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THE NEW ANTISEMITISM

by

EDGAR GIOVANNI SOTO

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors Undergraduate Thesis program in Judaic Studies  
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## ABSTRACT

Following the Second World War, antisemitism appeared to be on a decline. Presently, however, there is an uptick in antisemitic hate crimes, worldwide. Modern-day Islamic antisemitism in particular is in large part recycled European Christian antisemitism adapted for Islamic audiences and intensified by the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict. This iteration of anti-Jewish bigotry is not the same as the “old,” but neither is it different. As will be explained, antisemitism has, throughout history, amounted to an anomaly in Islamic culture and in what may be called “normative” Islam. Indeed, Muslims and Jews lived together amicably for centuries. In fact, within dar-al-Islam, Jews were afforded greater opportunities for social advancement and participation in their host societies than Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews in Christendom. However, after the creation of the modern state of Israel in 1948, distinctly European antisemitic tropes have surfaced in the Islamic world. These have clearly been imported from old Europe (including the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, *Mein Kampf*, and the virulent antisemitism of organizations such as Islamic Jihad). Disturbingly, these same tropes are making their way back into Europe via the growing Muslim minorities in various countries. While this “new antisemitism” of the twenty-first century is neither the same nor different from the old, neither is it unresolvable. The answer, I will assert, is to address historical Christian antisemitism and impress upon Muslims that antisemitism is contrary to Islamic teachings. The 2020 signing of the Abraham Accords by Israel and a number of Arab states, as well as Israel’s peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt, show that antisemitism can be remedied and that Judeo-Islamic relations can be mended. The Jewish experience in Azerbaijan (a majority-Muslim state) and Singapore (where Jews constitute a tiny minority) further demonstrate that Jews and Muslims can indeed live peaceably together and even cooperate.

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## INTRODUCTION

### *The Jews of Christendom*

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum calls antisemitism “the longest hatred.”<sup>1</sup> Whether it is white supremacists chanting “Jews will not replace us” in Charlottesville, Virginia or the waving of Hamas banners by far-leftists in Berlin, we can see that world Jewry is getting squeezed in the vice of antisemitism. An especially destructive form of this hatred which does not fit neatly within left-wing or right-wing ideology manifests itself in predominantly-Muslim countries. This iteration of antisemitism is simultaneously similar and different from past iterations in nominally-Christian European countries.

It must be stressed that Jews endured much persecution and hardship in the kingdoms that comprised Christendom. This mistreatment went on for centuries and manifested itself in numerous ways. Within Christendom, antisemitism was initially religious in origin. During the first millennium of the Christian era, European Christian leaders promulgated the idea that the Jews were responsible for Christ’s death. As Europe Christianized, Jews became the only visible religious minority.

During the Middle Ages, Europeans identified themselves according to faith rather than ethnicity and this would marginalize the Jews of Europe even further. The Jews’ refusal to accept Christ as the Messiah was viewed by Christians as arrogance on the part of the Jews. The “blood libel” myth, which alleged that Jews used the blood of Christian children for religious rituals, had gained traction during the Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Antisemitism in History: From the Early Church to 1400,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed October 24, 2023, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/antisemitism-in-history-from-the-early-church-to-1400>.

<sup>2</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Antisemitism in History: From the Early Church to 1400.”

Renowned German theologian Martin Luther penned an antisemitic treatise entitled “On the Jews and Their Lies” in 1543. In this treatise, Luther writes “Moreover, they are nothing but thieves and robbers who daily eat no morsel and wear no thread of clothing which they have not stolen and pilfered from us by means of their accursed usury. Thus, they live from day to day, together with wife and child, by theft and robbery, as arch thieves and robbers, in the most impenitent security.”<sup>3</sup>

In Europe during the early modern era, Jews took on managerial and commercial roles that the ruling classes could not fill on their own. The Catholic and Orthodox Churches had prohibited usury, facilitating the Jews’ occupation of the role of moneylender to their Christian hosts. Most Jews, however, lived in poverty and were even barred from owning land. Social mobility was not an option for Jews unless they converted to Christianity.<sup>4</sup>

It was in the latter half of the 19th century that antisemitism became more racially-based than religiously-based. In 1879, German writer Wilhelm Marr coined the term “antisemite” when he founded the League of Antisemites. The League of Antisemites was the first attempt at forming a political mass movement centered around antisemitism. In his 1879 work, *The Victory of Judaism over Germandom*, Wilhelm Marr wrote “Further, we cannot count on the help of the ‘Christian’ state. The Jews are the ‘best citizens’ of this modern, Christian state, as it is in perfect

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<sup>3</sup> Luther, Martin, Helmut T. Lehmann, and Franklin Sherman. Essay. In *Luther’s Works* 47, 47:268–93. The Christian in Society IV. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971.

<sup>4</sup> “Antisemitism in History: The Early Modern Era, 1300-1800.” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Accessed July 28, 2023. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/antisemitism-in-history-the-early-modern-era-1300-1800?series=30>.

harmony with their interests.”<sup>5</sup> One can observe that this form of antisemitism deviates from the standard religiously-based antisemitism of the past.

### *The Jews of Islam*

Meanwhile, in dar-al-Islam, Jews found themselves in better living conditions and maintained a higher degree of economic and social participation. Jews in Muslim kingdoms were still relegated to a permanent underclass, though this was true of all non-Muslim minorities in dar-al-Islam. From the 7th century Muslim conquests onward, most Mizrahi Jews lived under the crescent. Jews living in Muslim realms were more accepting of outside influences and cultural differences. The opposite was true of Ashkenazim living under the cross.<sup>6</sup>

The watershed event which transformed Judeo-Islamic relations into the adversarial relationship we see today was the birth of the state of Israel in 1948. Muslim-majority Arab countries were pitted against the world’s sole Jewish state. Not long after the events of the Holocaust in Europe, the horrific antisemitic bigotry of the Nazis and their accomplices resurfaced in Muslim-dominated countries.

In November 2020, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah mentioned notorious Holocaust denier Roger Garaudy in a speech and went on to deny the Holocaust.<sup>7</sup> In December 2011, Bayan Nuwayhed al-Hout, a Palestinian-Lebanese historian, made references to the *Protocols of the*

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<sup>5</sup> Mendes-Flohr, Paul R., Jehuda Reinharz, and Wilhelm Marr. “The Victory of Judaism over Germandom.” Essay. In *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 3rd ed., 306. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Zion Zohar et al, “Chapter 1: A Global Perspective on Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry,” essay, in *Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Seth J. Frantzman, “French Cartoon Row: Islamic Leaders Push Holocaust Denial in Response,” JPost.com, November 1, 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/french-cartoon-row-islamic-leaders-push-holocaust-denial-in-response-647649>.

*Elders of Zion* in an article for a Lebanese daily. The *Protocols* was a document which had originated from tsarist Russia, detailing an alleged plan for Jewish world domination. In the article, al-Hout writes, “However, those who judge the *Protocols* by their general spirit and essence will find that they are an exact reproduction of statements and writings by Zionist leaders past and present, and of the principles of the Zionist movement.”<sup>8</sup>

Examples of Muslims quoting European antisemitic literature like the *Protocols* and the works of European Holocaust deniers are legion. What is even more disturbing is that anti-Jewish propaganda from Europe, which is now packaged for the Islamic consumer, is reappearing on the continent via the increased number of Muslim migrants. The enmity between Jews and Muslims in the Middle East today is being reproduced in the streets of Europe.

According to a November 21st, 2023 article in the *Jerusalem Post*, an Arabic translation of *Mein Kampf* was spotted at a library in Malmö, Sweden. Quite tellingly, the article states: “Malmö has witnessed a disturbing surge in antisemitism in recent years, largely attributed to the influence of immigrants, particularly from Muslim-majority countries. Sweden ranks third in Europe for antisemitic incidents, following Germany and Austria.”<sup>9</sup> In an instance of dark irony, Germany and Austria are witnessing the same antisemitism that they had both promulgated and then labored intensely to do away with.

It must be stressed to Muslim communities all around the world, and in the Arab world in particular, that Muslims can live amicably with Jews. For instance, Jews and Muslims in Singapore (where both groups are a minority) enjoy cordial relations. In majority-Muslim

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<sup>8</sup> “Palestinian-Lebanese Historian: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion Are an Exact Reflection of Judaism and the Zionist Idea,” MEMRI, January 12, 2012, <https://www.memri.org/reports/palestinian-lebanese-historian-protocols-elders-zion-are-exact-reflection-judaism-and>.

<sup>9</sup> Zvika Klein, “Malmo Sweden Sees Antisemitism in Schools, Nazi Books in Arabic at Public Library,” The Jerusalem Post | JPost.com, November 21, 2023, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-774386>.

Azerbaijan, the local Jewish diaspora has existed for centuries under a tolerant Shia majority. The 2020 Abraham Accords, which saw several Arab states normalize relations with Israel, is one result of a trend toward peace between Jews and predominantly-Muslim Arabs.

Israel's normalization of relations with the United Arab Emirates as part of the Abraham Accords has resulted in a top-down mending of Judeo-Islamic relations in the UAE. Put simply, the governments of the UAE and Israel have established diplomatic ties and bilateral trade has ballooned; increased economic and political cooperation have elicited domestic changes, especially in the area of Emiratis' relationship with antisemitism. A notable instance of these changes in action was the construction in 2020 of a metal menorah in front of the Burj Khalifa for the entirety of Hanukkah.<sup>10</sup> Even in the face of the current Israel-Hamas war, the UAE has remained steadfast in maintaining ties with Israel. The Emirati trade minister went as far as stating in October 2023, "The United Arab Emirates does not mix trade with politics."<sup>11</sup>

Even more importantly, Israel and Saudi Arabia have made inroads toward normalization. The possibility of an Israel-Saudi Arabia normalization agreement, while impeded by the October 7th attacks and subsequent Israeli response, remains alive. If the world's only Jewish state and the birthplace of Islam can come together for the cause of peace, then this can certainly be done on a smaller scale between Muslim and Jewish minority groups.

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<sup>10</sup> Idan Zonshine, "Burj Khalifa Lights up for Historic Dubai Hanukkah Celebrations," JPost.com, December 11, 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/burj-khalifa-lights-up-for-historic-dubai-hanukkah-celebrations-651785>.

<sup>11</sup> Rachna Uppal, "UAE, after Israel-Gaza Conflict, Says It Does Not Mix Trade with Politics," Reuters, October 10, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/uae-after-israel-gaza-conflict-says-it-does-not-mix-trade-with-politics-2023-10-10/>.

## CHAPTER 1: NOT THE SAME

### *Jews vs. Muslims*

How prevalent is antisemitism in Europe and the Middle East? Currently, antisemitic violence is surging around the world. Antisemitism in majority-Muslim countries today is not different from that of Christian Europe in past centuries, but also not the same since Christian antisemitism possesses racial and ethnic elements that are alien to Islam. In 2015, the Anti-Defamation League released a survey of antisemitism in over 100 countries. In Iran, a geopolitical enemy of Israel, approximately 60% of adults harbored antisemitic views. These antisemitic views include: the belief that Jews are more loyal to Israel than the countries they live in, a view shared by 66% of Iranians; the belief that Jews exercise too much control over the United States government, a view held by 70% of Iranians; and the belief that people hate Jews because of their behavior, a view held by 68% of Iranians.<sup>12</sup>

When examining other countries of the Middle East, the results become more shocking. In Bahrain, a country which agreed to normalize relations with Israel in 2020, there is a similar picture. 75% of Bahrainis believed that Jews don't care about anyone except their own kind. 76% believed that Jews possess too much influence in international finance. 77% of Bahrainis believed that people hate Jews because of how Jews behave.<sup>13</sup>

The rhetoric of today's Muslim antisemites is not unlike that of antisemites in Europe and the United States, comprising far-right elements and extreme left-wing voices. One other element

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<sup>12</sup> "ADL Global 100: Middle East and North Africa." Anti-Defamation League, 2015. <https://global100.adl.org/country/iran/2015>.

<sup>13</sup> "ADL Global 100: Middle East and North Africa." Anti-Defamation League, 2015. <https://global100.adl.org/country/bahrain/2014>.

that distinguishes the former from the latter is the inclusion of anti-colonialist talking points vis-a-vis Israel and Palestine. That being said, my aim is not to disparage Muslims or Islam as a whole, quite the contrary. It must be strongly emphasized that Jews living in the Islamic world enjoyed more social mobility and acceptance as peers. Conflict between Jews and Muslims has only become such a serious problem within the last century, increasing in intensity after the birth of the state of Israel.

Mark R. Cohen, an American scholar of Jewish history at Princeton, wrote in 2005: “Despite several serious instances of persecution, the Jews of Arab lands enjoyed much greater security than Jews living under the cross. In this comfortable atmosphere, they openly adopted Arab culture.”<sup>14</sup> Make no mistake, Jews were still second-class citizens in the Islamic world, however. In dar-al-Islam, Jews, like Christians, were regarded as People of the Book. In other words, Jews were afforded certain protections and privileges in exchange for a politically-subordinate status within society.

