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ANTISEMITISM ONLINE: HISTORY'S OLDEST HATRED AND NEW MEDIA CHALLENGES

ABSTRACT

In this text I examine the online presence of antisemitism and the ways it is spreading on a global level. I focus on different forms of antisemitism, distributed through numerous social network platforms. I also dwell on the possible causes of this phenomenon, with all its consequences. Antisemitism has always been present in public discourse, and thus its presence in online space is not new or unusual, but what surprises is certainly a significant failure of responsible institutions to prevent this phenomenon and punish perpetrators. In the last ten years, the level of online antisemitism has significantly risen. Covert and overt types of antisemitism on social networks represent a serious social problem, and a threat directed not only towards the Jewish community, but also towards every society that fosters the values of human rights, equality, peaceful communication and non-violence in all its forms.

KEYWORDS

hate speech, antisemitism, new media, social media platforms

Introduction: Defining Hate Speech

In the broadest sense and in common parlance, hate speech can be defined as any case of spreading, expressing, supporting, or defending intolerance, hatred, and aggression towards individuals and/or social groups or communities related to their racial, religious, ethnical, and national orientation, or their gender or sex identities, their sexual preferences, their ability, or any other personal characteristic of theirs. Hate speech can also be recognized through insults based on stereotypes and prejudices connected with different social groups. All that can influence further marginalization of these groups or individuals. This sort of hate speech also encourages and promotes different types of discrimination and oppression. However, when we speak about definitions of hate speech which are followed by international organizations, public institutions or private companies, they are not the same, and they might significantly differ, which is determined by the cultural context in which they are created, or

by political climate in which they are applied. In the other words, there is no unitary or universal definition of hate speech. The 2019 United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech determines the term hate speech “as any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colours, descent, gender or other identity factor” (United Nations 2019: 2). This document stresses all forms of hate speech as harmful, but not all of them are forbidden by international law. Also, it is stated in the same document that the international law applies the prohibition only in cases of certain hate speech defined as incitement. Incitement is a very dangerous form of speech that is enacted with the clear intention and goal to invoke discrimination and violence whose consequence can be atrocity crimes of terrorism. Following that and according to international law, each and every state should adopt legal regulations that prohibit all actions defined as very dangerous form of speech, or incitement. That actually means that all the other forms of hate speech which are seen as less dangerous according to the international law don't have to be legally banned on the level of individual countries. This fact largely complicates the process of problem solving when it comes to discrimination and hate speech.

Types of hate speech can be different, and they include verbal expression, but also written expression, image, sound, and video material designed and distributed into the public discourse. Hate speech can be present within public panel speeches, lectures, in print material such as books, brochures, pamphlets, or posters, in public spaces in the form of graffiti, or as an audio or video material presented through conventional media, or through new media channels. A very big problem today is also hate speech that occurs on the internet, which is a public space in itself, but it is not always fully regulated by the laws applied in a certain country. This impossibility of application of the law comes from the internet's decentralized structure, as well as from the anonymity of people or groups that spread hate speech. Because of this, it is very important to create and develop different mechanisms of self-regulation which would go in line with the development of information technology. Premoderation or moderation of the comments left by internet users, especially those who follow internet portals of electronic media is one of the ways in which hate speech can be prevented and disabled. However, besides internet portals, huge problem lies in social networks too, where anyone, anonymous or not, can spread hatred through writing, images, audio or video messages. This is the reason why the European Commission took necessary steps, and opened cooperation with IT companies, so the online hate speech could be prevented and stopped. The Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online was signed on 31 May 2016 by the European Commission and Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Microsoft-hosted consumer services. Instagram and Google+ have joined the Code of conduct in early 2018, and TikTok have joined in September 2020. The Code of conduct is binding IT companies, and ensuring the

standards and rules which their users have to follow, together with procedures applied in cases of breaking the established rules.

