



Analysis of the Anti-Semitism Report 2017

In the year 2017, 39 anti-Semitic incidents were registered in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. On top of that, there were countless aggressive posts against Jews on the internet. The most serious this year were three physical attacks on Jews and three Nazi banners displayed over a motorway.

In the reporting year (2017), 39 anti-Semitic incidents were recorded in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, not counting the ones on the internet. These were mainly cases reported to the SIG registration office or were reported in the media. This analysis also includes comments recorded in online newspapers and cases on the internet - although they are not included in the total number of incidents. A comparison with the incidents recorded on the same basis in previous years [66 incidents in 2014; 15 incidents in 2015; 25 incidents in 2016] shows that the incidents outside the internet have increased again. However, the rise in the number of registered incidents this year should not be taken as a sign of any corresponding increase in the level of anti-Semitic incidents because the fluctuations can also be attributed to a difference in reporting patterns. According to a study of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) from the year 2013, up to 70% of anti-Semitic incidents are not reported.

In contrast to the anti-Semitic incidents, which from time to time are strongly influenced by political events at home and abroad, the attitudes of Swiss men and women towards Jews generally show less change. According to the study published in 2017 by the Federal Statistical Office, up to 12% of respondents hold hostile or negative attitudes towards Jews.

→ **For the study, see**

<https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bevoelkerung/migration-integration/zusammenleben-schweiz.html>

Examples of incidents

At the end of January, the president of a Jewish community received an anonymous packet of excrement.

A newspaper article published in June reported that an esoteric bookshop in Zurich was stocking anti-Semitic books. Apart from that, the journalist was able to obtain an unannotated edition of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* despite querying whether this was allowed.

In June, there was a serious physical attack in Zurich. A group of adolescents were creating a din one evening. A passer-by told them that they should please be quiet and go home. By way of response, the adolescents surrounded the passer-by. Someone clearly identifiable as a Jew intervened in order to help the passer-by. The adolescents insulted the person rendering assistance, calling him a *sow Jew*. The Jewish man then received a head injury and was punched to the ground and kicked by the four adolescents. An observer alerted the police. When the adolescents heard the police siren, they made off.

In July, there were various media reports about anti-Semitic banners in the canton of Schwyz across three motorway bridges in the direction of Zurich. They were flags with swastikas, an *I love Hitler* banner and a banner displaying the words *Kill Jews*.

In mid-August, there was another serious incident in Zurich. A rabbi was taking a walk with his family on the promenade along Lake Zurich when he was subjected to anti-Semitic insults and a physical attack by a woman.

Cases arousing much media attention

Two cases deserve special mention because of their complexity and their impact in the media. In one case, in a hotel in Arosa, only Jews were explicitly called on to take a shower. In the second case, a member of Parliament compared the transportation of pigs with the deportation of Jews in World War Two. In both cases, the authors of these acts apologised promptly and admitted that they had not reflected on what they were saying. As a consequence of these incidents, prevention programmes were offered, which were then taken up by the parties concerned. Common to both cases was a serious lack of sensitivity, which also triggered anti-Semitic sentiments in consequence. These circumstances were discussed intensively in the media right across Switzerland. The fact is that the trivialisation and exploitation of the holocaust and other genocides have not decreased in the political debate - the holocaust and other genocides must not be misused for this. Here, politicians have an important role-model function to play, one which they should always be aware of even in the heat of political affairs.

Anti-Semitic correspondence

This year, too, Jewish institutions received various hate messages by post and e-mail. Among them were a package containing excrement (as mentioned above), threats, recriminations, insults and woolly-minded texts. In the mailed items, the perpetrators repeatedly confuse Jews with Israelis and are often unaware that Swiss Jews have no influence on Israeli politics.

Anti-Semitism on the internet

In the year 2017, nearly 90 anti-Semitic entries were registered and analysed on the internet. These include both reported incidents and those personally observed on web pages, comment pages in online media or in social media (mainly Facebook). Over a third of registered incidents were hate comments hostile to Jews in the *Comment Function of German-speaking Online Media*, which were published unhindered despite certain filter systems. All other incidents were registered in *social media (mainly Facebook)*.

Anti-Semitic harassment on the internet is often influenced by political events at home and abroad, especially by events connected with the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. This was the explanation behind the sharp increase in anti-Semitic incidents in 2014 in particular. In the reporting year, the debate about a possible ban on the import of kosher meat and US President Trump's decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem acted as triggers for anti-Semitic hate comments.

Notes on perpetrator profiles

Although in the past, extreme right-wing internet users in particular refrained from revealing their names in their posts, an increasing number of aggressive posts in 2017 targeting Jewish men and women included the writers' real names, which indicates that the perpetrators increasingly regard their hate messages as socially acceptable.

As well as that, it is striking that on the Facebook social network a large number of perpetrators were aged between 15 and 30. Particularly where hate talk refers to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, the registered profiles of writers show that an above-average number of users have a Muslim background. Also this group increasingly does not trouble to hide their profiles, which is why it was also possible to observe this trend in these cases.

Current dangers and protection for the Jewish community

As the current status report of the federal news service and the report on the federation's measures against anti-Semitism in Switzerland abundantly and unmistakably demonstrate, racism and anti-Semitism continue to present a serious problem in Switzerland. The menacing situation facing Jews in Switzerland remains acute. For the first time, protection of the Jewish community is being seen as 'a matter of national significance'.

The report goes on to say, "As well as other groups, Jewish and Israeli people and institutions in Switzerland are also among targets especially exposed to jihadi terrorism. NDB, the federation's news service, assesses the threats to Jewish institutions and communities in Switzerland as ongoing. It assumes that as a consequence of attacks in Europe on such targets the risk of so-called 'copycat' acts temporarily increases in Switzerland as well. Because of the global political situation, the jihadi threat will continue into the future."

Summary

In 2017, the number of recorded anti-Semitic incidents, compared with the previous year, also grew in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Again and again, there are threats and physical acts and correspondence motivated by anti-Semitism. The internet especially is increasingly being misused for hate messages. Inhibitions are slowly disappearing and more and more agitators are acting openly and under their real names. On the internet, in social media such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter or in blogs and the comment columns of online newspapers, racism and anti-Semitism find an open platform.

→ [*For more on the subject of racism and anti-Semitism on the internet, read our conversation with the rapper Knackeboul.*](#)