In 1856, Ottoman Sultan Abdulmecid I outlined the rights and privileges of non-Muslim communities in his domain. The sultan states explicitly: “Every distinction or designation pending to make any class whatever of the subjects of my empire inferior to another class, on account of their religion, language, or race, shall be forever effaced from administrative protocol.”<sup>15</sup> Abdulmecid I was known for his drive to modernize the Ottoman Empire. It should be mentioned that Abdulmecid I’s reforms came at a time when other powers, such as Russia and Imperial Germany, were subjecting their Jewish populations to persecution.

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<sup>14</sup> Zohar et al, *Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry*, ch. 2, Kindle edition.

<sup>15</sup> Mendes-Flohr, Paul R., Jehuda Reinharz, and Abdulmecid I. “The Privileges and Immunities of the Non-Muslim Communities,” Essay. In *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 3rd ed., 450. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

### *Early Judeo-Islamic Relations*

Current sentiments notwithstanding, antisemitism is a relatively recent development in Muslim-majority countries. This form of antisemitism represents a deviation from the norm in terms of historical Judeo-Islamic relations. In fact, Jews in Muslim-controlled lands were afforded greater opportunities for social mobility and enjoyed a higher living standard than Jews in Christian lands.<sup>16</sup> In al-Andalus, Jewish culture and intellectual life was lively and full of virility. Names such as Moses ben Maimon (or Maimonides) and theologian Abraham ibn Ezra hailed from Muslim-controlled Spain. However, Jews and Christians were still relegated to a subordinate status in al-Andalus. The Islamic kingdoms which hosted Jews were far from monolithic, though.

In his 1984 book *The Jews of Islam*, Bernard Lewis writes this about Muslim antisemitism: “For Muslims, it is not part of the birth pangs of their religion, as it is for Christians. It is rather the usual attitude of the dominant to the subordinate, of the majority to the minority, without that additional theological and therefore psychological dimension that gives Christian anti-Semitism its unique and special character.”<sup>17</sup> Lewis also asserts that Jews living in Muslim-dominated domains lived alongside many other minorities in more pluralistic environments, therefore making them more inconspicuous. He writes that this less noticeable presence served as an advantage for the Jews.<sup>18</sup>

Jews impacted the cultural and religious life of their Muslim host societies. On religious matters, Jews and Muslims often found common cause with each other. Both Jews and Muslims living in Muslim-controlled societies shared similar views on the monotheistic nature of God.

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<sup>16</sup> Zohar et al, *Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry*, ch. 1, Kindle edition.

<sup>17</sup> Bernard Lewis, “2: The Judeo-Islamic Tradition,” essay, in *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014). Kindle edition.

<sup>18</sup> Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, ch. 2, Kindle edition.

Maimonides himself argued that Jews must endure suffering and death rather than convert to Christianity, but made exceptions for Islam. Jews viewed the profession of Muhammad as God's prophet as more acceptable than professing that Jesus is the son of God.<sup>19</sup>

On a more practical level, Jews and Muslims were alike in many ways. For instance, Judaism and Islam both impose dietary laws on their adherents. Islamic dietary laws are not as strict as in Judaism, though. In both Judaism and Islam, the notion exists of divinely "permitted" and "forbidden" foods. As a matter of fact, Islamic religious authorities often allowed Muslims to eat kosher meat. Although the opposite was not true for Jews, Jews still sympathized with the Muslim attitude toward unclean foods.<sup>20</sup>

What were relations between Jews and the early Muslims like? Jews had been established in the Arabian Peninsula for centuries.<sup>21</sup> Over time, a significant Jewish community had formed in and around Medina. The three most important Jewish tribes in Medina were the Banu Nadir, Banu Qurayza, and Banu Qaynuqa. These tribes allied themselves with and clashed with pagan tribes in Medina in a fight for dominance over the area.<sup>22</sup> Jews in Arabia spoke Arabic just like their pagan neighbors, were organized along tribal and clan lines, and adopted many of the values of "desert society."<sup>23</sup>

The Jewish presence was at one point so significant that the Yemenite kingdom of Himyar adopted Judaism. The kingdom came to an end during the reign of Dhu Nuwas. Dhu Nuwas was killed while trying to fend off a large Ethiopian invasion force. Despite the strong standing of Judaism within Yemen, Jews were a numerically small portion of the total

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<sup>19</sup> Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, ch. 2, Kindle edition.

<sup>20</sup> Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, ch. 2, Kindle edition.

<sup>21</sup> Norman A Stillman, "1: The First Encounter - Muhammad and the Jews," essay, in *The Jews of Arab Lands* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 3.

<sup>22</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 4.

population. Jews became visibly integrated into Arabian society, though they were still viewed as an “other.”<sup>24</sup>

Assuming that the writings of pre-Islamic Arab poets are indeed genuine, there are literary mentions by Arabs of Jewish religious practices and to the Torah among other references to Judaism. The Jews of Arabia had a similar status in their host society as that of Christians.<sup>25</sup> Arabian Christians constituted a distinct religious entity while also maintaining a high degree of assimilation.<sup>26</sup>

As a young man, the Prophet Muhammad likely encountered many Christians and Jews. His hometown of Mecca was situated on the caravan route linking Yemen in the south to Egypt and the Levant to the northwest, and Sassanid Persia to the northeast. The trade route to Syria ran through an area known as the Wadi al-Qura or “Village of Villages” which hosted a large Jewish community. The Jews and Christians Muhammad had the most contact with were merchants residing in Mecca or attending one of the area’s annual fairs.<sup>27</sup>

Muhammad was invited to act as the city of Medina’s chief magistrate and provide some semblance of leadership to the fractured community. In June 622, seventy-five Medinese professed the Islamic faith and pledged their loyalty to the Prophet. These Medinese could more readily accept Islam because of their prior association with Jews.<sup>28</sup> The Jews themselves played no part in inviting the Prophet to Medina, however.<sup>29</sup>

The Jews of Medina did not welcome the Prophet Muhammad with open arms. Western scholars such as W. Montgomery Watt argues, “...had the Jews come to terms with Muhammad

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<sup>24</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 10.

instead of opposing him...they might have become partners in the Arab empire and Islam a sect of Jewry.”<sup>30</sup> Norman A. Stillman responds to this with the argument that the Prophet would have been naive to think that Medina’s Jews would readily accept him. However, this was not unique to Jews.<sup>31</sup>

Christians did not recognize their Jewish counterparts and even sects within Christianity did not recognize each other. In this regard, the Jewish mentality was no more intolerant than the mentalities of other faiths in the region.<sup>32</sup> It is important to mention that tribal feuding was the norm in 7th century Arabia, even among the Jews. The chieftain of the Banu Nadir was assassinated for insulting Islam, perfectly in line with Arab social norms of the time.<sup>33</sup>

Medina’s Jewish intellectuals had flown in the face of the Prophet. Not only did they reject his prophethood, these intellectuals openly contradicted and ridiculed the Prophet too.<sup>34</sup> Muhammad would become convinced that the Jews rejected his message because of their pride.<sup>35</sup> Shortly after the Muslims’ first major victory over the forces of Mecca at Badr in 624, the Prophet did battle with the weakest of Arabia’s three Jewish tribes, the Banu Qaynuqa. The other two Jewish tribes did not come to the Qaynuqa’s aid.<sup>36</sup>

Eventually, the Banu Nadir fell victim to Muhammad’s forces. During the disastrous Battle of Uhud in March 625, the Jewish tribes did not assist the Muslims since the engagement had taken place on the Sabbath. The fact that the Banu Nadir were rich and controlled some of Medina’s best land made them a more attractive target. Claiming to have received a divine

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<sup>30</sup> William Montgomery Watt, essay, in *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1956), 219.

<sup>31</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 10.

<sup>32</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 10.

<sup>33</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 13.

<sup>34</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 11.

<sup>35</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 12.

<sup>36</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 13.

revelation, the Prophet Muhammad accused the Nadir of plotting to assassinate him and expelled them from Medina. Two years later, the men of the Banu Nadir would perish at the hands of the Muslims in the Battle of Khaybar.<sup>37</sup>

The sole remaining important Medinese Jewish tribe, the Banu Qurayza, were attacked by the Muslims also. In 627, the Meccans and their Bedouin confederates attacked Medina. The Qurayza had contributed supplies to the city's defense, but remained in their forts during the siege. The attackers sent an envoy to the Qurayza who had successfully won them over. Despite this, the Jews still did not trust the Meccan besiegers and stayed in their forts. When the Meccans and their allies withdrew, the Prophet directed his attention toward the Banu Qurayza. The Jews were overrun after 25 days of fighting. As a punishment, the Prophet Muhammad sentenced the adult males to death and the women and children of the tribe to slavery. Around 600-900 men were beheaded.<sup>38</sup>

It must be reiterated that actions such as this beheading were within the norms of local cultural practice at the time.<sup>39</sup> The previously mentioned Yemenite Jewish king, Dhu Nuwas, massacred thousands of Christians (including women and children) by burning. Others were decapitated.<sup>40</sup> It should be stated that the Prophet afforded legal protection to the Jewish Banu Awf tribe in Medina's constitution. He even allows other Jewish tribes the same rights.<sup>41</sup>

From 900-1200, medieval Islamic civilization enjoyed something of a renaissance. Both Muslims and non-Muslims benefited from the status quo. Religious policy during this period was generally tolerant. During this time, there was more intra-religious conflict than interfaith

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<sup>37</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 14.

<sup>38</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 14-16.

<sup>39</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 16.

<sup>40</sup> "Thousands of Yemen's Christians Burned for Their Faith: It Happened Today," Christian History Institute, accessed January 6, 2024, <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/it-happened-today/11/25>.

<sup>41</sup> Abduljalil Sajid, "Scholars Smash Hizb Argument Against British Politics," MPACUK, December 22, 2004, <https://web.archive.org/web/20050207221944/http://www.mpacuk.org/content/view/211/>.

hostility. Norman A. Stillman remarked, “Probably at no other time in the thirteen hundred years of Jewish history under Islam were the Jews as thoroughly assimilated into the general cultural milieu of the Arabic-speaking world.”<sup>42</sup> Jews in Muslim lands in the Middle Ages were afforded the same treatment as any other religious minority.

### *Judeo-Islamic Relations in the 20th Century*

In the 20th century and especially after Israel’s inception in 1948, Jews residing in majority-Muslim Arab countries felt increasingly insecure. The early 20th century marked a turning point in the relationship between Jews and Muslims. Zionist migration to Palestine generated tensions between both groups. An instance of Muslim antisemitic violence reminiscent of that experienced by Jews in Europe was the Farhud in Iraq in 1941. “Farhud” is an Arabic word best translated as “pogrom.” According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Farhud “was a turning point in the history of the Jews in Iraq.”<sup>43</sup>

In the 1940s, more than 130,000 Jews lived in Iraq. Most Jews resided in Baghdad, though they also comprised a sizable minority in Basra.<sup>44</sup> The Jewish diaspora in Iraq was one of the oldest Jewish diaspora groups in the world, dating back to antiquity.<sup>45</sup> In April 1941, Rashid Ali al-Kailani carried out a coup against Iraq’s pro-British government. Once in power, he formed a pro-Axis government. Predictably, Iraq’s Jews were threatened by this new regime, which was influenced by Nazi propoganda. Indeed, this propoganda was available in written form through Arabic translations of *Mein Kampf* and Arabic-language broadcasts from Berlin.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, 40-41.

<sup>43</sup> Esther Meir-Glitzstein, “The Farhud | Holocaust Encyclopedia,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed January 6, 2024, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-farhud>.

<sup>44</sup> Meir-Glitzstein, “The Farhud,” 2024.

<sup>45</sup> Zohar et al, *Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry*, ch. 2, Kindle edition.

<sup>46</sup> Meir-Glitzstein, “The Farhud,” 2024.

Fearing that Iraq would become an Axis base in the Middle East, Britain intervened militarily. By the end of May 1941, the new government was toppled and its leaders had fled the country. On June 1st, 1941, Regent Abd al-Ilah returned to Baghdad and British forces surrounded the city. The Jews in Baghdad, believing the city to be safe once again, began celebrating the holiday of Shavuot. Riots, led and incited by soldiers and police sympathetic to al-Kailani, had broken out in Baghdad. These riots would last until June 2nd and claim the lives of 150-180 Jews. Hundreds more were injured and an unknown number of Jewish women had been raped.<sup>47</sup>

It is estimated that around 15% of Baghdad's Jews were directly affected by the Farhud. More than 1,500 businesses and homes were damaged in this disorder. There were multiple motives behind the riots, including perceived Jewish collaboration with British colonial authorities and the alleged Zionist sympathies of the Baghdadi Jews. The Farhud was an unprecedented conflagration in antisemitic violence in the region. Despite this, however, most Jews who fled Iraq during the unrest had returned once the country was stabilized.<sup>48</sup>

The plight of Iraq's Jews would not end there. In 1947, the Iraqi government banned migration to Israel. Zionism was soon made a capital offense after Israel's inception. Hundreds of Iraqi Jews were imprisoned for attempting to leave. Israel's much-talked about Law of Return, which was passed in 1950, along with a Knesset decision to help negotiate on Iraqi Jews' behalf, were pull factors. The Iraqi government permitted Jewish emigration to Israel in 1951. However, Jewish emigres were forced to sell their properties and liquidate their business assets.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Meir-Glitzstein, "The Farhud," 2024.