In this text I will focus on the specific antisemitic hate speech, or, more precisely, on antisemitism present in new media, particularly in online social media and social networking services such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and online video sharing and social media platform YouTube. The appearance of antisemitism in new media globally is nothing unexpected. However, what surprises is the absence of use of the established regulatory mechanisms, defined through the standards and rules which would ensure prevention of antisemitic context appearance on the internet portals and on social media platforms. This was the topic of research conducted in 2021 by the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH). This research covered the process of locating antisemitic posts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube and TikTok through the time period of six weeks – from May 18th to June 21st 2021. All antisemitic posts that were collected could be defined as a content that explicitly breaks standards and rules previously defined by social networks. Further on, these posts were reported to the social media platforms, in the ways that those platforms themselves suggested. Afterwards there was another revision, with the goal of seeing if the reported content was deleted, or marked in an adequate way. The revision had the following result: “the platforms acted on fewer than 1 in 6 reported examples of antisemitism. The posts that we reported for this analysis received up to 7.3 million impressions. Facebook and Twitter showed the poorest rate of enforcement action” (CCDH 2021: 4). This situation is pretty much worrisome, because in absence of an adequate regulation of social media content, social media platforms start to be recognized as the safe places for spreading antisemitic messages and hate speech in general. Besides that, in this way, antisemitic content stays on social networks, and thus it collects more and more views and shares, which then reaches greater number of people.

Antisemitism and Antisemitic Discourse

In order to better understand the problem of antisemitic content in the online space and on social networks, it is necessary to define antisemitism as a term, and antisemitic discourse through which these prejudices, stereotypes, and hate speech directed towards Jews and Jewish communities are produced. In the direct translation, the word anti-semitism means intolerance and/or hatred towards all the semitic people, although in practice it is not actually the case. This term is being in use since 1879, and it was used from the beginning as a term designating intolerance and hatred towards Jews. After secularization of Europe which happened in the nineteenth century, in certain social circles it was no longer acceptable to understand religion as the base of hatred towards Jews, so the new term was needed to mark the old hatred. The new term was made by Wilhelm Marr, a German publicist who encouraged hatred towards Jews, with the intention to accentuate race as the base for conflicts between Jews and other nations. In this way the old term, “Jew-hatred”, which was tied

to Christian intolerance towards Jews, was abandoned. In the same time the very word Jew was wiped out, and the newly established neologism, antisemitism, was made to sound more neutral (Chanes 2004; Laqueur, Tydor Baumel 2001). Moreover, the new term should have sounded as a term which signifies a concept supported by some kind of a scientific paradigm, and the truth was that behind the word and the concept it was nothing else than pseudo-scientific racist theories of those times that led to newly constructed hatred towards Jews, based on the concept of race (Ben-Rafael 2019). Historically speaking, the religious difference as the base for intolerance and persecution of Jews existed as early as in the Roman times, and later it was spread through spreading of Christianity, and soon it became the main argument for destruction and persecution of Jewish people. Later on, in the nineteenth century, the racial argument was added to the mixture, and it became the key platform for exercising hatred and discrimination. In the other words, antisemitism is deeply rooted in intolerance towards religious, racial, ethnic, and cultural difference, and it stands for one of the forms of negative attitude towards the Other. The specific way of life, and a certain isolation of the Jewish community, wherever in the world, provoked and still provoke creation of stereotypes and myths related to it, defining Jewish community as a threatening Other that endangers everyone who is not a part of it (Milanović 2017).

Looking onto the stereotypes on which antisemitism was established, the antisemitism can be understood through three categories today; these categories are related to different time periods of further and closer history, but also to the occurrences of antisemitism forms today. The mentioned categories are not essentially different; they mostly cover the same concept evolving and being layered and influenced by the current geopolitical dynamics. This phenomenon shows historical adaptability of antisemitism. The first category, the classical antisemitism, is related to the period until 1945, and it is based on the old classical stereotype about Jews as corrupted, evil, greedy cheaters, the killers of Christian and non-Jewish children, and as people obsessed with power. The second epoch starts after 1945, and it can be defined as the post-Holocaust phase of antisemitism, still tightly connected to the classical stereotypes, but with the new hatred added. The focus of this new layer of hatred is primarily expressed through negating the Holocaust as the horrendous crime which must not be forgotten. In this type of hatred the Holocaust is relativized and denied, together with denying the acceptance of responsibility for the genocide of Jewish people. The third epoch is related to the present times, and it is directly connected with so-called Israel-centered antisemitism (Schwarz-Friesel 2019: 313). Contemporary antisemitism, which is the antisemitism from the end of the twentieth century up until now, some authors also call *new antisemitism* or *neo-judeophobia*. These authors stress that this kind of antisemitism is largely based on the criticism towards Israel and Zionism. The specificity of the new antisemitism lays on the ability to globally unite three seemingly non-unifiable sides: left, right, and radical Islam (Ben-Rafael 2019). Within the discussion that was started in the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism

