

# The New Antisemitism

Antisemitism is on the rise, morphing into new forms—yet it remains invisible to many of us. The moral software we use to detect antisemitism needs an update.



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A few weeks ago, a Parisian friend asked if—after eight years abroad—I could ever see myself returning to France. I told him I was content with the life I’d built overseas, and for now, the question didn’t really arise. That seemed to satisfy him. But then, after a pause, I cracked the door open a bit further. I added: “Besides, I’m not sure there’s a future for Jews in Europe.”

He looked at me, surprised and a little shocked. He knows me as an unshakeable optimist. Almost immediately, he said, “Don’t fall for that. Everything you hear from outside is blown out of proportion.”

I hadn’t meant to start a debate, but I needed to explain. I told him about my mother, who removed her mezuzah from her door. About my Jewish friends who use fake names to order taxis—some out of caution, others because they’ve been threatened. About my aunt, who woke up one morning to find her door smeared with feces and swastikas. About my cousins—secular, proudly French—who feel forced to send their children to Jewish schools that look like fortresses.

He listened with compassion. But he didn’t budge. In his view, these were regrettable, short-lived outbursts, triggered by the conflict in the Middle East—nothing to suggest a deeper crisis. He didn’t see it as a reason to question the future of Jews in France.

So I changed tactics. I set aside the emotion, the personal stories, the intimate fears. I laid out the facts. During my last visit to Paris—just five days—a rabbi was attacked in broad daylight in Orléans, and a kosher supermarket, the same one taken hostage in 2015, was set on fire. He shrugged. ‘Regrettable, but marginal,’ he said. And then he added, ‘We talk about it so much because the far right uses it to stir up hate.’ That struck me as a bizarre remark—like blaming women for sexism because they speak up about it.

Running out of patience, I pulled out the hard data: official figures from the French Ministry of the Interior. More than 60% of religiously motivated attacks in France target Jews. No anecdotes. No rumors. Just cold, unvarnished data. His response was immediate: “Impossible!” he said. Jews are less than 1% of France’s population. He started doing mental math, trying to dismiss the numbers. I could see the confusion on his face. “Your numbers must be wrong,” he said. Plain and simple.

But the numbers are true. They’ve reached historic highs. In 2023, there were 1,676 antisemitic incidents in France—compared to 436 the previous year. That’s a fourfold increase. Almost all occurred after October 7. In three months, we saw as many incidents as in the previous three years combined. And 2024 looks even worse: already up 192% from 2023.



Boulder, Colorado Attack (June 1, 2025): A man named Mohamed Sabry Soliman attacked participants of a pro-Israel rally with a makeshift flamethrower and Molotov cocktails, injuring 13 people, including an 88-year-old Holocaust survivor. The FBI is treating this as a targeted terrorist attack.

## **Antisemitism is a narrative virus**

As I walked away from that conversation, one question kept gnawing at me: How can an educated, liberal, progressive man remain so blind to a reality so thoroughly documented?

Then an unsettling realization hit me. It's not my friend who is blind. It's our collective lens for seeing antisemitism that's become outdated. The moral software we use to detect antisemitism hasn't been updated in years. It no longer recognizes the new strains of hate. Without that update, we mislabel the hatreds, we erase the victims, and we lose the ability to fight back. It's like using an antivirus program from 1990 on a modern computer.

So where do we start? **My theory is simple: antisemitism is a narrative virus.** It evolves with the fears and obsessions of each era. Like any virus, it mutates. Once, it was the accusation of a people who killed Christ. Then, a race to be exterminated. Today, it's a state to be destroyed. Tomorrow, it will be something else. Right now, radical anti-Zionism has become its main carrier. And this new strain has developed three genetic mutations that make it nearly undetectable to our old defenses.

**The first mutation is a quiet shift in language—a semantic sleight of hand.** In the vocabulary of hate, the word “Zionist” has become a stand-in for “Israeli” or “Jew.” People no longer say “the Jew is plotting.” They say “the Zionist manipulates the media.” They don't speak of “Jewish power” or “the Jewish lobby,” but of the “Zionist lobby.” The question is no longer “the Jewish question,” but “the Israeli question”—how to handle this unclassifiable entity. No longer a pariah people, but a pariah state. It's no longer “the Jews control finance,” but “BlackRock, Goldman Sachs—Zionist finance.” The words have shifted to fit our modern anxieties, but the substance remains unchanged. The same fantasies. The same stereotypes. Just dressed up differently.