<sup>48</sup> Meir-Glitzstein, "The Farhud," 2024.

<sup>49</sup> "Operation Ezra and Nehemiah," Jewish Virtual Library, accessed January 6, 2024, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/operation-ezra-and-nehemia-the-airlift-of-iraqi-jews>.

To make life even harder for these Jews, they could not bring more than \$140. Jews were not allowed to take more than 66 pounds of luggage with them and were not permitted to carry jewelry out of the country. Within a month, 50,000 Iraqi Jews had signed up to migrate to Israel. Within three months, 90,000 had signed up. Beginning on May 18th, 1951, the IDF airlifted the 2,500 year-old Iraqi Jewish community to Israel. Operation Ezra and Nehemiah, as this airlift was known, lasted until 1952 and carried 130,000 Jews out of the country.<sup>50</sup>

The Jews of Yemen have a similar and contemporaneous story. In December 1947, an antisemitic riot broke out in the southern Arabian port city of Aden (now in Yemen). The disorder was caused by the passing of UN Resolution 181 days earlier, which had partitioned Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. The disturbances began on December 2nd and the ragtag band of Jewish defenders in the area managed to successfully defend themselves. As the riots entered their second day, the Aden Protectorate Levies (a local security force trained by the British authorities) were sent in.<sup>51</sup>

Ostensibly, they were dispatched to protect Aden's Jewish minority. However, they gunned down many of the local Jews. Angry mobs burned synagogues as well as Jewish homes and businesses. Yemenite Jews waiting for permission to move to Israel were also targeted by the mobs. On the third day, British troops finally quelled the riots. 87 Jews died in the unrest and nearly every Jewish shop was looted.<sup>52</sup> In May 1949, the imam of Yemen allowed 45,000 of the country's 46,000 Jews to emigrate. The Yemenite Jews were flown to Israel on 380 flights. British and American planes secretly flew these Jews from Aden to Israel. Today, no Jews

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<sup>50</sup> "Operation Ezra and Nehemiah," Jewish Virtual Library, 2024.

<sup>51</sup> Dani Goldsmith and Sarah Ansbacher, "Murder, Looting, Burning: Remembering the Aden Riots of 1947," Times of Israel, December 6, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/murder-looting-burning-remembering-the-aden-riots-of-1947/>.

<sup>52</sup> Goldsmith and Ansbacher, "Murder, Looting, Burning..." 2017.

remain in Aden and the Jewish diaspora in Yemen is effectively non-existent. The 1940s for Mizrahi Jews in the Middle East is comparable to the 1880s for Ashkenazi Jews in Europe.<sup>53</sup>

The birth of the state of Israel sparked an exodus of Jews from the Arab world. Egypt was home to 75,000 Jews in 1948. As of 2018, 100 Jews resided in Egypt. In 1948, 38,000 Jews lived in Libya. In 2018, there were no Jews remaining. Tunisia hosted 105,000 Jews in 1948. By 2018, this number was down to roughly 1,000. Morocco hosted a Jewish minority numbering 265,000 in 1948. This number dwindled to slightly over 2,000 Jews by 2018.<sup>54</sup> The Israeli-Palestinian conflict had given new life to antisemitism following the events of the Holocaust in Europe.

Just like their Ashkenazi and Sephardic brethren in Europe, Mizrahi Jews were targets of violence on the part of their host populations and subjected to expulsions or fled for their safety. The flight of Jews from the Arab world was simply a local manifestation of what had been taking place for centuries under Christian-dominated domains in Europe. By virtue of geography, Muslim antisemitism is distinct from centuries-old antisemitism originating from Christian-controlled lands. This violence was different since Jews in predominantly-Muslim Arab countries faced increased danger while Nazism and other right-wing antisemitic ideologies had been crushed in Europe, which had a longer and more pronounced history of antisemitism than the Arab world.

### *Early Judeo-Christian Relations*

Early Christendom was intolerant of its religious minorities. Antisemitism as we know it today was born out of Christendom. Christianity cannot be separated from the blossoming of

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<sup>53</sup> "Operation Magic Carpet," Jewish Virtual Library, accessed January 6, 2024, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/operation-magic-carpet-airlift-of-yemenite-jews>.

<sup>54</sup> "Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries," Jewish Virtual Library, accessed January 7, 2024, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-refugees-from-arab-countries>.

antisemitism. All throughout Christendom, Jews were relegated to a subservient status and constantly exposed to physical danger and hardship. In his 2023 book *Jewish Muslims*, David M. Freidenreich makes the assertion that Christianity became more anti-Jewish as more Gentiles adopted Christianity. He points to a passage in the book of Galatians interpreted to separate Christians (the sons of Sarah) with the Jews (the sons of Hagar). Freidenreich says, “It is only with the rise of Islam, however, that Christians seize this potential to portray Muslim Arabs (and Muslims more broadly) as Jewish.”<sup>55</sup> The label “Jewish” was used by Christian polemicists as an insult.

The antisemitic interpretation of the aforementioned passage in Galatians is a conclusion arrived at by many early Christian figures. Writing in the 2nd century, Christian theologian Tertullian said that the book of Galatians is the apostle Paul’s “primary letter against Judaism.”<sup>56</sup> Tertullian would also write, “the noble dignity of Christianity has its allegorical type and figure in the son of Abraham born of the free woman, while the legal bondage of Judaism has its allegorical type in the son of the slave woman.”<sup>57</sup>

Another theologian, Jerome, writing in the 4th century, remarked that “nearly all the commentators on this passage interpret it to mean that the slave woman Hagar represents the Law and the Jewish people, but that the free woman Sarah symbolizes the Church.”<sup>58</sup> John Chrysostom, another major Christian figure who lived in the 4th century, declared, “I shall choose to risk my life rather than let [a fellow Christian] enter the doors of the synagogue.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>David M. Freidenreich, “Chapter 1: Paul’s Rivals and the Early Christian Discourse of Anti-Judaism,” essay, in *Jewish Muslims: How Christians Imagined Islam as the Enemy* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2023), 32.

<sup>56</sup> Freidenreich, *Jewish Muslims*, 30.

<sup>57</sup> Freidenreich, *Jewish Muslims*, 30.

<sup>58</sup> Freidenreich, *Jewish Muslims*, 30.

<sup>59</sup> Freidenreich, *Jewish Muslims*, 30.

David Freidenreich wrote that there is no mention of Ishmael or his descendants. The name “Ishmael” is not even mentioned once throughout Paul’s epistle to the Galatians. Jews in Paul’s era commonly identified nomadic Arabs as Ishmael’s descendants. Freidenreich asserts that Paul was not interested in engaging the Arabs and focused on condemning his fellow Christians. According to Freidenreich, Jews occupied an important place within early interpretations of Paul’s letter to the Galatians because Christians viewed Paul’s writing through an anti-Jewish lens. Anti-Jewish hermeneutics notwithstanding, these Christians (oddly enough) devote no attention to Ishmael and his offspring.<sup>60</sup>

Another antisemitic element of Christian polemics in the Middle Ages was the alleged Jewish lineage of Muhammad. Muslim sources state that the Prophet belonged to the Quraysh tribe. In Arabia during the life of Muhammad, there were Jewish tribes (such as the ones mentioned previously) and mixed Arab-Jewish tribes. The Quraysh tribe was made up solely of Gentiles, however. There are European Christian historians who claim (on the basis of questionable evidence) that the Prophet was raised as a Jew.<sup>61</sup>

David Freidenreich writes in *Jewish Muslims*, “This claim has no factual basis, but European Christians regarded it as plausible nonetheless because it enables them to explain key differences they perceive between Christianity and Islam by means of anti-Jewish frames of reference.”<sup>62</sup> Islam and the practice thereof was even less well-understood by European Christians. Although European Christians did not understand much about Judaism either, they had more contact with Jews than with Muslims.

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<sup>60</sup> Freidenreich, *Jewish Muslims*, 31-33.

<sup>61</sup> Freidenreich, *Jewish Muslims*, 123.

<sup>62</sup> Freidenreich, *Jewish Muslims*, 123.

In the 1970s, scholars Patricia Crone and Michael Cook made the claim that Islam came into being as a messianic belief system for Arabs who accepted the Torah's authority. They reasoned that Christian sources from the 7th century provided more reliable information on the beliefs of Arabs during that period than Islamic sources authored years later. The issue with their hypothesis is that Christian sources often include inaccurate depictions of Muslims.<sup>63</sup>

The earliest work to define Muslims via antisemitism was the *History of Sebeos*, completed somewhere around 655. In this work, an unnamed Armenian author uses the passage in Paul's letter to the Galatians to distinguish Muslims from Christians. Like the Jews, Muslims were the heirs of the slave woman Hagar. The author of *Sebeos* argues that Jews and Muslims make illegitimate claims to Abraham's covenant and misinterpret Scripture.<sup>64</sup>

Allegations of Jewish hostility toward Christians are also made in the *History of Sebeos*. The author even alleges that the Muslim prince who ruled Jerusalem following the Muslim conquest was a Jew. They go on to accuse Jews of defiling the Muslim house of worship with pig blood and falsely accusing local Christians. According to this work, it was only through the testimony of a Muslim witness that the prince did not act to eliminate the Christians in the area.<sup>65</sup>

The author of the *History of Sebeos* goes to great lengths to associate the Muslim conquerors with Jews. In fact, the lines between Jews and Muslims become blurred in the author's writing since they are so closely associated with each other.<sup>66</sup> The author claims that the Ishmaelites divided themselves into twelve tribes, retraced the route the Israelites had taken to

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<sup>63</sup> Freidenreich, *Jewish Muslims*, 88-89.

<sup>64</sup> Freidenreich, *Jewish Muslims*, 40-43.

<sup>65</sup> Freidenreich, *Jewish Muslims*, 43.

<sup>66</sup> Freidenreich, *Jewish Muslims*, 44.

the Promised Land, and conquered Palestine alongside the Jews (who had raised their own army).<sup>67</sup>

Sophronius, the patriarch of Jerusalem who surrendered to the Muslim conquerors of that city in 638, said in his Christmas Sermon of 634 that the “Jewish” sins of those under him had brought on the Muslim invasion. He goes on to denounce faithlessness as Jewishness. In reference to the Jews, Sophronius said, “we have accepted the savior Christ and shine with faith in him—indeed, we hate and trample upon the faithlessness of the Jews as something loathsome and, in their total madness, utterly profane.”<sup>68</sup> Given that Jews had been banished from Jerusalem for some time, this is an interesting parallel that the patriarch uses. The Arab conquests in the Middle Ages brought more Jews under Islamic control. In Europe from the Middle Ages onward, Christian antisemitism was especially vicious since Jews were a more noticeable minority.

### *The Jews of Christian Europe*

Today, Jews in Europe (for the most part) live in tolerant societies free from legal persecution. The characterization of today’s Europe as a safer place (relatively speaking) for Jews to exist openly, in stark contrast to today’s Middle East, shows that popular views toward Jews are not static or impervious to outside factors. Be that as it may, Christian Europeans have much to answer for; they provided an intellectual basis for today’s Muslim antisemites.

During medieval times, Jews in Christendom lived a precarious existence. Thousands of Jews perished during the Crusades. Both European and Middle Eastern Jews were targeted. It was in medieval Christendom that the “blood libel” came into existence. In 1144, the Jews of Norwich, England were accused of killing a Christian boy and using the boy’s blood to bake

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<sup>67</sup> Freidenreich, *Jewish Muslims*, 42.

<sup>68</sup> Freidenreich, *Jewish Muslims*, 37-38.

matzah. This rumor found an audience among medieval European Christians and was repeated countless times through the centuries. During the Synod of Oxford in 1222, several antisemitic policies in England were enacted, including tithes targeted toward Jews (no doubt with Jewish moneylenders in mind).<sup>69</sup> As a matter of fact, Jews would be expelled from England in 1290.<sup>70</sup>

As the Black Death wrought havoc and widespread death in Europe in the 14th century, Jews were scapegoated for the misery of their Gentile counterparts. Antisemitic massacres were carried out in numerous European cities such as Zürich, Basel, Erfurt, and Strasbourg. The massacre at Strasbourg in 1349 was especially bloody; thousands of Jews were burned to death.<sup>71</sup> What should be noted about these massacres is that these acts were localized affairs that resulted from slander and libel about the local Jewish communities. European Jews were accused of poisoning water sources and spreading the plague.