and Policy (ISGAP) in New York, the member of Canadian Parliament Irwin Cotler offered analysis of contemporary antisemitism, and he compared it to traditional, or classical antisemitism. Cotler stressed that the essence of the old and the new antisemitism is the same – both are based on denial of the right to self-identification. He says that: “classical or traditional Antisemitism is the discrimination against, denial of, or assault upon, the rights of Jews to live as equal members of whatever host society they inhabit. The new antisemitism involves the discrimination against the right of the Jewish people to live as an equal member of the family of nations – the denial of, and assault upon, the Jewish people’s right even to live – with Israel as the ‘collective Jew among the nations’” (Cotler 2009: 5). In order to make a difference between legitimate criticism directed towards the state politics of Israel and antisemitism, Israeli politician Natan Sharansky exhibited a “three Ds test”. This test was designed as a helpful tool, or criteria for detecting antisemitism in cases when it is covered by the criticism towards Israeli state politics. The three letters D stand for demonization, double standards and delegitimization. Demonization of Jewish state happens in cases of comparison of Israelis and Nazis, and/or Palestinian refugee camps and Auschwitz. Double standards appear with the criticism of Israel for the actions and politics also done by the other states which don’t get criticized for similar and even much harsher actions. Delegitimization comes with perceiving the existing of the State of Israel as simply wrong, which actually leads to denial of the right for Jews to have their own country (Sharansky 2004).

The definition of antisemitism which is often in use today and can be seen in different reports and hate speech analyses in the public sphere was established in 2016 by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), and it is marked as non-binding working definition. The definition is following: “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities” (IHRA 2016). As an additional explanation with this definition, IHRA gives a list of the examples of contemporary antisemitism which we may encounter in public sphere: calls on murdering or harming of Jews, or justification of such crimes; spreading the stereotypes, prejudices, false claims and accusations with the goal of dehumanization and demonization of Jews; reinforcing myths about Jews controlling the media, social institutions, even the world geopolitical order; accusing the Jews and Jewish people for the real or imagined crimes; denial of the Holocaust, as well as individual crimes done on Jewish people in the Second World War; accusing all Jews for loyalty to the Jewish community, or to the State of Israel if they are not its residents; accusing all Jews for the political moves of the State of Israel; using the known antisemitic symbols and illustrations to represent citizens of Israel, and comparing the politics of the State of Israel to the Nazi politics. All these examples of antisemitism expressions are present on social media in the form of textual posts, images, or audio/video materials.