What's new is that this language no longer lives in extremist circles alone. For much of the twentieth century, antisemitism was mainly associated with the far right—fascist regimes, white supremacist groups. Those ideas persisted, but they were pushed to the

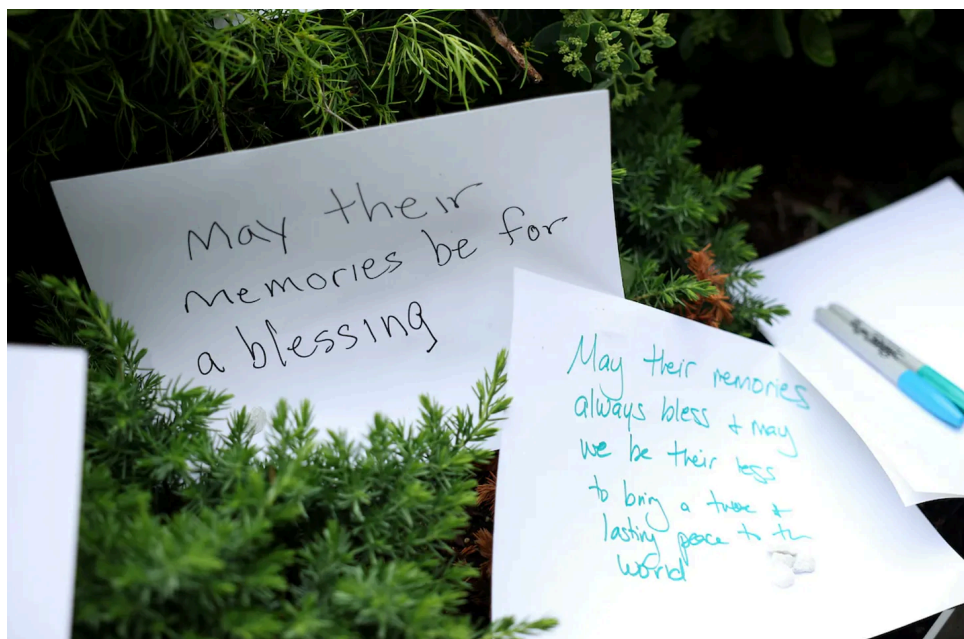
fringes: neo-Nazi forums, fringe newsletters. That still exists. But today, the Overton window has shifted. It's no longer a window—it's a glass ceiling, open for all to see.

The far right hasn't disappeared. It's still there, feeding on racial fantasies and conspiracy myths. But antisemitism has also taken root on the far left, often in the name of anti-Zionism or anti-colonial struggle. We now see a horseshoe effect: the extremes of both ends converging in their hostility toward Jews, even if for different reasons. On the right, it's the old racial conspiracy. On the left, it's the Jew as a symbol of imperialism, colonialism, capitalism, or white privilege.

This is why contemporary antisemitism no longer hides in the shadows. What once was unspeakable is now said aloud—in our streets, schools, universities, and institutions. Sometimes even with the applause of crowds who see themselves as champions of justice.

This viral, obsessive hatred has seeped into universities, activist circles, and social media. It spreads through slogans, posts, and hashtags. It's on TikTok, Instagram, and in the halls of Columbia. It masquerades as righteous indignation. But it's the same virus as before. Yesterday, Jews were hated because they were seen as everywhere. Today, they're hated because they're somewhere.

And there's another mutation, even more insidious. **Today's antisemitism wears the clothes of humanism, anti-racism, and justice for the oppressed.** It's the same hatred—disguised as moral virtue.



Handwritten notes left at the site of the shooting outside the Capital Jewish Museum. Washington, D.C. Shooting (May 21, 2025): Two Israeli Embassy employees were fatally shot outside the Capital Jewish Museum. The assailant reportedly shouted "Free Palestine" during the attack.

This is a hatred that no longer shouts “Death to the Jews.” Instead, it chants “From the river to the sea,” while stubbornly denying that this genocidal slogan calls for the erasure of a people—half of the world’s Jews live in Israel. That’s the pivot point. We’re no longer facing an antisemitism that hides behind moral language to justify itself. We’re facing an antisemitism that truly believes it is innocent—antiracist, even anti-antisemitic. It’s no longer a shameful passion—it’s a cause. It’s a hatred that doesn’t see itself as hatred—because it believes itself to be virtuous.