Jews on the Iberian peninsula were also subjected to harsh treatment by the rulers they lived under. In the 15th century, Spanish Jews were coerced into converting to Catholicism. Despite this, converted Jews (or Conversos) were attacked in riots throughout the 1440s. Decades later in the 1480s, Jews accused of converting insincerely were killed at the behest of the Spanish government. In 1492, the remaining Jews in Spain were ejected. The number of Jews killed during the Spanish Inquisition is unknown.<sup>72</sup>

As is commonly known, life for Jews in Germany was unsafe. This was true even before the rise of the Nazi regime. During the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther had Jews expelled

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<sup>69</sup> TOI Staff, "After 800 Years, Church of England Apologizes to Jews for Laws That Led to Expulsion," *The Times of Israel*, May 8, 2022, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/church-of-england-apologizes-to-jews-800-years-after-laws-that-led-to-expulsion/>.

<sup>70</sup> Emmanuel Navon, "Between Powerlessness and Empowerment," essay, in *The Star and the Scepter: A Diplomatic History of Israel* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2020).

<sup>71</sup> Aish.com, "The Strasbourg Massacre," May 2, 2023, <https://aish.com/the-strasbourg-massacre/#>.

<sup>72</sup> Navon, *The Star and the Scepter*, ch. 5, Kindle edition.

from Saxony in 1537. The Germany of Theodor Herzl's time was consumed by völkisch nationalism. In Germany, Jews did not enjoy as much freedom as their counterparts in the United States or in the United Kingdom. Jews in 19th-century Germany faced virulent antisemitism even after conversion. After the 1871 unification of Germany, Jews were given civic equality in the new German Empire. While Jews had integrated into German society by the early 20th century, they hardly rose to the top levels of the government or the military.<sup>73</sup>

Russia has a dark history of antisemitism. Under the tsars and under the Soviet regime, Russia has targeted Jews living in its midst since absorbing large numbers of them during the 18th century partitions of Poland.<sup>74</sup> This dark history was popularized by the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, released in 1964. Following the assassination of Russian tsar Alexander II in 1881, Jews in the Russian Empire were subjected to beatings, killings, and destruction of their homes and businesses.

These acts of violence, called “pogroms,” were the result of rumors spread about the assassins’ supposed Jewish heritage, even though only one of the assassins had Jewish heritage.<sup>75</sup> Jews were victimized in pogroms not only in the 1880s, but also in 1905 and during the Russian Civil War of 1917-1922.<sup>76</sup> During the Odessa pogrom of 1905, over 300 Jews were killed by angry mobs and more were injured. The pogrom took place after Tsar Nicholas II issued the October Manifesto, a precursor to what would be tsarist Russia’s first constitution.<sup>77</sup> Just as the pogroms of the early 1880s had done, the Odessa pogrom of 1905 served as a catalyst for another

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<sup>73</sup> Navon, *The Star and the Scepter*, ch. 5, Kindle edition.

<sup>74</sup> Zvi Y. Gitelman, “1: Creativity versus Repression: The Jews in Russia 1881-1917,” essay, in *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001). Kindle edition.

<sup>75</sup> Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, ch. 1, Kindle edition.

<sup>76</sup> Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, ch. 9, Kindle edition.

<sup>77</sup> Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, ch. 1, Kindle edition.

wave of migration from the Pale of Settlement to Ottoman-controlled Palestine. This wave of settlers became known as the Second Aliyah.<sup>78</sup>

During the Russian Civil War, Jews in the former Pale of Settlement (abolished in 1917) fell victim to Ukrainian nationalist militias and the anti-communist White forces. One horrific instance of antisemitic violence was the Proskurov massacre on February 15th, 1919. Local Bolsheviks in the town organized a revolt which was unsuccessful and a Cossack leader in the area blamed the Jews of the town (around half of the town's population was Jewish) for the disorder. Over three and a half hours, 1,200 people were killed and hundreds more were injured.<sup>79</sup>

Under Stalin and later under Leonid Brezhnev, the communist Soviet state was hostile to Jews and Zionism. After the Second World War, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin waged a campaign against “rootless cosmopolitans” (or Jews). Jews were arrested and executed for a wide range of fabricated charges. Jews were even accused of plotting to kill Stalin himself.<sup>80</sup> Initially, the USSR had been among the first countries to recognize the fledgling state of Israel in 1948<sup>81</sup> and had approved arms sales to Israel via Czechoslovakia.<sup>82</sup>

This amicable relationship was brief since Israel drifted closer to the United States and the Western camp. This was even more true once Israel had declared its support for the United States after the start of the Korean War in June 1950. As the USSR had aligned itself with

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<sup>78</sup> “Immigration to Israel: The Second Aliyah,” Jewish Virtual Library, accessed January 7, 2024, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-second-aliyah-1904-1914>.

<sup>79</sup> Tetiana Seliutina, “This Day - February, 15, 1919 - Proskurov Pogrom,” Museum of Jewish Memory and the Holocaust in Ukraine, March 4, 2021, <https://jmh.org/en/news-list/931-this-day-february-15-1919-proskurov-pogrom>.

<sup>80</sup> Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, ch. 5, Kindle edition.

<sup>81</sup> “International Recognition of Israel,” Jewish Virtual Library, accessed January 7, 2024, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/international-recognition-of-israel>

<sup>82</sup> Gita Zbavitelová, “The Czech Arms That Saved Israel,” JPost.com, November 30, 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/international/the-czech-arms-that-saved-israel-650710>.

Israel's Arab enemies, Jews living in the Soviet Union would now have to face the ugly consequences of its anti-Zionist foreign policy.

Under Brezhnev, Soviet Jews were effectively prohibited from migrating and viewed by the government as disloyal. Anti-Zionist propaganda was widespread under Brezhnev.<sup>83</sup> One of the most famous of the “refuseniks” (Jews who were repeatedly denied permission to migrate) was Soviet Jewish dissident Natan Sharansky. Sharansky was a human rights activist who raised the alarm about the Soviet government's treatment of Jews living under it. He spent years in the harsh Soviet prison system as a result.<sup>84</sup>

Antisemitism in the Russian Federation has been on the decline. According to ADL figures from 2023, 26% of Russians harbor antisemitic views.<sup>85</sup> This number is down from 30% in 2014.<sup>86</sup> State-sponsored anti-Zionism is no longer a framework for Russian foreign policy. Until the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war in October 2023, Russia and Israel maintained a cordial relationship. Indeed, Russian speakers make up approximately 15% of Israel's population.<sup>87</sup> Russian is the third most-widely spoken language in Israel. The end of the Cold War and fall of the USSR fostered warmer relations between the two countries. Prime Minister Netanyahu, in fact, has presented himself as a friend of Russian president Vladimir Putin.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, ch. 6, Kindle edition.

<sup>84</sup> Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, ch. 9, Kindle edition.

<sup>85</sup> “ADL Global 100: Russia,” ADL Global 100, 2023, <https://global100.adl.org/country/russia/2023>

<sup>86</sup> “ADL Global 100: Russia,” ADL Global 100, 2014, <https://global100.adl.org/country/russia/2014>

<sup>87</sup> Izabella Tabarovsky, “Russian-Speaking Israelis Go to the Polls,” Wilson Center, April 4, 2019. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/russian-speaking-israelis-go-to-the-polls>.

<sup>88</sup> Maxim Trudolyubov, “Hostage to His Own War, Putin Abrogates Russia's “Friendship” with Israel,” Wilson Center. November 9, 2023. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/hostage-his-own-war-putin-abrogates-russias-friendship-israel#:~:text=For%20years%2C%20Israeli%20prime%20minister,actors%20in%20the%20Middle%20East>.

Despite this, there are still ugly manifestations of antisemitism in today's Russia. The riot in Makhachkala, Russia at the end of October 2023 is a perfect example. Rioters in the Dagestani city of Makhachkala rushed into a terminal at the city's airport and stormed the airport runway. The crowd was fired up by rumors that Jews and Israeli nationals were onboard an incoming flight from Tel Aviv. A crowd gathered outside of the airport displaying signs saying "We are against Jewish refugees" and "There is no place for child-killers in Dagestan." At least 20 were injured in the carnage and 60 people were detained by the authorities.<sup>89</sup>

Dagestan is a Muslim-majority region of the Russian Federation situated in the Caucasus. Dagestan hosts a small community of Mountain Jews. These Mountain Jews lived peaceably with their Muslim neighbors for centuries, however the population of Jews in the area is declining due to emigration. It does warrant mentioning, however, that there were other factors at play which caused the Makhachkala affair, such as poor economic conditions and high casualties in Ukraine.<sup>90</sup>

### *The Relationship Between Geopolitics and Antisemitism*

Modern geopolitics plays a role in the growth and spread of today's antisemitism. The role that Middle Eastern and global geopolitics play in the Islamic antisemitism of today distinguishes it from European Christian antisemitism of the past. Antisemitic views are not as pervasive in Western Europe and North America (regions more closely aligned with Israel) compared to the Arab states of the Middle East (bitter enemies of Israel). Unlike Jews in

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<sup>89</sup> Scott Massey, "Analysis: Anti-Jewish Riot in Russia's Dagestan Shows Risks of Putin's Balancing Act on Hamas," CNN, October 31, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/31/europe/dagestan-riot-putin-hamas-balancing-act-analysis-intl-hnk/index.html>.

<sup>90</sup> Massey, "Analysis: Anti-Jewish Riot..." CNN, 2023.

medieval Europe, Jews in Israel today enjoy the protection of a state, diplomatic and military protection from a major world power (the United States), and are incorporated into the Western world's global security architecture.

Christian antisemites in medieval Europe had more room to act on their bigotry with impunity. Antisemites in the Arab world today must reckon with the long arm of the Israeli security apparatus whenever Jews are attacked. Antisemitic sentiments in majority-Muslim countries today are more commonplace and socially acceptable while antisemitism in the West has mostly been pushed to the fringes of society. There is usually a surge in antisemitic hate crimes during periods of heightened tensions between Israel and its neighbors.

Unlike antisemitism in 19th-century Russia or in Nazi Germany, there was no Jewish state to create an international cause celebre toward which anti-Jewish bigots could focus their energies. The antisemitic ultranationalist Black Hundreds carrying out pogroms against Jews in tsarist Russia could not use Israel's treatment of Palestinians as a club to beat Russian Jews with. Germans in the 1930s did not have a "Nakba" to rally around like Palestinian Arabs have today. During the pogroms in the Pale of Settlement after Tsar Alexander II's assassination in 1881, Jews in Vienna, Paris, and other European cities were not attacked by angry Russian emigres or angry mobs sympathetic to Alexander II. The pogroms in Russia in the late 19th century were a catastrophe which mostly affected Russian Jews.

European Gentiles were not assaulting and killing Jews out of outrage for and solidarity with Gentiles in other parts of Europe. Antisemites in the Middle Ages were not as organized as antisemites are today. Whenever Jews were accused of poisoning water sources in European cities, there were not calls throughout the continent and the world on the part of Gentiles to "globalize the Intifada" (or rather "globalize the pogrom").

Iran is a case study worthy of attention. Officially, the Iranian regime is strongly anti-Zionist and anti-American. Iranian foreign policy notwithstanding, the Jewish community in Iran dates back millenia and is the third-largest Jewish community in the Middle East after Israel and Turkey. Roughly 9,000-15,000 Jews remain in the country as of 2022.<sup>91</sup>

Over the past decade, Iranian Jewish migration to Israel has been almost non-existent. Only a negligible number of Iranian Jews arrived in Israel in the early 2000s. In fact, the Israeli government launched a program in 2007 offering the equivalent of \$10,000 to every Iranian Jewish migrant who moved to Israel. Only a hundred families emigrated as a result of this program. The Iranian government, while outwardly hostile to Israel and Zionism, is surprisingly tolerant (in some ways) toward Jews. As a matter of fact, the Iranian government has funded synagogue renovations along with renovating the tomb of Mordechai and Esther.<sup>92</sup>

A Jewish community leader named Zion Hassid (himself of Iranian Jewish heritage) remarked in an *i24 News* article, "Iranians have no hostility towards Jews. Most do not even have any towards Israel. They hate the (Iranian) regime and are not in solidarity with its position."<sup>93</sup> In other ways, though, Iran is still no safe haven for Jews. Iranian Jews are still not permitted to work as public servants or in academia, serve in the military, or travel to Israel. Hassid describes the living conditions of Jews in Iran as that of a "gilded prison."<sup>94</sup> In this sense, however, the Islamic Republic of Iran's domestic policy is in lockstep with its foreign policy.

The influence of geopolitics over antisemitic attitudes and policies in Saudi Arabia presents an interesting case. In the early 2000s, Saudi Arabia provided significant funding to

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<sup>91</sup> Johanna Afriat, "Jews of Iran: A Community on Borrowed Time," *i24News*, April 7, 2022, <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/middle-east/iran-eastern-states/1649326588-jews-of-iran-a-community-on-borrowed-time>.