Antisemitic Conspiracy Narratives

The results of numerous studies show that the amount of antisemitic posts on social networks grew more and more over the last decade, and especially since Covid-19 pandemic started (Hübscher, von Mering 2022; Comerford, Gerster 2021; Gunz, Schaller 2022; Cohen et al. 2021). Within the research of European Commission it was discovered that from the moment when pandemic started, there was a rapid multiplication of antisemitic conspiracy narratives in the online space. Practically, the global public health crisis was used for spreading the hatred and intolerance towards Jews. This practice is not new nor unexpected, and it is actually a very common phenomenon. The situations of crises, in combination with already existing stereotypes, produce the abuse and misinterpretation of facts, leading to the old image of supposedly evil and conspiracy-oriented Jews. As I already stressed in the previous parts of the text, stereotypes and prejudices towards Jewish people that have been around for centuries are just being developed and adapted so they could fulfill the same role in different times, world events and new situations. Because of religious difference, first of all, Jews are marked as the threatening Other with which all the other people (others-than-Other) should not and must not have anything in common. This attitude puts the Jews in the place of a dangerous Other that is to be isolated and persecuted. This kind of perception of Jewish people led not only to the institutional discrimination, but also served as a base for imagining different stories in which Jews were seen as pure evil during many centuries. False statements and fabrications about Jews were especially present and multiplied during Middle Ages, when they were used as a justification for different formal bans, controls, and for torturing and killing Jews throughout Europe. In the very beginning of bubonic plague epidemic in the fourteenth century, which was also known under the name “The Black Death”, it was not long before Europe witnessed another antisemitic story about “Jewish poisoners of the wells”. This story mentioned the Jews that came from France to Southern Germany in 1348, allegedly with the intention to exterminate Christians. The fear of the unknown disease that quickly spread throughout Europe was followed by the typical example of conspiracy narrative that involved the story of Jews as the main cause of big number of deceased. Together with these rumours, there were whole lists and descriptions of Jews, the “accused poisoners”, that served as the basis for torturing the members of Jewish communities for the acts that were never committed. The whole Jewish communities were persecuted and killed just on the ground of this horrendous idea (Grebner 2013: 64–65).

Through the history, there were lots of conspiracy narratives in which Jews were accused for all the misfortunes that happened to the humankind. The big portion of these stories and myths live even today – they just reappear in new variations of the story that is refabricated, so they could be related to contemporary crises and times we live in. Today we call these theories conspiracy theories or conspiracy myths, although some authors think that they should be called conspiracy fantasies, because of the nature of their content

(Allington, Joshi 2020; Allington et al. 2020). Jews were always a part of narratives in the majority of actual conspiracy fantasies in which they are presented individually, or joined with some other groups of people (Berlet 2009; Önnersfors 2021). Antisemitic narrations regarding Covid-19 pandemic were placed as the series of conspiracy fantasies, and lots of them were contradictory, pointing to completely different ideas about the alleged “guilt” of the Jews. The Jews were accused for creating the virus, for intentionally spreading the virus in order to kill all those who are not Jews, and then they were also accused that they were, with the help of media, fabricating the pandemic to invoke fear and panic among people. With the appearance of vaccines, new fantasies emerged, especially the one that sees all the vaccine programs as being under control of the Jews which wanted to, as it is said, sterilize, control, and/or kill all the non-Jews, all of it with the help of the vaccines they invested in, and the money harvested from that protocol. (Comerford, Gerster 2021; Gunz, Schaller 2022; Cohen et al. 2021). Parallely to this, fantasies that were already present before the pandemic such as a “secret chipping of the people” or “5G technology” were automatically connected to the narratives of pandemic, and they led to another layer of the same old hatred. The most famous example of such ideas is the thought that “people will be secretly microchipped through the vaccination process, so they could be controlled through 5G technology” (Önnersfors 2021; Mulhall 2021).

Antisemitism in Online Space

The placement of conspiracy fantasies in online space enables the content to be very available to very large amount of people in a very short time. Often unidentified as hate speech, such content escapes censorship, and circulates even in the online spaces with good moderation and strong rules for a long time. One of the tactics that are used in order to escape censorship is applying coded language, or association terminology such as elite, globalists, bankers, and so on. These words are not classified as insults by themselves, but in a certain context they can turn into antisemitic messages. It is believed that precisely because of this mimicry, the antisemitic conspiracy fantasies are considered to be one of the most often used form of antisemitism which can be seen on mainstream platforms of social networks, despite strong regulations and community standards (Mulhall 2021). As a reaction to multiplication of hate speech, disinformational speech, and conspiracy fantasies on social networks during the first month of pandemic, coalition Stop Hate for Profit (SHFP) started the campaign for preventing antisemitism in 2020. Campaign was supported by great number of non-governmental organizations, citizen groups, equality groups, celebrities, USA Congress, but also by thousands of businesses that ceased to invest in Facebook and Instagram advertisements. The results of this campaign and its pressure led to certain positive changes, but soon it was clear that these changes are not enough, and a lot more effort is needed, especially with antisemitism on Facebook (SHFP 2021). All this information is pretty

much worrisome, if we have the reach of internet and social networks in mind. The specific challenge here lies in social media role in informing people about the pandemic, which was never done too well by formal institutions – neither by the state or through science. Besides pandemic and the issues of safety measures, there is an issue of infodemic too. Infodemic stands for an excessive quantity of information spreading through digital and physical channels, making it hard to recognize and divide true from false news (WHO 2021). In search for information, people turn to social networks and alternative media, in which they can find overabundance of information, of which most are not true, or they are based on conspiracy theories.

