered over her university campus, she decided use [to] a National Union of Students conference to highlight the presence of anti-Semitism.

Using the #NUSzones15 hashtag, the Birmingham University student posted photos of the posters on Twitter to draw attention to the "serious issue".

But shortly after sending the tweet, Lenga was trolled with vile messages of anti-Semitism – which she re-tweeted to expose her harassers.

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[Messages included comments such as 'What colour is a corpse dead from cyanide gassing?', 'Never trust a Jew – Titus 1:14' and 'I'm dismayed (not surprised) that #Jews always play the victims and never try to end their parasitism on others.']

In a message she posted on Facebook, Lenga described the tweets as a "terrifying read".

"I decided [the NUS conference] was an appropriate time and place to demonstrate how antisemitism is still problematic on our campuses ... However, the backlash to my tweet has been extremely nasty and deeply upsetting. This sets a worrying precedent. ...

Many Jewish students will now, and completely understandably, be apprehensive to speak up publicly about the antisemitism they may be facing, for fear of a similar backlash."

Despite the onslaught of abuse, Lenga has resolved to stand strong.

And the student has received numerous messages of support – including from Labour MP Luciana Berger – with some even deploying the hashtag #IStandWithIzzy.

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Lenga has also received support from the National Union of Students, whose president Megan Dunn blogged on *The Huffington Post UK* about the incident.

## Connection Questions

1. What was powerful about Izzy's stand against antisemitism?
2. What was done to show solidarity with and support for Izzy and the Jewish student community?
  - What else could have been done?
3. What did the existence of these posters on campus reveal about antisemitism and attitudes to it?
  - What could Birmingham University do to tackle such attitudes?
4. In what ways did the abusive tweets to Izzy refer to or extend known antisemitic tropes?
  - What does this highlight about the challenges in countering antisemitism?
5. Izzy refers to her concerns about 'the rise of antisemitism across Europe and the world'.
  - What do you think needs to be done to address this?
6. In your own words, write a two- to three-sentence summary of this article in your notebooks.

## Contemporary Antisemitism Case Studies

### Case Study 3: BBC News, 'Antisemitic graffiti daubed on London shops and cafes' (29 December 2019)

**Directions:** Read the case study about an antisemitic incident and discuss the connection questions that follow.



A council worker removed the graffiti which someone had covered with a note wishing all people "Peace and Good Will"

Anti-Semitic graffiti has been daubed on a synagogue and several shops in north London during the Jewish festival of Hanukkah.

The Star of David, a Jewish symbol, and "911" were spray-painted in Hampstead and Belsize Park, possibly referencing a conspiracy theory.

South Hampstead Synagogue was among the premises targeted, with reports made to police from 23:30 GMT on Saturday.

Police are treating it as a racially motivated hate crime.

The graffiti could reference an anti-Semitic conspiracy theory that Jews are responsible for the 9/11 terror attack.

It could also reference Kristallnacht, an organised nationwide attack on Jews which began in Germany on 9 November 1938.

The vandalism was carried out six days after the start of Hanukkah – one of the biggest festivals of the year for Jewish people. No arrests have been made.

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan said on Twitter: "This makes me sick to my stomach" adding that "anti-Semitism like this" had "no place anywhere and certainly not in London".

He also said that residents could expect more police patrols in the area.

A South Hampstead Synagogue spokesman said: "This is a time for people of all backgrounds – of all faiths and of none – to stand united and show our determination that we do not tolerate prejudice, hate and division - on our streets or online."

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Conservative councillor for Hampstead Oliver Cooper said he spent Sunday morning patrolling the neighbourhood after "appalled" residents alerted the Community Security Trust charity, which works to protect the Jewish community.

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The graffiti was seen being removed from shop windows on Sunday afternoon.

## Connection Questions

- 1. What was done to show solidarity with and support for the Jewish community in the Hampstead and Belsize Park area?**
  - What else do you think could have been done?
- 2. In response to the attack, the South Hampstead Synagogue also stated: 'Social media is polluted with xenophobia, Islamophobia, homophobia, misogyny, racism and antisemitism. Sadly, these things are connected.'**
  - What might South Hampstead Synagogue mean by saying all these forms of hate are connected?
- 3. What can be done when antisemitic graffiti is sprayed on walls?**
  - How can communities respond in the moment?
  - What can be done in the longer term?
- 4. In what ways did the graffiti draw on antisemitic tropes?**
  - What does this highlight about the challenges in countering antisemitism?
- 5. In response to the attack, the South Hampstead Synagogue stated: 'This is a time for people of all backgrounds – of all faiths and of none – to stand united and show our determination that we do not tolerate prejudice, hate and division – on our streets or online.'**
  - Why might it be important to have 'people of all backgrounds – of all faiths and of none' united in the fight against hate crime?
  - How can people show that they do not tolerate prejudice, hate and division on the streets and online?
- 6. In your own words, write a two- to three-sentence summary of this article in your notebooks.**

## Contemporary Antisemitism Case Studies

### Case Study 4: CNN, 'Abuse directed at London Hanukkah party bus investigated as a hate crime, police say'

(2 December 2021)

**Directions:** Read the case study about an antisemitic incident and discuss the connection questions that follow.

London Metropolitan Police are investigating a video that appeared to show a group of men spitting at [a] group of Jewish people celebrating Hanukkah earlier this week.

The video, filmed from inside a bus dubbed a "Hanukkah party on wheels" in central London on Monday, shows passengers subjected to a barrage of alleged anti-Semitic abuse.

The Met Police are treating the incident as a hate crime, according to a Thursday statement. No injuries were reported and no arrests were made, the force said.

"The occupants of the bus were Jewish and the abuse directed at them was allegedly antisemitic in nature," the Met statement said, adding that police were called at the time of the incident and officers were deployed. However, while police were en route, the bus "left the location to avoid any further confrontation."

In the video, the passengers can be heard saying "we are Jewish" and "we need to go." The video shows one of the men in the group hitting the bus with his shoe as it drove away.

Rabbi Shneur Glitsenstein, who was on board the bus, described the incident as a "bigoted antisemitic attack."

"Let me be clear: On Monday evening we were attacked on the streets of London for being Jewish and celebrating Chanukah. While our bus contained no references to Israel, we were clearly a Jewish group. The young men who surrounded us were not engaged in political protest; this was a bigoted anti-Semitic attack in the heart of London, seen by dozens of others, who stood by silently," Glitsenstein said in a statement published by the Chabad Israeli Center Golders Green.

### Connection Questions

1. **Although no injuries were reported, those on the bus were spat at and verbally abused.**
  - What impacts could these actions have on those who are targeted by them?
2. **Why is it significant that this attack took place in the 'heart of London'?**
  - How might it make Jews feel about publicly displaying their Jewish identity?
3. **What can be done when people are targeted with antisemitic abuse on the street?**
  - What could those who, according to Rabbi Shneur Glitsenstein 'stood by silently' have done?
4. **What could have been done to show solidarity with and support for the Jewish community after this attack?**
  - Whose responsibility was it?

5. **How do you think acts of hate, such as targeted verbal abuse, impact communities?**
  - How could they make it more likely that people will commit violent acts?
6. **In your own words, write a two- to three-sentence summary of this article in your notebooks.**