<sup>92</sup> Afriat, "Jews of Iran."

<sup>93</sup> Afriat, "Jews of Iran."

<sup>94</sup> Afriat, "Jews of Iran."

Hamas (even more so than Iran). Due to American pressure, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reduced its support for Hamas in 2004.<sup>95</sup> Fast forward to 2023 and the prospect of a Saudi-Israeli normalization agreement was likely prior to the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas conflict in October. The change in the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Israel has culminated in a change in the relationship Saudis have with antisemitism. School textbooks in Saudi Arabia have been scrubbed of antisemitic and anti-Zionist passages.

A May 23rd, 2023 article in the *Algemeiner Journal* reported that all antisemitic content in Saudi K-12 textbooks had been removed. To mention a specific example, a passage was removed in a high school-level Islamic studies textbook accusing Jews of apostasy and selling their souls. The title of a section in a Saudi social studies textbook was revised from “The Attempt to Create the Zionist Entity”<sup>96</sup> to the “British Mandate in Palestine.”<sup>97</sup> There was also an improvement in the depiction of LGBT people, Christians, and non-Muslims in general.

In January 2020, a delegation from the Mecca-based Muslim World League paid an unprecedented visit to the Auschwitz extermination camp in Poland. This visit was the first by a senior Muslim delegation to the camp. The delegation was also accompanied by representatives from the American Jewish Committee. Secretary General Muhammad al-Issa gave a speech denouncing antisemitism and the horrific atrocities committed during the Holocaust. The visit was greeted with support from the Saudi media and intelligentsia. The foreign ministers of the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain (signatory parties to the Abraham Accords) expressed

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<sup>95</sup>Samuel Ramani, “Hamas’s Pivot to Saudi Arabia - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 17, 2015, <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/61315>.

<sup>96</sup> Dion J. Pierre, “Saudi Arabia Has Mostly Removed Antisemitic Tropes from School Textbooks, New Report Says,” *Algemeiner.com*, May 23, 2023, <https://www.algemeiner.com/2023/05/23/saudi-arabia-has-mostly-removed-antisemitic-tropes-from-school-textbooks-new-report-says/>.

<sup>97</sup> Pierre, “Saudi Arabia Has Mostly Removed Antisemitic Tropes...”

solidarity with Holocaust victims on social media. In Qatar, meanwhile, the visit to Auschwitz was met with hostility.<sup>98</sup>

The United Arab Emirates, one of the signatory parties to the Abraham Accords in 2020, has redefined its relationship with Israel and with antisemitism. In 2021, a Holocaust memorial exhibition was unveiled in Dubai. This exhibition was the first of its kind in the Arab world. A section of this exhibition featured Arabs and Muslims who saved Jewish lives during the Holocaust.<sup>99</sup> In January 2023, the Emirati embassy in Washington announced that the Holocaust would be added to Emirati school curricula.<sup>100</sup> The UAE's leadership even went as far as condemning antisemitic comments made by PA leader Mahmoud Abbas in September 2023.<sup>101</sup>

Another country, Azerbaijan, a majority-Muslim country situated in the Caucasus, is remarkably tolerant of Jews. The Jews of Azerbaijan comprise over 7,000 people. Most of the country's Jewish residents are Mountain Jews who trace their lineage to Persia, but other Jewish subgroups such as Ashkenazi, Georgian, and Bukharan Jews live in the country as well. Azerbaijan is a country which prides itself on religious tolerance, so much so that it is common for Azerbaijanis of different religious backgrounds to cross faith lines and celebrate each other's holidays.

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<sup>98</sup> B. Shanee, "Muslim World League's Historic Auschwitz Visit Draws Support from Saudi Arabia, Condemnation from Qatar," MEMRI, January 30, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/reports/muslim-world-leagues-historic-auschwitz-visit-draws-support-saudi-arabia-condemnation-qatar>.

<sup>99</sup> Zeena Saifi and Celine Alkhalidi, "First Holocaust Exhibition to Open in the Arab World," CNN, June 8, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/crossroads-of-civilizations-museum-dubai/index.html>.

<sup>100</sup> i24News, "United Arab Emirates Makes 'historic Decision' to Teach Holocaust in Schools," i24News, January 8, 2023, <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/middle-east/the-gulf/1673164001-emirates-confirms-that-the-holocaust-will-be-taught-in-their-schools>.

<sup>101</sup> Richard Percival, "UAE Condemns Mahmoud Abbas' Claim That Hitler Killed Jews Because of 'Social Role,'" The Jewish Chronicle, September 19, 2023, <https://www.thejc.com/news/world/uae-condemns-mahmoud-abbas-claim-that-hitler-killed-jews-because-of-social-role-xxmnvrmi>.

It should be noted that Israel and Azerbaijan enjoy a close relationship. Jerusalem cultivated closer ties with Baku as a part of its “periphery strategy,” a policy of establishing closer ties to non-Arab states on the fringes of the Middle East. During the Cold War, Israel pursued this strategy vis-a-vis Turkey, Iran, and Ethiopia.<sup>102</sup> Israel and Azerbaijan’s courtship culminated in the opening of an Azerbaijani embassy in Tel Aviv in March 2023.<sup>103</sup> Interestingly, public displays of support for Israel in Azerbaijan are not uncommon. After Hamas’ attack on Israel in early October 2023, the gate of the Israeli embassy in Baku was adorned with flowers and teddy bears by sympathetic locals.<sup>104</sup>

In Singapore, a country which has received military assistance from Israel, Law and Home Affairs Minister K Shanmugam condemned Hamas’ attacks. Shanmugam stated, “Hamas’ attack on Israel – attacking and massacring civilians is a massive terrorist attack. The kidnapping and unjustified murder of children – the acts of cruelty are shocking, and horrifying.”<sup>105</sup> Additionally, Singapore’s Chief Rabbi and Mufti have pledged solidarity between their communities in the midst of Israel’s fight against Hamas.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Yossi Alpher, “Israeli Regional Strategies: Balancing the Arab Core, the New Periphery, and Great Powers,” IEMed, 2017, <https://www.iemed.org/publication/israeli-regional-strategies-balancing-the-arab-core-the-new-periphery-and-great-powers/>.

<sup>103</sup> “Azerbaijan to Open Embassy in Israel,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 29, 2023, <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/azerbaijan-to-open-embassy-in-israel-18-nov-2022>.

<sup>104</sup> Asgar Asgarov, “Pro-Israel Sentiments in Azerbaijan Stand out amid Conflict in Gaza,” Voice of America, October 10, 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/pro-israel-sentiments-in-azerbaijan-stand-out-amid-conflict-in-gaza/7304802.html>.

<sup>105</sup> Ang Hwee Min, “Singapore Condemns Hamas’ Terror Attack on Israel, Atrocities ‘Cannot Be Justified by Any Rationale’: Shanmugam,” CNA, October 12, 2023, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/singapore-condemns-hamas-terror-attacks-atrocities-cannot-be-justified-shanmugam-3841016>.

<sup>106</sup> Staff Writer, “Singapore’s Chief Rabbi, Mufti Reaffirm Solidarity between Communities amid ‘senseless’ Israel-Hamas War,” CNA, October 15, 2023, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/chief-rabbi-mufti-singapore-solidarity-jewish-muslim-communities-israel-hamas-war-3847391#:~:text=In%20a%20letter%20to%20Chief,Muslims%20in%20Israel%20and%20Palestine>.

Both Israel and Singapore are majority-non Muslim countries surrounded by larger Muslim states. Muslim minorities reside in both countries. Like Israel, Singapore invests heavily in national defense and once had the largest military budget among the ASEAN member states.<sup>107</sup> The history of the Jews in Singapore is marked by tolerance and significant participation in the city-state's economy. Jews, mainly Mizrahi Jews from Baghdad, began migrating to Singapore in the 19th century.<sup>108</sup>

In 1840, the Jewish diaspora in Singapore had reached a large enough size for the construction of a synagogue. The street upon which the synagogue was built is named "Synagogue Street" and is part of the city's financial district. In 1875, Singapore's Jewish community purchased land in another area of the city for the construction of a larger synagogue. The construction of this synagogue was completed in 1878. Maghain Aboth Synagogue is the oldest synagogue in East Asia. Sir Menasseh Meyer, a wealthy Singaporean Jew, made his name as a philanthropist. Meyer was even knighted by King George V in 1929. Official records dating back to 1931 showed that the 832 Singaporean Jews and the more numerous Arab residents owned the majority of property in the city.<sup>109</sup>

When the Second World War broke out in September 1939, more than 1,500 Jews lived in Singapore. By the late 1960s, that figure had declined to roughly 450. Jews even occupied top-level government positions in the city-state. David S. Marshall, an Iraqi Jew, was Singapore's first chief minister. Dr. Yahya Cohen was appointed the Republic's surgeon general.

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<sup>107</sup> "Military Expenditure (Current USD) - Singapore," World Bank Open Data, accessed January 7, 2024, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.CD?locations=SG>.

<sup>108</sup> "Singapore Virtual Jewish History Tour," Jewish Virtual Library, accessed January 7, 2024, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/singapore-virtual-jewish-history-tour>.

<sup>109</sup> "Singapore Virtual Jewish History Tour," accessed January 7, 2024.

Jacob Ballas, a Jewish philanthropist who once chaired the Singapore Stock Exchange, was another pillar of the city's Jewish diaspora.

A Jewish community center named for Ballas was opened in 2007.<sup>110</sup> Over the decades, Ashkenazi Jews from the West have migrated to Singapore.<sup>111</sup> Around 2,000 Jews live in Singapore.<sup>112</sup> Jews, who comprise less than a thousandth of the city's total population, punch far above their weight class in Singaporean society. It is the city state's emphasis on tolerance and social cohesion that has allowed them to thrive.

The effects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on antisemitism are not confined to Asia. Cuba has maintained a firmly anti-Israel foreign policy for decades. During the Yom Kippur War of 1973, Cuban troops fought alongside the Arab armies in their campaign against Israel. Cuba also trained Palestinian fedayeen operating against Israel and established ties with the Palestinian Liberation Organization as well as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.<sup>113</sup> In 1975, Cuba voted in favor of UN Resolution 3379, which condemns Zionism as a form of racism and discrimination.

In 1991, Cuba voted against the repeal of UN Resolution 3379. Diplomatic relations are yet to be re-established between Israel and Cuba. Venezuela, also firmly anti-United States and by extension anti-Zionist, likewise has no diplomatic ties with Israel. More than a dozen countries in Latin America and the Caribbean voted in favor of the 1947 UN partition of Palestine. Another six countries in the region abstained and Cuba (pre-Castro) provided the only

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<sup>110</sup> "History," Singapore Jews, November 24, 2021, Accessed January 7, 2024.  
<https://singaporejews.com/history-2/>.

<sup>111</sup> "Singapore Jews," Singapore Jews, November 24, 2021, Accessed January 7, 2024.  
<https://singaporejews.com/>

<sup>112</sup> Singapore Jews, "History,"

<sup>113</sup> Domingo Amuchastegui, "Cuba in the Middle East: A Brief Chronology," U.S. Department of State, July 1999, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/wha/ci/cu/14745.htm>.

“no” vote.<sup>114</sup> Following the start of the 2023 Israeli-Hamas conflict, most countries in the region expressed support for Israel or condemned Hamas at minimum.

Cuba and Venezuela are part of the minority who expressed support for Palestine, explicitly attributing Israeli actions to the current situation. According to the ADL Global 100 survey from 2014, 34% of Nicaraguans<sup>115</sup>, 30% of Venezuelans<sup>116</sup>, and 30% of Bolivians<sup>117</sup> harbored antisemitic beliefs. These three countries in particular are anti-American and anti-Zionist in alignment. In contrast, 9% of Americans,<sup>118</sup> 14% of Canadians,<sup>119</sup> and 16% of people in Brazil<sup>120</sup> held antisemitic views. These three countries are aligned more closely to Israel in their foreign policy. The regional average was 19%.<sup>121</sup>

It would be remiss, however, not to state that geopolitical alignment and antisemitic sentiments and policies are not perfectly correlated. 52% of Panamanian people hold antisemitic beliefs.<sup>122</sup> Panama is undoubtedly in the United States’ orbit and has been for quite some time. In Uruguay, a country which voted in favor of the 1947 UN partition, 33% of people harbor antisemitic attitudes.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> UN General Assembly Resolutions: Resolution 181, accessed November 2, 2023, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/un-general-assembly-resolution-181-2>.

<sup>115</sup> “ADL Global 100: Nicaragua,” ADL Global 100, 2014, <https://global100.adl.org/country/nicaragua/2014>.

<sup>116</sup> “ADL Global 100: Venezuela,” ADL Global 100, 2014, <https://global100.adl.org/country/venezuela/2014>.

<sup>117</sup> “ADL Global 100: Bolivia,” ADL Global 100, 2014, <https://global100.adl.org/country/bolivia/2014>.

<sup>118</sup> “ADL Global 100: USA,” ADL Global 100, 2014, <https://global100.adl.org/country/usa/2014>.