One of the important influences on a trend of multiplication of antisemitic messages in online space during the previous 10 years is certainly an expansive social network development, which brought the increase of number of their users globally. According to the information given by DataReportal in the end of 2011, there was a little bit more than two billion internet users all over the world, while the decade later, in the end of 2021, this number peaked to 4.9 billion users. Current trend shows the possibility of the users number going as high as five billion by the middle of 2022. If we look only at the numbers of social media users, in the end of 2011 it was a little bit less than 1.5 billion active users globally (22% of the total global population at that time), and it grew to more than 4.5 billion by the end of 2021 (57,6 % of the total global population). At the end of 2021 the number of active Facebook users multiplied 3.5 times, and it reached 2.9 billion, compared to 2011, when it was counting a little bit more than 800 million active users globally. Moreover, at the moment, 7 different social media platforms have more than 1 billion active users monthly, and it is estimated that a typical social media user visits 6.7 different platforms every month. The overall time that a typical user invests in social networks daily also significantly increased during the last decade (Kemp 2021). These numbers show that communication through internet and social networks on the global level became significant part of social life, so hate speech and antisemitism took their own online space together with the newly created mechanisms of spreading hatred, intimidation, and discrimination of Jews. Also, the problem is not just the online antisemitism, for online hate speech usually corresponds to non-online hate crimes. In this case, with the rise of online antisemitism, antisemitism incidents occur more and more in the non-online space too.

Hate speech and violent rhetoric present on social media often spill out of it too, and they can serve as an incentive to hate crimes, and as a serious threat to targeted community and individuals belonging to it. For example, crimes done by Robert Bowers and John Earnest in USA were motivated by antisemitism, and they were announced on the social networks. Before killing one person and before he wounded three more in the synagogue Chabad of Poway in San Diego, John Earnest had published his antisemitic manifest on the 8chan platform. This crime happened in 2019. Six months earlier, immediately before he killed eleven persons and wounded six of them in the synagogue of Pittsburgh, Robert Bowers announced it on the social network Gab (Barak-Cheney,

Saltiel 2022). Because of this mass murder, the social platform Gab attracted new users, and in spite of it all, it survived as a place in which far-right extremists groups recruit new members. The especially problematic fact is escaping safety and security policies of the networks, as well as escaping stronger policies of moderation and deleting of hate speech. This directly leads to social networks becoming safe spaces for extremists which use the networks not only for their antisemitic moves, but also as a firm base for gathering like-minded people. Also, social networks became a base for organizing live gatherings in form of “hate camps” and training camps outside online space. What is particularly troublesome is that there is always a possibility that the ultra-right groups will create a parallel structure of social networks which would not be easily identifiable, traceable, controlled or regulated (Miller 2022). In support of that, we can exhibit the antisemitic announcement from October 2021, posted through the account of social network Gab, which states the following: “We’re building a parallel Christian society because we are fed up and done with the Judeo-Bolshevik one” (Anti-Defamation League 2021a).