This self-perception is precisely what allows parts of the far left to practice antisemitism while condemning it elsewhere. They see only its most obvious forms—a ripped-off kippah, a racial slur. They ignore its subtler forms: suspicion, double standards, demands for Jews to disavow themselves. And it’s this belief in their own innocence that lets them spread the same hatred in new ways, all while claiming to stand against it. And because it wears the mask of virtue, it’s almost impossible to call out. Anyone who dares point to the underlying hatred is accused of trying to silence legitimate criticism of Israel—or worse, of siding with the oppressors.

This is how criticism of Israel has become the new lingua franca of antisemitism. Not all criticism of Israel is antisemitic—of course not. If that were true, most Jews in the diaspora and in Israel would be antisemitic themselves. Israeli newspapers criticize the government every day. But when that criticism uses antisemitic stereotypes, denies Israel’s right to exist, applies double standards, or targets Jews as a whole, it crosses a line. The difference is in the nuance. Condemning settler violence is legitimate; calling Israel a Nazi state is antisemitic.

More and more, Israel has become a convenient scapegoat, absorbing an ancient hatred in modern form. It becomes antisemitic when the criticism turns obsessive, exclusive, or shifts to anyone with a connection to Israel—like diaspora Jews. We see it when Jews are assaulted in the streets after events in Gaza. When they’re accused of dual loyalty. When 73 synagogues are attacked in France in three months after October 7. When Jews are told they must renounce Israel to participate in social justice movements. Or when Gaza posters are plastered on Jewish-owned shops.

Saying this isn’t an attempt to silence solidarity with Palestinians or their immense suffering in Gaza and elsewhere. It’s to say that legitimate solidarity does not require, or justify, genocidal slogans, violence, or the targeting of Jews.

I want to highlight the absurdity—and the injustice—of making individuals bear collective responsibility for acts they didn't commit or condone. Between 2014 and 2019, the international coalition flattened entire historic cities—Mosul, Raqqa, Fallujah. Thirty-five thousand airstrikes. More than 90,000 dead. Over a million displaced. The damage was massive. The suffering real. But no one would justify attacks or harassment of people in New York or London because of those bombings. No one did that after the Bataclan massacres in Paris. So why is it acceptable when it's Jews? Especially when Jews in France, Britain, or America aren't Israelis—they're members of a diaspora, living thousands of miles away. This exceptional treatment, this automatic suspicion, this transfer of collective guilt—this is the hallmark of an old antisemitism reborn in a new form.

For Jews, it's a trap. It reveals a double standard that's hard to stomach. No other diaspora is held to this kind of collective disavowal. Take the Indian diaspora in the United States. Many Indian Americans support Prime Minister Modi or his party, the BJP. Yet no one demands they condemn India's actions in Kashmir or against Muslims. We don't see Hindu temples vandalized when India is in the headlines. Likewise, no one asks the 48 million Chinese diaspora members to renounce Beijing's policies in Tibet, Taiwan, or Xinjiang. Every other diaspora keeps a point of connection—accepted, even expected.

But for Jews, the demand is different. Jews are told: you can belong here, if you first denounce Israel. You can speak up, if you declare yourself non-Zionist. You can stay, if you prove your loyalty. It's not outright exclusion—it's an expectation of self-erasure. A conditional belonging.

This viral hatred doesn't operate in a vacuum. It pairs with another disturbing trend: the breaking of solidarity among minorities. Jews were once seen—rightly—as just another minority, victims of oppression like any other. Today, they're recast as part of the powerful. White. Western. Privileged. The result: Jews are pushed out of causes they have long supported.



We hear this in many activist circles. Antisemitism, they say, isn't "real" racism. In the worldview of some modern antiracists, Jews can't be victims—because they're seen as "dominant." The righteous antiracist no longer sees Jews at all. He files them away in the wrong column. They're "white," "powerful," "privileged." And it doesn't matter that half of the world's Jews aren't of European descent. Jews aren't expelled—they're reclassified. Dissolved. Any denunciation of antisemitism is downplayed or met with suspicion, as if it's a distraction from supposedly more important forms of racism. This isn't the old antisemitism. It's a form of large-scale profiling that erases the reality of rising antisemitic violence.