<sup>119</sup> “ADL Global 100: Canada,” ADL Global 100, 2014, <https://global100.adl.org/country/canada/2014>.

<sup>120</sup> “ADL Global 100: Brazil,” ADL Global 100, 2014, <https://global100.adl.org/country/brazil/2014>.

<sup>121</sup> ADL Global 100: Americas,” ADL Global 100, 2014, <https://global100.adl.org/map/americas>.

<sup>122</sup> ADL Global 100: Panama,” ADL Global 100, 2014, <https://global100.adl.org/country/panama/2014>.

<sup>123</sup> ADL Global 100: Uruguay,” ADL Global 100, 2014, <https://global100.adl.org/country/uruguay/2014>.

### *Jews as “White Oppressors”*

Another factor which distinguishes modern-day Islamic antisemitism from antisemitism of bygone eras is the portrayal of Jews as colonizers and oppressors. Medieval European antisemitism did not paint Jews as “white” colonizers oppressing indigenous “brown” Arabs. Whether or not this is actually the case is of little importance. What matters is that this is perceived to be the case by many Muslims and even non-Muslims. The anticolonial element of present-day Islamic antisemitism is a powerful factor.

Israel is frequently denounced as a settler colonial state populated by “white” European Jews. Arab, and by extension Muslim, outrage toward Israel is tinged with anticolonial sentiments similar to those found in other parts of the Global South. Shahd Hammouri, a lecturer on international law at the University of Kent, wrote in a December 2023 *Al Jazeera* article: “The status of Israel as a colonising state was clear in the early days of the United Nations.”<sup>124</sup>

She wrote in reference to the Oslo Accords, “The oppression and dispossession of the Palestinian people at the hands of their Israeli colonisers continued.”<sup>125</sup> Palestinian-American university professor Rashid Khalidi argues in his book *The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine* that the Zionist venture is an exercise in European colonialism. Black Lives Matter even issued a statement showing solidarity with Palestinians and condemning settler colonialism.<sup>126</sup> In contrast to the Middle Ages, Jews are now in a position of power over another people group. Medieval

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<sup>124</sup> Shahd Hammouri, “How International Law Is Used to Cover up Israeli Settler-Colonialism,” *Al Jazeera*, December 11, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/12/10/how-international-law-is-used-to-cover-up-israeli-settler-colonialism>.

<sup>125</sup> Hammouri, “How International Law is Used...”

<sup>126</sup> “Black Lives Matter Grassroots Statement in Solidarity with the Palestinian People,” Black Lives Matter Grassroots, accessed January 5, 2024, <https://blmgrassroots.org/black-lives-matter-grassroots-statement-in-solidarity-with-the-palestinian-people/>.

Christian antisemites usually belonged to the majority population and Jews were an outnumbered and oppressed minority.

It is Israeli rule over the Palestinians that acts as a lightning rod for the energies of antisemitic Muslims in the Global South. Muslim antisemites, most of whom hail from countries formerly under European colonial regimes, lump Israel in with their former overlords. Cold War geopolitics shaped the political and social landscape in the Middle East. As Israel moved toward the American camp (which included former colonial powers Britain and France), it became easier for her Arab and Soviet detractors to condemn Israel as an outpost of European colonialism in the Middle East. The fact that Ashkenazi Jews from eastern Europe were the prime movers for Zionist settlement in Palestine only added credence to this notion.

Joseph Massad, a professor at Columbia University, wrote in an article in the *Middle East Eye*, “Israel’s always available and rebarbative defence of its genocidal crimes is its claim that because European Jews had been subjected to a genocide by white European Christians, the Israeli government can therefore inflict, in the name of Jews, whatever atrocities it deems necessary on the Palestinian people - even if it means bulldozing and burying alive dozens of civilians.”<sup>127</sup> At the end of the article, Massad writes, “For the last 140 years, and more dramatically in the last 75, the indigenous Palestinians have similarly been the victims of this ongoing legacy of European settler-colonialism that is premised on Jewish supremacy and the defence of ‘western civilisation.’”<sup>128</sup>

The notion that Israel is a settler colony established by “white European” Jews at the expense of indigenous “brown” Arabs is a powerful one in left-wing circles. According to an

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<sup>127</sup> Joseph Massad, “How Israel’s Genocidal War against Palestinians Is a Colonial Tradition,” *Middle East Eye*, December 18, 2023, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/israel-genocide-against-palestinians-colonial-tradition>.

<sup>128</sup> Massad, “How Israel’s Genocidal War...”

article in *The Conversation* published in October 2023, antisemitic hate crimes in the US were more prevalent in progressive areas of the country. Ironically, these regions of the United States, such as California and the Northeast, are known for their tolerance of racial and religious minorities.<sup>129</sup>

Jewish college students in the United States feel the effects of this framing of Jews as colonizers ruling over indigenous Palestinian Arabs. In October 2023, mere days after Hamas' attack, Stanford University suspended a lecturer who was accused of calling Israelis "colonizers" and forcing Jewish students to stand in a corner. The lecturer also asserted that colonialism claimed more lives than the Holocaust and that colonialism was carried out in Palestine. He also reframed Hamas' attack on Israel as an act of resistance.

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<sup>129</sup> Arie Perliger, "Antisemitism Has Moved from the Right to the Left in the US – and Falls Back on Long-Standing Stereotypes," *The Conversation*, October 25, 2023, <https://theconversation.com/antisemitism-has-moved-from-the-right-to-the-left-in-the-us-and-falls-back-on-long-standing-stereotypes-215760>.

## CHAPTER 2: NOT DIFFERENT

### *European Antisemitic Tropes in Muslim Countries Today*

The *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, a forged document originating in the Russian Empire which outlines a Jewish plan for world domination, has enjoyed widespread circulation in the Arab world. The first Arabic translation of the *Protocols* to gain mainstream popularity was Muhammad Khalifa al-Tunisi's translation released in 1951.<sup>130</sup> In fact, the *Protocols* are quoted widely on social media and mainstream news outlets in the Arab world. On August 4th, 2022, Syrian Israeli affairs expert Muhammad Nasour said on an Arab-language TV network that, "All the destruction, wars, strife, and killing that the world has witnessed are a product of the Talmudic mind, which later produced *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*."<sup>131</sup>

The *Protocols* have even found an audience among Arab government officials. Retired general Mahmoud Khalifa, military advisor to the Secretary General of the Arab League, said on Egyptian television (in reference to Israel) that, "Its goal, according to *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, is to expand from the Nile River to the Euphrates River. They will bring all the Jews in the world and turn it into a Jewish land, and after that, they will expand once again."<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Matussek, Carmen. "WJC Analysis - Carmen Matussek: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion in the Arab World." World Jewish Congress, October 7, 2013.  
<https://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/news/wjc-analysis-carmen-matussek-the-protocols-of-the-elders-of-zion-in-the-arab-world>.

<sup>131</sup> "Syrian Israeli Affairs Expert Muhammad Nasour: The Number of Jewish Deaths in the 'so-Called' Holocaust..." MEMRI, August 4, 2022.  
<https://www.memri.org/tv/syrian-expert-israeli-affairs-nasour-holocaust-denial-zionists-destroy-world-nuke-talmudic-mind>.

<sup>132</sup> "Arab League Military Advisor Mahmoud Khalifa: Israel Wants to Expand from the Nile..." MEMRI, June 29, 2020.  
<https://www.memri.org/tv/arab-league-military-advisor-israel-wants-to-expand-nile-euphrates-protocols-elders-of-zion>.

Antisemitism in Muslim-dominated countries today is similar to Christian European antisemitism of the past, in fact it is a local variation of it. Muslim antisemites take inspiration from antisemitic European literature such as *Mein Kampf* and works written by Western Holocaust deniers. European Christian anti-Jewish bigotry has essentially been marketed differently to a different consumer in the modern era.

Medieval Christian antisemites and modern-day Muslim antisemites both draw from the stereotype of the usurious Jewish money lender. Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas stated during a speech on August 24th, 2023 that Hitler “fought” the Jews because of their usury and influence over money. Like in Christian Europe during the Middle Ages and onward, Muslim antisemites today paint Jews as duplicitous and untrustworthy.

In majority-Muslim countries, even children are taught hatred for Jews. School textbooks in the Palestinian territories are filled with antisemitic propaganda. In May 2023, the European Parliament passed a resolution condemning the Palestinian Authority for including antisemitic passages in school textbooks. Textbooks in areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority have long been decried by watchdogs for their antisemitic content. The European Union, the PA’s biggest donor, even went as far as withholding from the PA hundreds of millions of dollars of aid money in 2022.<sup>133</sup>

In Gaza, schoolchildren are inculcated with antisemitic sentiments. The curriculum utilized by Gaza schools teaches that the Jewish Torah and the Talmud are fabricated and describes Zionism as a racist ideology designed to expel Arabs from the Middle East. At schools run by the UN, figures such as Dalal al-Mughrabi are revered as heroes. Al-Mughrabi was

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<sup>133</sup> Stuart Winer, “EU Parliament Slams ‘hateful’ Palestinian Textbooks, Threatens Funding ...,” Times of Israel, May 11, 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/eu-parliament-slams-hateful-palestinian-textbooks-threatens-funding-freeze/>.

responsible for the deaths of more than 30 people in a terrorist attack in Tel Aviv.<sup>134</sup> In November 2023, Israeli forces operating in the Gaza Strip found an Arabic copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* in a child's room which had been occupied by Hamas militants.<sup>135</sup>

In Jordan, which has been at peace with Israel since 1994, middle school Islamic education textbooks portray Jews as treacherous. The textbook in question also teaches that the Jewish Banu Qaynuqa tribe breaking a pact with the Prophet Muhammad was customary Jewish behavior. High school Arab and world history textbooks denigrate Jews and Israel. These textbooks do not mention Jewish settlement in Palestine until the 19th century when "Zionist greed in Palestine"<sup>136</sup> came about. Jordanian textbooks also falsely attribute a number of crises to Jewish intrigue.

On August 21st, 1969, an Australian man named Denis Michael Rohan set fire to al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Rohan was a Christian who suffered from schizophrenia. School textbooks in Jordan point to Israel as having been responsible for the fire, even though Israeli firefighters extinguished the fire and Israeli authorities deported Rohan back to Australia.<sup>137</sup>

In January 2023, a Jordanian parliament member referred to Jews as "the sons of monkeys and pigs"<sup>138</sup> and encouraged suicide bombings after Israel's national security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir visited al-Aqsa Mosque. He is not the only member of Jordan's parliament who

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<sup>134</sup> Steve Israel, "The Roots of Hamas' Terror Attack Can Be Found in Gaza's Schools," The Forward, October 25, 2023, <https://forward.com/opinion/566841/hamas-schools-indoctrination-antisemitic-textbooks-gaza/>.

<sup>135</sup> i24News, "Hitler's 'Mein Kampf' Found In Hamas Base In Gaza," i24News, November 12, 2023, <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/israel-at-war/1699782656-hitler-s-mein-kampf-found-in-hamas-base-in-gaza-israeli-president-herzog>.

<sup>136</sup> David Andrew Weinberg, "Antisemitism in Jordanian Textbooks," Anti-Defamation League, March 31, 2021, <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/antisemitism-jordanian-textbooks>.

<sup>137</sup> Weinberg, "Antisemitism in Jordanian Textbooks."

<sup>138</sup> Alec Pollard, "Jordanians Will Become Suicide Bombers for Al-Aqsa' - Lawmaker," i24News, January 4, 2023, <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/middle-east/levant-turkey/1672844522-jordanians-will-become-suicide-bombers-for-al-aqsa-jordanian-lawmaker>.

has made such comments in recent years. Antisemitic Jordanian parliamentarian Yahya al-Saud met with an MP from Britain's Labour Party in July 2019. As recently as 2017, al-Saud has made comments supporting violence against Israel and has condemned the 1994 peace treaty between Jordan and Israel.<sup>139</sup>

During a session of the Jordanian parliament broadcast on television on May 17th, 2021, MP Safaa Momani labeled Jews "slayers of the prophets"<sup>140</sup> and said Jews could not be trusted. Another MP, Saleh al-Armouti, then voiced support for the terrorist group Hamas. A third Jordanian MP, Firas al-Qudah, called for the "Zionist enemies"<sup>141</sup> to be attacked around the world. For context, the Israel Defense Forces were carrying out operations in the Gaza Strip as these Jordanian parliamentarians made these comments. While Jordan and Israel are regional partners on paper, overt antisemitism is still widespread in Jordan.

In March 1979, Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian president Anwar Sadat concluded a peace agreement. Today, both countries are America's partners in the region and enjoy normal relations with each other. An article from *i24 News* published on April 23rd, 2023 mentioned that Egyptian school textbooks have been revised to depict Jews and the state of Israel more positively. These revisions came at the behest of Egyptian president al-Sisi and ties with Israel under his leadership have grown deeper.