Today numerous researches and analyses of media content turn their focus onto the presence of antisemitism on social networks. These analyses are usually being done by different governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations. According to the research done by Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) in October 2021, during three months, there was more than 4000 separate usages of terminology connected to Holocaust denial on the big social networks such as Twitter and Reddit, and also on the platforms with minimal moderation such as Gab, 4chan and 8kun, and on internet forums Stormfront and VNN Forum which are already established as racist and xenophobic online spaces. Results of the research showed that of all the analysed content in which the Jews are mentioned, almost 35% is related to the content containing negative attitudes towards them, while 25% of the content which mentions Jews are in the same time directly antisemitic, using different antisemitic stereotypes. All monitored platforms use English language as a language of communication and all of them are public, which means that they can be found by anyone (Cohen et al. 2021). According to the report given by Community Security Trust (CST) in Great Britain, in 2021 there was an increase of anti-Jewish hate incidents by 34%, comparing to the year 2020. The report states that this is the biggest number of yearly antisemitic incidents in the UK which was recorded by CST ever (CST 2021: 16). CST is dedicated to monitoring and recording the cases of antisemitic presence and appearance in the UK from 1984. This organization published their research results together with the Antisemitism Policy Trust in the end of 2021, and it was estimated that there are 495 000 explicitly antisemitic tweets in English language yearly. These tweets are available to all the online users in Great Britain (CST et al. 2021). One study that the European Commission published in 2021 shows that during Covid-19 pandemic there was a significant rise of the number of antisemitic posts in French and German language on the social networks such as Twitter, Facebook and Telegram. This data was collected from January 2020

to March 2021, monitoring 272 French language and 276 German language accounts and channels that served as platforms for spreading antisemitic content related to pandemic. It was the number of over 4 million posts that was collected on that occasion, and 180 000 of them contained antisemitic references. Most of the antisemitic posts with the antisemitic keywords were collected on Telegram (38 000) and Facebook (17 000). Keywords lists consisted of French and German words, and some English terms were included. The data obtained by comparing the first two months of 2020 (pre-pandemic period) with the first two months of 2021 (during the pandemic) show a seven-fold increase in antisemitic posting on the French language accounts, and over a thirteen-fold increase in antisemitic posting within the German channels. This study also showed that a very small number of accounts can create a very large amount of antisemitic content. For example, only 5% monitored accounts in German language created 50% of all the antisemitic content (Comerford, Gerster 2021).

These numbers point to a serious presence of antisemitism on the internet, and on the social networks. It seems that the online space has established itself as a fruitful and safe space for spreading hate speech, and placing the antisemitic propaganda often completely surpasses moderators and security standards. The most problematic content is certainly the one which IHRA defines as antisemitism, but the individual state laws do not see it as such. The state laws often see these crimes not as a hate crime, and thus they can not be prohibited or deleted. In that way this content stays on social networks, although it can fully be defined as harmful. Antisemitic content is often exhibited through coded language or through implicit, allusive, disguised or subtle ways, so it can not be easily detected and reported, or later analyzed through statistics. The way in which social networks work enables antisemitic messages to spread to a big number of users very quickly, which produces huge damage even if they are later deleted. However, political scientist and social media researcher Michael Bossetta shows that it might not be so important to focus on the quantity of antisemitic content on social networks, since it is not an all-pervasive practice of majority of the users. According to Bossetta, it would be more important to notice the potential of such a content in radicalizing individuals or groups, and to determine why certain people are more prone to radicalization (Bossetta 2022). In any case, here it is important to stress that, inspite of a small percent of antisemitic posts in comparison to a total number of posts on certain social network, the presence of antisemitism in online space is not a benign phenomenon at all. Lots of researches and analyses which focus on personal experiences of members of Jewish communities all around the world show that there is already a serious worry, and a feeling of personal endangerment, and that it is completely connected to the exposure to online antisemitism. Negative experiences on social networks in the forms of insults, threats, and other types of harassments negatively impact psychosocial well-being of the individuals towards whom the assaults were directed. Even if the assault happened in an online space, people can still feel insecure, frightened, upset, or they can even fear for their own life – especially in cases where we

do not deal with a lonely incident, but with a long-term process directed from one or several accounts (Czymbek 2022).