Defenders of modern antiracist dogmas refuse to see this complexity. They classify Jews as "the powerful" to remove them from the circle of compassion. They flatten everything into a simple binary: oppressors on one side, the oppressed on the other. And the Jew—historically a victim, now seen as privileged—no longer fits that binary. In the end, this rejection of nuance is a rejection of reality itself.



Universities like Columbia, Cornell, and UCLA have seen surges in antisemitic incidents, including chants and slogans equating Zionism with Nazism.

**This brings us to the third mutation of the antisemitism virus: flipping the roles of victim and perpetrator.** This is the ultimate fantasy: to erase moral debt, to shift blame, to no longer have to care. If Jews have become Nazis, then they deserve what they get. Vladimir Jankélévitch saw this early on: “Anti-Zionism is a rare find, because it gives us not just permission, but the right, even the duty, to be antisemitic in the name of democracy... If Jews themselves were Nazis? That would be wonderful. We would no longer need to pity them; they would have earned their fate.” In other words, it’s a way for people to symbolically cleanse themselves of guilt.

This goes hand in hand with a new form of holocaust denial. It’s not the blunt revisionism of the past. It’s subtler. Few deny the Holocaust outright anymore. Instead, many now fold it into a vague, universal story. The Holocaust is no longer a Jewish tragedy—it’s just another historical crime. The result: people gain moral capital by comparing Gaza not to Dresden or Raqqa, but to Auschwitz. By diluting the crime, they erase the unique hatred it represented. By calling Israelis Nazis, they soothe their conscience—and delegitimize Jews. In one stroke, they erase a moral debt and make room for new hate.

For those who understand history’s long arcs, none of this is a surprise. The worst violence doesn’t come from those who know they’re hateful. It comes from those who believe they’re virtuous. The real danger isn’t immorality—it’s moral fanaticism. The road to hell is really paved with good intentions.

Great violence almost always speaks the language of virtue. The Crusades invoked God. The French Terror invoked virtue. Communism invoked equality. Colonialism claimed civilization. Nazism spoke of “natural order.” Robespierre sent priests to the guillotine shouting “Long live virtue!” The Bolsheviks slaughtered the kulaks in the name of a classless society. Eichmann didn’t see himself as a monster—he saw himself as a cog in a moral machine.

Antisemitism, in particular, has always understood this logic better than any other hatred. Why? Because Jews have always been an anomaly in dominant identities. They don’t fit neatly into any box. Are they a religion? A people? A nation? A race? A state? They defy every label. This ambivalence makes them the eternal outsider—the permanent antagonist. What can’t be categorized is rejected.



This is why antisemitism has never been a shameful passion. It has always been a cause—justified, rationalized, woven into a worldview. Luther, in his pamphlets, called for the burning of synagogues to save Christian souls. Drumont, in *La France juive*, claimed to defend the people from the power of gold. Maurras saw antisemitism as a matter of public order. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion—a deliberate forgery—convinced people for more than a century that hatred of Jews was self-defense.

## **The Urgent Lesson**

This new antisemitism doesn't declare itself as hatred. It presents itself as an awakened conscience. It doesn't say, "The Jews are dangerous." It says, "We're defending justice." It doesn't justify itself in the name of intolerance—but in the name of humanity. It doesn't see itself as racist—it sees itself as clear-eyed. It doesn't hide in darkness—it stands proudly in the light of the most respected institutions. And it's this conviction of moral superiority that makes it so hard to name, so hard to fight, and sometimes, nearly impossible to stop.

If we fail to see this shift—if we keep looking for antisemitism through the lens of the last century—it will keep advancing, masked in the most respected halls, the most sincere minds, and the most noble causes. And that's the lesson. It's no longer enough to be well-meaning to avoid being dangerous. We need to learn how to see the ways hatred changes form. This lesson isn't just for antisemitism. It applies equally to other rising hatreds—like anti-Muslim bigotry. It demands that we don't shy away from complexity. It demands that we name things clearly. That we resist the easy comfort of binaries and oversimplifications. And perhaps more importantly, that we see through the illusion of moral purity and recognize hatred—especially when it wears the mask of virtue.