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Hunting Jews: The radicalization of antisemitism since October 7

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On October 7, Hamas and its collaborators murdered almost 1,200 innocent people, often in a sadistic and barbaric manner. In relation to the history of antisemitism, the massacre of October 7 can perhaps best be compared with earlier pogroms: for example those in 1903 in Kishinev in Russia, in 1929 in Hebron or in 1941 in Baghdad. In all these cases, Jews were also horribly tortured, raped and abused. There have been no such bloody outrages in Europe since 1946. Why? I suspect because the crime against humanity of the Holocaust was still fresh in people's minds. Pogroms were frowned upon due to their temporal proximity to the Shoah.

But this taboo fell away on October 7 - partly because of the mass applause that instantly greeted this massacre across the western world in lecture halls, at demonstrations and on social networks. it has become clear that what could best be described as the post-Holocaust phase of history is over; the murderous hatred and the willingness to kill Jews is back. Once again there are hunts for Jews, like last year in Amsterdam or the year before in Dagestan. Suddenly we see again the blood-red marking of houses where Jews live. In my first part I would like to recall these three events - Dagestan, Amsterdam and the spread of the red Hamas triangle - and in the second part I would like to say a few words about the role that Islamist Muslims play in this.

Let's start with the Russian Republic of Dagestan. In October 2023, a mob of 1,500 men stormed Dagestan's main airport to prevent the arrival of Jewish passengers on a flight from Tel Aviv. The plane was besieged with shouts of “Death to the Jews”; for its passengers it was “four hours of horror”. Their airport bus was then chased, pelted with stones and stopped. In the end, police officers rescued the group and flew them out by helicopter. Similar scenes unfolded outside the airport: Some of the demonstrators were stopping cars to check the personal identification documents of drivers and passengers as they searched for Israeli citizens. The previous day, in the nearby city of Khasavyurt, people stormed the Flamingo Hotel as it was believed that “Jewish refugees” had checked into the hotel. When the police arrived, they allowed protestors to check every room in the hotel to make sure it was “Jew-free”. After this, a message was posted outside the hotel prohibiting Jews from entering.

My second example comes from Amsterdam. It happened after a European Champions League football match between the Israeli club, Maccabi Tel Aviv, and Ajax Amsterdam. On the night of November 7 to November 8 last year, masked young men hunted down supporters of Maccabi Tel Aviv - not spontaneously, but in a well-organized and targeted manner. Some of the men carried Palestinian flags, in some videos they shouted “Allahu akbar”. They chased Israelis on motorcycles through the streets, beat them up and kicked them. Passers-by were shouted at to show their passports so that Israeli citizens could be identified and then assaulted.

Some victims were made to beg for mercy on their knees and say “Free Palestine”. One man jumped into a canal to escape his attackers, another was hit by a vehicle. 10 Israelis were injured, while hundreds more huddled in their hotels for hours, fearing they could be attacked. 2,000 Israeli fans were

eventually taken by police-escorted buses to the airport, where Israeli evacuation planes were waiting for them.

It later emerged that this well-organized assault had been prepared by the Palestinian Community in the Netherlands (PGNL) and PLFP supporters.

There was a WhatsApp group with 900 members supporting the mobilization. One member of that group boasted about joining the “Jew hunt” – his words. Drive your car “into those people” and “hit them hard”, said another one. There must be “at least one death”, dreamed a third WhatsApp member.

I would like to remind you that the slogan “hunting down the Jews” was last used in the 1940s, when German Nazis at the margins of the Holocaust hunted down and tracked down Polish Jews who were trying to hide in houses and forests in order to kill them mercilessly. “Hunt for the Jews” is the title of an important study published by Jan Grabowski in 2013 about this detail of Nazi history. On October 7, Hamas consciously or unconsciously picked up on this Nazi tradition: The terrorists sought out Jews systematically in order to kill or kidnap as many of them as possible. Because this mass murder was successful and was rarely unambiguously condemned, it inspired the subsequent acts in Dagestan and Amsterdam.

My third example has to do with the red triangle. Even in earlier pogroms, for example in Baghdad in 1941, the houses of Jews were marked in order to know who was to be killed and who was to be spared. The red Hamas triangle pointing downwards ties in with this tradition. In Hamas propaganda videos, it marks Israeli targets such as tanks or buildings before they are attacked. In Germany, these red triangles appeared in large numbers after October 7, particularly at universities and in places that are committed to Israel and against antisemitism. They are intended to mark targets and spread fear and

terror. They bear witness to the desire to kill Jews and were therefore banned in Germany a few months ago.