It should be stated, however, that al-Sisi's policy toward Israel has not remained consistent. An Egyptian TV program broadcast on the government-run Channel Two called *Blue*

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<sup>139</sup> Jerusalem Post Staff, "Jewish Labour MP Meets Jordanian Rep. Who Supports Terror against Israelis," JPost.com, July 15, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/jewish-labour-mp-meets-jordanian-rep-who-supports-terror-against-israelis-595673>.

<sup>140</sup> JNS and ILH staff, "Jordanian MPs Want to End Peace with Israel, Praise Hamas," Israelhayom.com, May 27, 2021, <https://www.israelhayom.com/2021/05/27/jordanian-lawmakers-seek-roll-back-peace-with-israel-after-gaz-a-war/>.

<sup>141</sup> JNS and ILH staff, "Jordanian MPs Want to End Peace with Israel, Praise Hamas."

*Line* ostensibly focuses on Egyptian-Israeli relations, but serves as a platform for antisemitic and anti-Zionist conspiracy theories. A guest on the show cited Holocaust denier Roger Garaudy in an episode and claimed that the slaughter of millions of Jews in gas chambers was improbable. The host of this program, Hasem Aboulseod, raises no objections when guests make antisemitic remarks. As of 2019, this show was still being broadcast on a government-run television network.

On June 30th, 2021, al-Sisi opened an international book fair in Cairo. On the shelves at this book fair were an assortment of antisemitic titles, including the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The previous year, the Anti-Defamation League made a complaint to the Egyptian embassy in Washington, listing several antisemitic books that the ADL did not want displayed at the event. At the 2021 event, every single title mentioned on the ADL's list was on display. It may not be official Egyptian policy to antagonize Israel, though this suggests that Egyptian society is still swayed by antisemitic and anti-Zionist propaganda.

Qatar has a close relationship with Hamas. Doha is one of Hamas' main financial backers, funneling more than a billion dollars to the militant group since 2012.<sup>142</sup> Government-run news media outlet *Al Jazeera* has a track record of antisemitism and anti-Israel bias. In 2017, the news outlet's English-language Twitter account posted a meme featuring the "Happy Merchant."<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup>Stuart Winer, "Qatar Gave over \$1.1 Billion to Gaza Strip from 2012-18, Ministers Told," *The Times of Israel*, February 11, 2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/qatar-gave-over-1-1-billion-to-gaza-strip-over-six-years-report/>.

<sup>143</sup> Sam Kestenbaum, "Al Jazeera Sorry for 'mistakenly' Tweeting Anti-Semitic Meme," *The Forward*, June 1, 2017, <https://forward.com/fast-forward/373513/al-jazeera-sorry-for-mistakenly-tweeting-anti-semitic-meme/>.

The Happy Merchant is a cartoon of a Jew in a yarmulke with a cartoonishly-large nose rubbing his hands together; this image is commonly used in antisemitic internet memes. The image was soon taken down, but not before Twitter users took screenshots of the meme. Rather tellingly, the network stated that the image was not theirs and gave an unenthusiastic apology. Interestingly, Ismail Haniyeh, leader of Hamas, currently resides in Qatar.<sup>144</sup>

In countries as far away from the Middle East as Malaysia, antisemitic sentiments are held by the majority of people.<sup>145</sup> Malaysian antisemitism is driven by solidarity with and collective outrage for their coreligionists in Palestine. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has globalized antisemitism and provided a velvet glove for Muslim antisemites across the globe to conceal the mailed fist of their anti-Jewish bigotry.

It is worth pointing out that Malaysia still has no diplomatic relations with Israel. Former Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohamad was rather open about his antisemitic sentiments during his considerable time in office. In October 2018, Mahathir called Jews “hook-nosed.”<sup>146</sup> In September 2019, during a question-and-answer session at Columbia University, Mahathir justified his past antisemitic statements by saying, “I am exercising my right to free speech.”<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup>i24News, “Away from Gaza’s Hardship: Where Are Hamas Leaders Hiding?,” i24News, October 26, 2023, <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/israel-at-war/1698317669-away-from-gaza-s-adversity-where-are-hamas-leaders-hiding>.

<sup>145</sup> “ADL Global 100: Malaysia,” ADL Global 100, 2014, <https://global100.adl.org/country/malaysia/2014>.

<sup>146</sup> Staff Writer, “Back to Old Habits, Malaysia’s Mahathir Calls Jews ‘Hook-Nosed,’” Reuters, October 2, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-malaysia-politics-mahathir-jews/back-to-old-habits-malaysias-mahathir-calls-jews-hook-nosed-idUSKCN1MC15T>.

<sup>147</sup> Eric Cortellessa, “A Defiant Malaysian PM Defends His Anti-Semitism in the Name of Free Speech,” The Times of Israel, September 26, 2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/a-defiant-malaysian-pm-defends-his-anti-semitism-in-the-name-of-free-speech/>.

### *European Antisemitic Tropes Re-Imported via Muslim Migrants*

It is a bitter irony that this new antisemitism (originally inspired by European Christians) is resurfacing in Europe among Muslim immigrants, having made a full circle to the place of its birth. In May 2017, an imam in Copenhagen, Denmark was reported to local authorities for preaching an antisemitic sermon on video. In the video, the imam was standing in front of a black flag with the Shahada (the Muslim profession of faith) written across it. He quoted a hadith which said that the Day of Judgment “will not come unless the Muslims fight the Jews and the Muslims kill them.”<sup>148</sup> He also said that al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem would be liberated “from the filth of the Zionists.”<sup>149</sup>

A survey released by the American Jewish Committee in 2022 showed that antisemitism among Muslims in Germany was becoming more and more widespread. 53% of German Muslims say that antisemitism had increased over the previous 10 years. 64% of Germans in the general population felt likewise. 54% of German Muslims felt that Jews use their status as Nazi genocide victims for their own gain. Approximately half (48%) of Germany’s Muslims disagree that Israel’s security is in Germany’s best interests.<sup>150</sup>

A 2018 report by the EU’s Fundamental Rights Agency revealed that Muslim extremists were responsible for 30% of reported cases of antisemitic harassment. Approximately 90% of respondents in this survey felt that antisemitism had increased in the years leading up to the

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<sup>148</sup> “Copenhagen Imam Accused of Calling for Killing of Jews,” BBC News, May 11, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39885745>.

<sup>149</sup> BBC News, “Copenhagen Imam Accused of Calling for Killing of Jews.”

<sup>150</sup> “American Jewish Committee Surveys German General and Muslim Populations on Antisemitism.” AJC, May 10, 2022. <https://www.ajc.org/news/american-jewish-committee-surveys-german-general-and-muslim-populations-on-antisemitism>.

survey. 85% of respondents felt that antisemitism was a serious issue in their countries. Even more shocking is the fact that 79% of Jews who faced antisemitic harassment in the five years prior to the survey did not report the most serious incident they faced to the police.

Almost half felt that nothing would change as a result.<sup>151</sup> In 2021, the Center for Information and Documentation Israel, a Dutch organization that tracks and combats antisemitism, noticed a 36% increase in antisemitic incidents in the Netherlands compared to the previous year. The director of this organization stated that antisemitic incidents are becoming more prevalent in the Netherlands.<sup>152</sup>

Between May and June 2021, which witnessed a flare-up in hostilities between Palestine and Israel, there were nearly 900 antisemitic hate crimes reported in the United Kingdom. The UK, in fact, had the highest tally of antisemitic incidents in Europe that year.<sup>153</sup> Between May 7th and May 14th 2021, approximately 17,000 tweets could be seen with a variation of the phrase “Hitler was right.”<sup>154</sup> Following the flare-up of hostilities between Israel and Palestine in October 2023 (coincidentally on the 50th anniversary of the onset of the Yom Kippur War), antisemitic sentiments have come to the surface.

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<sup>151</sup> “Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism. Second Survey On ...” EU Fundamental Rights Agency, 2018.  
[https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2018-experiences-and-perceptions-of-antisemitism-survey\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-experiences-and-perceptions-of-antisemitism-survey_en.pdf).

<sup>152</sup> “CIDI Antisemitism Monitor 2021: Summary.” Center for Information and Documentation Israel, 2022.  
<https://www.cidi.nl/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/CIDI-Monitor-Antisemitic-Incidents-summary.pdf>.

<sup>153</sup> Liphshiz, Cnaan. “UK Jews Record 2,255 Antisemitic Incidents in 2021 - the Highest Tally in Europe.” The Times of Israel, February 10, 2022.  
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/uk-jews-record-2255-antisemitic-incidents-in-2021-the-highest-tally-in-europe/>.

<sup>154</sup> Al-Arshani, Sarah. “Antisemitic Hate Crimes Grew in the US and Europe over the Past Few Weeks amid Tensions in Palestine and Israel.” Business Insider, May 22, 2021.  
<https://www.businessinsider.com/antisemitic-hate-crimes-rose-during-palestine-and-israel-conflict-2021-5>.

Since Hamas' attack on Israel, antisemitic attacks in the United Kingdom soared 300%.<sup>155</sup> Antisemitic threats on popular messaging app Telegram increased 488% since October 7th, 2023.<sup>156</sup> The surge of Muslim migrants into Europe over the last decade has further complicated the troubled relationship between Muslims and Jews on the continent.

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<sup>155</sup> Sky News. "More than 300% Increase in Antisemitic Incidents in UK since Hamas Attack on Israel, Jewish Security Group Says." Sky News, October 12, 2023. <https://news.sky.com/story/more-than-300-increase-in-antisemitic-incidents-in-uk-since-hamas-attack-on-israel-jewish-security-group-says-12982880>.

<sup>156</sup> ADL, "Hamas Attack Draws Cheers from Extremists, Spurs Antisemitism and Conspiracies Online," Anti-Defamation League, October 7, 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/hamas-attack-draws-cheers-extremists-spurs-antisemitism-and-conspiracies-online>.

## CONCLUSION: NOT UNRESOLVABLE

### *Interfaith Dialogue and Combating Misinformation*

One might wonder what solution there is to the constant escalations in tensions between Muslims and Jews. Any worthwhile solution to this problem will take years (even generations) to bear fruit. Using Azerbaijan and the UAE as a frame of reference, amicable relations between Jews and Muslims is within the realm of the possible. If such a state of affairs is possible in a majority-Muslim country, friendly relations between the two communities is certainly possible in countries where both groups share a minority status. We have the case study of Singapore to act as a lodestar.

An important component in solving Muslim-Jewish tensions is combating misinformation. History gives us one story after another of Jews enduring violence on the part of the majority populations they lived under as a result of misinformation. The infamous “blood libel” canard is a well-known example of this. I once again refer to mass killings of Jews during the Black Death as yet another example of misinformation resulting in violence. A more contemporary example of the consequences of misinformation is the aforementioned Makhachkala incident in Dagestan in 2023.

Interfaith dialogue is another way to promote understanding between Muslims and Jews. On some level, this interfaith dialogue has been occurring since the start of the Israel-Hamas conflict. Queens College in New York City has hosted meetings of interfaith dialogue between Jews and Muslims. Around 50 Jewish and Muslim students took part in the first Queens College

event. This event was quite possibly the first formal meeting between Muslim and Jewish students on a New York college campus since the escalation of hostilities on October 7th.<sup>157</sup>

New York in particular has witnessed an explosion in antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents since October 7th, 2023.<sup>158</sup> Queens College, as a matter of fact, has faced allegations of antisemitism for years. At Columbia University, an Israeli student was attacked and a swastika was drawn on the wall of a bathroom. At Cooper Union, Jewish students sought shelter inside a library while pro-Palestinian activists pounded on the library's doors and yelled slogans.

Both antisemitism and Islamophobia have become so intense on college campuses to the point in which the Department of Education has stepped in to investigate anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim bigotry at six US colleges.<sup>159</sup> A November 29th, 2023 Axios article said that 73% of Jewish college students have witnessed or experienced antisemitism since the 2023-2024 school year began. Prior to October 7th, the majority of Jewish students felt “very” and “extremely” safe on campus.

The University of Pennsylvania's president, Liz Magill, resigned following backlash associated with her testimony before Congress.<sup>160</sup> Several donors to the university pulled their financial support before this, feeling that Magill did not go far enough in denouncing a Palestinian literature festival in September 2023 which hosted speakers with track records of

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<sup>157</sup> Luke Tress, “A Rabbi and an Imam Called a Meeting of Jewish and Muslim Students at Queens College. It Yielded Little Common Ground.” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, November 17, 2023, <https://www.jta.org/2023/11/17/ny/a-rabbi-and-an-imam-organized-a-meeting-of-jewish-and-muslim-students-at-queens-college-it-yielded-little-common-ground>.

<sup>158</sup> Russell Contreras, “Anti-Arab, Antisemitic Hate Crimes Surge in NY, LA - Axios,” Axios.com, accessed January 7, 2024, <https://www.axios.com/2023/10/31/jewish-muslim-hate-crimes-nyc-la>.