The results of the study which was conducted by European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights showed that 89% of interviewees think that there has been much more antisemitism in the last five years than in the years before. “They assess antisemitism as being most problematic on the internet and on social media (89 %), followed by public spaces (73%), media (71%) and in political life (70%).” This study was dealing with experiences and perceptions of antisemitism in twelve countries belonging to European Union, and reached almost 16,500 individuals who identify as being Jewish. Also, according to the research of American Jewish Committee (AJC) that was published in 2020, 37% American Jews confirmed that they have been victims of antisemitism in the last five years. Of these 37%, 22% were directly targeted by antisemitic remarks online, or through social networks. “Of the 22% of American Jews who were the targets of antisemitism on a social media platform, a clear majority of 62% encountered it on Facebook, 33% on Twitter, 12% on Instagram, 10% on YouTube, 5% on Snapchat, 2% on TikTok, and 10% elsewhere. Slightly more than half of respondents (53%) said the social media company or online service to which they reported having encountered antisemitism took action in response to their complaint, while 46% said it did not.” (American Jewish Committee 2020: 3). The data that AJC published in 2021 related to the exposure to antisemitism from September 2020 to September 2021 showed that during that time 24% of American Jews have been victims of antisemitism, while 12% said that they had been the targets of antisemitism online, or on social media. “Of American Jews who have been the targets of antisemitism online or on social media, nearly one in five (18%) said it made them feel physically threatened.” (American Jewish Committee 2021: 5). What these studies don’t strictly define is the way in which online exposure to antisemitism was happening – meaning, if it was done through public posts, or through threats sent by direct messages, instant messaging services, or dating apps. Lots of these platforms are non-traceable because of encryption, so we can not collect data, except if the survey or the interview explicitly ask respondents to precisely locate the exact part of online space where they faced antisemitism personally.

When it comes to the forms of antisemitism in online space and on social networks, they can be divided into different categories. One of the criteria can be severity or intensity of seriousness of hate speech, following the level of direct danger that these messages carry and imply. In that kind of sense, antisemitism can be graded from the extreme, defined as very dangerous form of speech, to the more covert forms of antisemitism often camouflaged as anti-Zionism, or as some sort of political criticism directed towards the State of Israel. The extreme forms of antisemitism would include direct death threats, violent threats, or threats that involve destruction of one’s property. The extreme forms of antisemitism also include direct calls for violence towards Jewish people, or even indirect threats that encourage or justify killing or harassing Jews. A little bit less extreme form of online antisemitism includes different

forms of toxic language such as spreading stereotypes and prejudices, insults, belittling, villification, humiliation, swearing or other forms of vulgar speech, as well as dehumanization and demonization of Jewish people and individuals. This form of antisemitism is especially harmful and it can mobilize larger number of people, while in the same time directly endangering individuals or groups. Covert antisemitism, as a separate category of hate speech directed towards Jews can be divided into two groups. The first group covers antisemitic expressions known as practice of dog whistling, which is being done through coded language, associations, through using of specific symbols, or through combination of all the mentioned above. Some of the examples would be, for example, putting the word Hollywood into triple parentheses – (((Hollywood))), or the word media – (((media))), so it would point to a belief that both Hollywood and mainstream media are under Jewish control, or used for Jewish propaganda. During Covid-19 pandemic triple parentheses was being added to the word virus too – virus – (((virus))), so it would signify the belief that coronavirus was artificially made by the Jews, leading to a thought that pandemics too is under Jewish control (Cohen et al. 2021; European Commission 2021). This form of expression is used so the real meaning of the message would be hidden, and the author would escape criticism or punishment. In the same time, the meaning of triple parentheses is quite direct if a person knows how to read it, and the message is successfully communicated.

The second version of covert antisemitism would include specific excessive criticism of the State of Israel, and of its politics. This criticism is often placed under a so-defined “care for human rights”, but it is actually closer to antisemitism than to a genuine care. Antisemitism researcher Monika Schwarz-Friesel states that this type of antisemitism is particularly present in online space, and that the empirical data show that what is in question is “Israelization of antisemitism, the most dominant manifestation of Judeophobia today” (Schwarz-Friesel 2019: 311). Findings from a long term study *Antisemitism in the World Wide Web* which Monika Schwarz-Friesel led from 2007 to 2017 and published in 2018, reveals that more than 33 percent of antisemitic online comments are implicitly or explicitly connected to Israel (Schwarz-Friesel 2018: 8). Of course, not all of the criticism towards the State of Israel is antisemitic; but if it is disproportionately big or harsh comparing to criticism aimed at other states for doing the same or similar policies, and if it accuses all Jews for the political decisions of the State of Israel, if it uses all the existing stereotypes and prejudices about Jews, it can definitely be defined not as criticism, but as antisemitism. Practically seen, these findings proved to be true, since during or after the conflict in which Israel is being included, there was always an increase of the number of verbal or physical incidents and attacks on Jews all around the world. These incidents show that anti-Israel and anti-Zionist rhetoric and campaigns influence promotion and spreading of antisemitism, while in the same time endangering Jews living on all the continents (Anti-Defamation League 2021b). In the other words, being overt or covert, antisemitism is always harmful, and it can lead to the escalation of violence.