The hunts for Jews in Dagestan and Amsterdam and the mass spread of the Hamas triangle show that antisemitism has not only increased in quantity, but has also become more radicalized, aggressive and murderous. All over the world, the number of violent attacks on Jews and on non-Jewish opponents of antisemitism has soared. And in almost all cases, incited Muslims were at the forefront of these attacks. This applies to Amsterdam and Dagestan and, of course, to the massacre on October 7. The special role of Islamists as haters of Jews has been known for some time: Every single murder of a Jew in Europe since the beginning of this century, for example, has been committed by Islamists. Islamist leaders have also repeatedly called for a new, genuine Holocaust. What is new, however, is that incited Muslims are now taking October 7 as a model and coordinating to attack and terrorize Jews.

How can the Islamists' special hatred of Jews be explained? What is the meaning of the shouts of Allahu akbar that, as we know, accompanied the massacres of October 7? And why did the Islamist Iranian leadership applaud this mass murder? These are important questions that need to be answered if we really want to understand the crime of October 7 and the attack on the liberal world order that it unleashed.

Furthermore, a special feature of the Middle East played a role on October 7, which I can only outline today: that is, the Nazification of the Middle East conflict that began in the 1930s and still shapes the behaviour of Palestinian leaders to this day.

It was no coincidence that the Hamas terrorists on October 7 behaved like Nazis in Poland did 80 years ago. As early as the 1930s, Nazi Germany joined

forces with the Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin el-Husseini, and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state at all costs. They turned the territorial conflict over Palestine, which was resolvable, into a war of world views between Judaism and Islam, which was insoluble and, in their minds, could only be ended with the total victory of one side over the other. They misused Islam and established a reading of the Koran that was exclusively antisemitic.

The radio, a new medium at the time, played a decisive role in the brainwashing by Nazis and Islamists. The Arabic-language radio broadcasts from Zeesen, a town near Berlin, with which Goebbels bombarded the Middle East every evening between 1939 and 1945, combined the hatred of Jews from early Islamic sources with elements of European antisemitism. In his pathbreaking study „Nazi Propaganda For The Arab World“, Jeffrey Herf analysed the content of these broadcasts. For the Middle East, this six-year period of mass brainwashing proved to be a caesura that divided the history of this region into a before and an after. While in 1937 proposals for compromise still found a sympathetic ear in the Arab camp, a few years later this was no longer the case.

Moreover, there is a special feature of the Arab world: while it was indeed Nazified in terms of its view of the Jews and the Middle East conflict, the denazification that took place in the German-speaking countries after 1945 never occurred in the Arab world. Nowhere else have Adolf Hitler and the Holocaust been so openly defended after 1945 as in that region. The alliance between the Nazis and the Mufti has never been seriously criticized there. On the contrary: the terror against dissidents, which the Mufti established in the 1930s, continues uninterrupted to this day: in both Gaza and Ramallah, anyone who speaks out in favour of normal relations with Israel risks their life. At the

same time, the Nazi-like hatred of Jews, which we find faithfully reproduced in the Hamas Charter of 1988, has been further radicalized with the help of the Islamist martyr ideology and integrated into the global programme of Islamism. “We would rather die as martyrs. … We are ready to die and tens of thousands will die with us”, stated Yahya Sinwar, the mastermind of the Hamas massacre, in a speech.

Let me summarize:

The massacre of October 7 was neither a new Holocaust nor an isolated aberration, but the end of a historical period. Between 1946 and 2023, anti-Jewish pogroms were frowned upon in Europe due to their temporal proximity to the Holocaust. Since October 7, this taboo has been lifted: A Nazi-style war against Jewish existence is back. Once again, Jews are being marginalized, humiliated and physically threatened.

Non-Jewish society in particular must react to this. Firstly, by taking sides with the state of Israel and resisting all attempts at intimidation. Secondly, by strengthening the executive and legal instruments in the fight against anti-Jewish violence and its symbols. Thirdly, by giving considerably more attention and publicity to moderate Muslims who despise Islamism and antisemitism. And fourthly, by exposing the roots of Jew-hatred in the Middle East. It is regrettable to find such issues getting so little attention even at this conference. Unless this dimension of antisemitism is acknowledged, confronted and neutralized, the situation can only get worse.

The Contemporary Antisemitism Conference (March 29, 2025 – April 1, 2025) was organized by the London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism (LCSCA).