<sup>159</sup> Ivana Saric, “73% of Jewish College Students Report Antisemitism on Campus This School Year: ADL,” Axios.com, November 29, 2023, <https://www.axios.com/2023/11/29/antisemitism-college-campus-adl-survey-israel-hamas-war>.

<sup>160</sup> Juliana Kim, “Penn President, Board of Trustees Chair Resign after Antisemitism Hearing,” NPR, December 10, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/12/09/1218415525/penn-president-liz-magill-resigns-antisemitism-hearing>.

antisemitic remarks.<sup>161</sup> The president of Harvard University, Claudine Gay, likewise resigned due to criticism of her testimony before Congress concerning antisemitism (among other reasons).<sup>162</sup>

In December 2023, Syracuse University in upstate New York held an interfaith dialogue event hosted by a Muslim imam and a Jewish rabbi. The hosts of this event compared the Torah and Quran, emphasizing passages in both texts related to empathy. They then broke the attendees up into groups and encouraged them to work with someone of a “different background.” Dr. Zachary Braiterman, the director of the university’s Jewish studies program, mentioned that looking for similarities between the Torah and the Quran is common in Islamic-Jewish discourse.<sup>163</sup>

At a church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, an annual tradition of interfaith worship was used as a means of building bridges between Jews, Muslims, Christians, and practitioners of indigenous American religions. Members of these faith communities came together to worship on Thanksgiving Day of 2023. A rabbi who took part in the service said, “Our role and task as religious institutions is to engage in interfaith dialogue because it is the antidote to religious violence.”<sup>164</sup>

In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, site of the 2018 Tree of Life synagogue massacre, an armory was converted into a skating rink to bring together members of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths. The skating rink was opened after Thanksgiving 2023. This venture was

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<sup>161</sup> Kim, “Penn President, Board of Trustees...”

<sup>162</sup> Shabbos Kestenbaum, “Claudine Gay’s Resignation and Harvard’s Antisemitism Problem,” Aish.com, January 7, 2024, <https://aish.com/claudine-gays-resignation-and-the-increase-of-antisemitism-at-harvard/>.

<sup>163</sup> Julia Boehning, “Hendricks Chapel Promotes Jewish-Muslim Dialogue at Interfaith Speaker Event,” The Daily Orange, December 14, 2023, <https://dailyorange.com/2023/12/hendricks-chapel-promotes-jewish-muslim-dialogue/>.

<sup>164</sup> Jason Rantala, “Minneapolis Interfaith Service Looks for Common Ground during Israel-Hamas War,” CBS News, November 24, 2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/news/minneapolis-plymouth-congregational-church-thanksgiving-interfaith-service/>.

spearheaded by the Pittsburgh Penguins, the local NHL team. Pittsburgh, as a matter of fact, has become a bastion of interfaith harmony. Following the Tree of Life shooting, Pittsburgh Muslims raised money to cover the funeral costs of their Jewish counterparts. Local Christians have provided sanctuary for Jewish worshippers to pray as well.<sup>165</sup>

Contrary to popular belief, there are Muslim Zionists. Some of them are or have been in influential positions. Abdurrahman “Gus Dur” Wahid was Indonesia’s fourth president and a very vocal proponent of establishing ties with Israel.<sup>166</sup> Gus Dur was at one time the chairman of Indonesia’s largest Muslim organization.<sup>167</sup> Abdul Hadi Palazzi, an Italian sheikh and former pupil of the Grand Mufti of Cairo, has voiced support for Israel. In a 2010 *Jerusalem Post* article, Palazzi said, “the Saudis put millions of dollars in the pockets of those radical brotherhoods for an extremist struggle in the guise of Islam. The influence of Wahabism on the contemporary Arab world is such that many Arab Muslims are wrongly convinced that in order to be a good Muslim one must hate Israel.”<sup>168</sup>

It must be reiterated to Muslims that antisemitism is contrary to Islam. With a plethora of supporting evidence from history, Jews and Muslims have coexisted peacefully for centuries and have even cooperated with each other. Islamic antisemitism is, for the most part, a very recent phenomena driven by geopolitics. Of course, there are examples of mistreatment of Jews in

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<sup>165</sup> Eduardo Cuevas, “Ice Rinks and Kit Kats: After Tree of Life Shooting, Pittsburgh Forging Interfaith Bonds,” USA Today, October 27, 2023, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2023/10/27/tree-of-life-shooting-pittsburgh-faith-groups-unite/71228665007/>.

<sup>166</sup> Kornelius Purba, “Diplomatic Ties with Israel Unimaginable for Indonesian Muslims,” The Jakarta Post, August 24, 2022, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2022/08/24/diplomatic-ties-with-israel-unimaginable-for-indonesia-n-muslims.html>.

<sup>167</sup> Alissa Wahid, “Gus Dur’s Legacy Lives on – DW – 09/07/2017,” dw.com, September 7, 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/ex-president-gus-durs-vision-for-democratic-islam-in-indonesia/a-40394288>.

<sup>168</sup> Sven Behrisch, “The Zionist Imam,” JPost.com, July 19, 2010, <https://www.jpost.com/christian-in-israel/blogs/the-zionist-imam>.

Muslim-controlled societies prior to the 20th century. One can look at the pogrom in Fez, Morocco in 1033 or the pogrom in Granada in 1066 as case studies.

Antisemitism in Muslim-majority countries is a form of antisemitism which bears similarities with its medieval Christian counterpart, but it is also different in several ways. The international element to modern Islamic antisemitism, compounded by social media and globalization, distinguishes it from more localized and less well-organized European Christian antisemitism. Anti-colonialism is another feature which differentiates Muslim antisemitism of today from Christian antisemitism of previous eras. However, Christian antisemitism provides an intellectual basis from which Muslim antisemites can work.

It was Christians in antiquity and the Middle Ages who condemned Jews as “Christ-killers” and denounced them for refusing to accept Christ as the Messiah. It was Christian ultranationalists who terrorized Russian Jews in the Pale of Settlement. It was in “Christian” England that the infamous blood libel originated. The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was published in “Orthodox Christian” Russia. It was in Catholic Spain and Portugal that Sephardic Jews were targeted by inquisitors and subsequently expelled. European Christian antisemitism birthed the Zionist movement. The historical culpability for modern antisemitism rests mostly on European Christians and this must be emphasized to members of the Jewish and Muslim communities. Shockingly, Europe is re-importing from majority-Muslim countries the antisemitic tropes it had created.

### *Fighting Antisemitism from the Top Down*

The geopolitical fault lines of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been superimposed onto Jewish-Islamic interfaith relations. These divisions play a more important role in today’s

antisemitism. With this in mind, the tensions between Jews and Muslims can be ameliorated. Using Israel's relationships with its neighbors to buttress this statement, international relations and popular sentiments are always dynamic. Within a century, Jews had gone from a tolerated minority in Muslim-dominated realms to bitter enemies forced to flee from intolerance.

Within 75 years, Israel has made peace with Egypt and Jordan, normalized diplomatic relations with a handful of Arab states, and has even engaged in talks to normalize relations with Saudi Arabia (the birthplace of Islam itself). As Americans, we must pressurize our elected officials into encouraging productive talks between Arab and Israeli leaders. The United States is uniquely positioned to exert meaningful influence over the actions of Middle Eastern states. Mitigating the repercussions of international politics will do the most to de-escalate tensions between the two groups. It is increased economic and security cooperation between Israel and the Arab countries under the aegis of the United States which is the most powerful weapon against antisemitism.

The signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020, while not a panacea, represents a path toward a brighter future. In the Middle East, the geopolitical and economic landscape has changed. One factor which has brought Arab states closer to Israel is the role America plays in the region. The United States' presence in the Middle East has had a stabilizing effect on the Arab-Israeli conflict. It was Anwar Sadat's desire to bring Egypt into America's security architecture which encouraged peace between Israel and Egypt. It is the shared foreign policy interests of the US and Jordan which tie the latter to the former and to Israel by extension.

Saudi Arabia's wish to sign a defense agreement with the United States has spurred it to make progress toward a normalization agreement with Israel. The moderate Arab states in the Persian Gulf such as Bahrain and the UAE, also American partners, have a vested interest in

changing their relationships with Israel and with antisemitism. Shared foreign policy interests (such as countering Iran), combined with the effects of globalization, have facilitated dialogue and cooperation between Arab states and Israel.

The Abraham Accords has put the issue of Palestinian statehood to the side, since Palestinian militant groups like Hamas are Iranian-backed proxy forces. Israeli-Arab relations are trending toward peace in spite of October 7th and Iran's efforts against this trend. In fact, Iranian backing of armed groups throughout the region has been a prime mover in bringing Israel and the Arab countries closer together.

Israel's normalization agreement with the United Arab Emirates gives us a look at the future, and it is indeed a bright future. A contributor to *The Jewish Chronicle* named Zoe Strimpel wrote an article in 2022 about Jewish life in the UAE. Toward the beginning of the article, Strimpel writes, "In deference to local laws, British universities banned all books by Jews, and those that mentioned Jews in their bibliographies; the British Council openly admitted to the banning of Jewish work."<sup>169</sup>

She mentions the signing of the Abraham Accords and the opening of flights from Israel to Abu Dhabi along with the construction of Moses ben Maimon synagogue, the first purpose-built synagogue in the Middle East in roughly a century. The article ends with "I reflected on how Dubai's storied but fundamentally alien culture, with all its luxuries, had become the surprising setting for what had seemed one of the happiest and healthiest Jewish communities I had ever encountered."<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Zoe Strimpel, "Dubai's New Tribe: What's it like being Jewish in the United Arab Emirates?," *The Jewish Chronicle*, April 14, 2022, <https://www.thejc.com/life-and-culture/dubais-new-tribe-whats-it-like-being-jewish-in-the-united-arab-emirates-oihm9b4z>.

<sup>170</sup> Strimpel, "Dubai's New Tribe..."

According to an April 2023 *Reuters* article, Israel wishes to cultivate closer ties to the UAE in order to gain more commercial opportunities in the Gulf. The UAE, meanwhile, wishes to benefit from Israeli expertise in various economic sectors, such as technology, security, water security, and energy.<sup>171</sup> The UAE-Israel CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement), which came into force in April 2023, grants Emirati products even further access to Israeli markets. This agreement eases cross-border trade with Israel and allows Emirati service providers to benefit from Israel's domestic service market.<sup>172</sup>

The culmination of Arab-Israeli cooperation could possibly manifest itself in a more monumental way. Under American direction, the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) was launched as an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative. This land and sea corridor would run from India, through the Gulf Arab states and the Levant (Jordan and Israel), and to the European Union through Greece. The ongoing conflict in Gaza has placed roadblocks on the corridor's progress, but this corridor could revolutionize global trade by lowering shipping costs and increasing the speed of shipments.<sup>173</sup>

There is more than just talk surrounding this project; Saudi Arabia has already pledged to invest \$20 billion in IMEC. The UAE has already prepared most of its rail infrastructure for this venture.<sup>174</sup> Admittedly, the events of October 7th and beyond have put the future of IMEC into

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<sup>171</sup> Rachna Uppal and Lisa Barrington, "UAE Plans Long-Term Economic Ties with Israel despite Political ...," *Reuters*, April 4, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/uae-plans-long-term-economic-ties-with-israel-despite-political-strains-2023-04-03/>.

<sup>172</sup> "UAE-Israel Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement," UAE Ministry of Economy, accessed February 27, 2024, [https://www.moec.gov.ae/en/cepa\\_israel](https://www.moec.gov.ae/en/cepa_israel).

<sup>173</sup> Abdul Moiz Khan, "The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC): Too Little...," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, December 12, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/91214>.

<sup>174</sup> Anchal Vohra, "The Uncertain Future of the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor," *POLITICO*, January 8, 2024, <https://www.politico.eu/article/the-uncertain-future-of-the-india-middle-east-europe-corridor/>.

question, but there are still parties invested in the successful completion of the corridor. Put bluntly, economics trumps ideology.

The “normalization” of relations between Muslims and Jews is an end goal that must be pursued and spearheaded by those willing to make a sincere effort toward such a goal. Make no mistake, this is a road filled with obstacles and roadblocks. Following the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Egyptian president Anwar Sadat talked of building a “shrine to peace” on Mount Sinai. This shrine would feature a church, synagogue, and mosque for the three major monotheistic faiths to come together.<sup>175</sup> The shrine was never built and Sadat would pay with his life in the pursuit of peace. He was assassinated by a member of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1981. Sadat’s vision, in spite of his violent death, is still a vision that must and can become a reality. Jews, Muslims, and Christians can not only coexist in peace, but can also find common ground for productive cooperation and history has proven this to be true.

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<sup>175</sup> William Claiborne, “Quest for ‘peace Shrine’ Intrudes upon Mt. Sinai,” Washington Post, October 13, 1979, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/10/13/quest-for-peace-shrine-intrudes-upon-mt-sinai/94e1588b-21e5-48dd-b996-8cfaf5525aa3/>.

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