

Report recommends shutting down Israel's Ministry for Combatting Antisemitism

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Cover Image. Credit: Tel Aviv University

On the eve of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry at Tel Aviv University presents its third "For a Righteous Cause" Annual Report.

The sixty-five-page report reviews and analyzes initiatives and programs for combating antisemitism and racism in countries around the world, as well as projects to preserve Jewish heritage, and presents policy recommendations. At the beginning of May, TAU's Irwin Cotler Institute along with the Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry will publish the Annual Report on Antisemitism Worldwide, which will include the wave of antisemitism that followed the events of October 7. This report is in partnership with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL).

The authors of the "For a Righteous Cause" Report call on the Israeli government to shut down the Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combatting Antisemitism and divide its functions between the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose representatives maintain direct and close ties with Jewish communities worldwide.

According to the Report, the Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combatting Antisemitism has no substantial vision, and the few projects it promotes do not justify its independent existence. The Report describes, for example, the Ministry's attempt to collect reports on antisemitic incidents through a link on its website as "a particularly ineffective way to learn anything valuable about the phenomenon." Moreover, according to the Report, the link itself leads to an empty page with no option for reporting.

The authors maintain that the existence of multiple government agencies working to combat antisemitism creates redundancies and wastes valuable resources. They urge the government to present clear priorities for combating antisemitism focus on areas in which Israel has a relative advantage and respond to the actual needs of Jewish communities.

In one comprehensive article, the Report reviews dozens of events demonstrating a strong attachment to Israel and a stronger-than-ever commitment to fight manifestations of antisemitism. "On Oct. 7, the masques came off in many places, including some that pretend to be enlightened," says the Center's Head, Prof. Uriya Shavit. "But we would be wrong to say that 'the whole world is against us.' The last few months have shown that the Jewish people also have many friends who have learned the lessons of history."

According to Prof. Shavit, "In the fight against antisemitism, we see many slogans and speeches, but few action plans that set transparent, measurable, and attainable goals. If we want to reverse [current trends](#), we need to have new legislation and aggressive enforcement in relation to social media, alongside education and policing focused on a limited number of cities and regions in countries where the majority of physical attacks occur."

The Report notes that 2023 was characterized by multiple initiatives for preserving Jewish heritage, including the restoration of synagogues in Greece, Belgium, Lithuania, and other countries. An extensive review included in the Report tells the unique story of the magnificent synagogue in Vidin, Bulgaria, which, following extensive renovations after years of neglect, was opened this year as a museum.

Other articles in the Report describe, among other things, a project in Norway introducing [high school students](#) to Jewish history; the US National Strategy to Combat Antisemitism; the mass-scale arrests of

antisemitic football fans by the Amsterdam police; initiatives for promoting relations between Jews and African-Americans in the US; and the shared prayer space established in the UAE for the three monotheistic religions.

All articles in the Report include [policy recommendations](#) for improving existing plans. At the same time, according to Dr. Carl Yonker, the Center's Project Manager, the Report's purpose is also to "express gratitude toward those already working for the righteous cause and encourage others around the world to join as well."

Among other recommendations, the Report calls upon governments not to be satisfied with adopting national action plans for combating antisemitism but to set clear and measurable goals for these programs. The Report also recommends utilizing new technologies to enable the prosecution of individual antisemitic sports fans instead of enforcing collective punishments.

The Report includes a special interview with Hakan Can, an Austrian Muslim of Turkish descent, who serves as Deputy Head of the Department for Fostering Austrian-Jewish Heritage and Combating Antisemitism at the Federal Chancellery of Austria. Can relates how he came to dedicate his professional life to the fight against antisemitism, describes achievements in bringing Jews and Muslims closer in Austria, and speaks about the complex relations between Turks and Israelis.

Can adds, "While people may hold varying opinions on Israeli policies, with settlements and related issues often cropping up, it is crucial to separate those discussions from the events of October 7. The world witnessed an act of terror, and it must be unequivocally condemned as such. I expect every community to denounce it. The terrorist who attacks you today may target me tomorrow."

More information: Report: [cst.tau.ac.il/publications/for ... -annual-report-2024/](https://cst.tau.ac.il/publications/for...-annual-report-2024/)

Provided by Tel-Aviv University

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