Instead of a Conclusion

In order for this serious problem to be taken care of, it is necessary to go through a couple of different steps which first invoke the activities related to legal frameworks, both on the international and national levels. Then, it is necessary to continually monitor the implementation of these laws. Also, because the prohibition of hate speech is directly related to the social network popularity, profit might as well be the exact cause of ignoring the online antisemitism by moderation policies of the networks. That is why legal prohibitions such as financial fines might be necessary, so escaping the law would be less profitable than it is now. Besides that, it would be necessary to introduce harsher rules and bans on hate speech from the side of social networks themselves, and they should be moderated and monitored by educated moderator teams which would know how to recognize all sorts of covert antisemitism. In that way all the problematic content could be deleted, no matter if it is a text, image, or video material. In order to adequately introduce and retain these measures, it is important to invest in quantitative, but also in qualitative trans-disciplinary research. This would ensure that this phenomenon would be seen from different angles and perspectives, so it could lead to understanding all the mechanisms of its functioning and consequences. Currently the research on antisemitism in the social networks is mostly done within the projects of non-governmental organizations, and certain research institutes. Here we see mostly reports and quantitative research which focus on collecting data about the amount of antisemitic content, the way of its distribution, and its dynamic of appearance on the internet. However, besides this all, it should be necessary to develop academic programs within universities, which could offer all the necessary resources for education and conducting international research projects covering this topic. Establishing of these programs should create conditions for planning different research projects which would focus on social networks users, those who post antisemitic content, and those who react on it in different ways. These projects should also focus on bystanders and Jewish community, in order to understand the impact of this phenomenon to the Jewish and wider community. Moreover, what is needed is also a deeper analysis of the relation of online and non-online antisemitism, together with demographic characteristics and roles of all the actors of these phenomena. Besides this, it is important to develop strategies of resistance to online antisemitism and counter-narratives, and to track and analyze their efficacy and advancement. Education on this topic should be included in school programs from the early age on, so all the levels of education could contribute to further strategies of opposing and preventing hate speech and extremist narratives.

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Aleksa Milanović

Antisemitizam onlajn: najstarija mržnja u istoriji i novi medijski izazovi

Apstrakt

U ovom tekstu baviću se pojavom i širenjem antisemitizma u onlajn prostoru na globalnom nivou. Fokusiraću se na različite oblike antisemitizma koji se plasiraju i šire putem mnogobrojnih platformi društvenih mreža kao i na moguće uzroke ove pojave, ali i na posledice koje ona može proizvesti. Antisemitizam je u javnom diskursu oduvek bio prisutan i zato ne čudi njegova pojava i u onlajn prostoru. Međutim, ono što iznenađuje je neuspeh nadležnih institucija da tu pojavu spreče i adekvatno sankcionišu uprkos tome što je usled naglog razvoja društvenih mreža u poslednjih deset godina došlo i do naglog porasta antisemitskih sadržaja na internetu. Prikriveni i otvoreni antisemitizam na društvenim mrežama predstavljaju ozbiljan društveni problem i pretnju koja nije usmerena samo ka jevrejskoj zajednici već i generalno ka svakom društvu koje neguje vrednosti poput poštovanja ljudskih prava, ravnopravnosti, nenasilne komunikacije i nenasilja u širem smislu.

Ključne reči: govor mržnje, antisemitizam, novi mediji, društvene mreže