

After 10/7: Normalization of Antisemitism in the West¹

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Abstract

The October 7, 2023, terrorist attacks against Israel (10/7) represented the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. Rather than triggering sympathy for the victims, most of whom were Jewish, 10/7 sparked a rise in antisemitism in Western diasporas. This rise cannot be satisfactorily explained in terms of radicalization. Radicalization is an increase in extremist attitudes and behavioral intentions relative to default societal norms. Thus, the radicalization hypothesis implies that the output of radicalization (in this case, antisemitism) is not normalized. This is unambiguously contradicted by data on incidence rates of antisemitism before and after 10/7 and other documentary evidence. Such findings indicate that antisemitism was normalizing before 10/7, and it is that normalization which set the preconditions for its explosive rise witnessed after 10/7. Misattributing the current wave of antisemitism principally to radicalization endangers Jews because such explanations can inadvertently minimize the breadth and severity of the problem.

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We must call things by their right name.

The truth is, the pogrom that should have been—and was, for a brief moment—the occasion for seamless solidarity with the dead and those who mourned them, produced the opposite effect: a gale of anti-Semitism.

Or, to call it by its right name, a tempest of hatred for Jews without precedent since the Second World War.

Bernard-Henri Lévy (2024, p. 80)

The Pogrom Before 10/8

On October 7, 2023, members of Hamas's armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, and no less than four other Palestinian armed groups breached Israel by land and air from Gaza. The 10/7 perpetrators murdered roughly 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals, approximately 70% of whom were civilians (Government of Israel, 2023). Two hundred fifty-one hostages were also

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taken into Gaza, of which roughly two-thirds were eventually returned alive in lopsided exchanges of criminals and pauses in Israel's military response to the atrocities committed that day. The terrorists who perpetrated the pogrom that day beheaded, burned, and assassinated many of their victims, who included babies, children, women, the elderly (including Holocaust survivors), and of course, men (Sunby, 2023). The perpetrators committed severe acts of sexual violence against multiple victims in multiple locations (Klar-Chalamish, 2024). They filmed their atrocities on GoPro cameras (Human Rights Watch, 2024), some gleefully relaying news of their murderous activities to their family members and to the world. To say that, on that day, Israelis and those foreign nationals caught up in the tragedy were victims of sheer barbarism borders on understatement. Aside from those directly targeted, 10/7 had a profound effect on the mental well-being of Israelis, triggering large increases in post-traumatic stress disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, depression (Levi-Beltz et al., 2024), concomitant increases in addictive substance use (Feingold et al., 2024), and burnout in Jewish mental health care professionals (Shklarski et al., 2025).

The commission of crimes against humanity in conjunction with their instantaneous propagation through social media was a stunning illustration of the refinement of the maturation phase of terrorism in which hyper-violence is projected virally through social media (Moghaddam & Marco, 2025). The reception to the attacks also demonstrated the degree to which support for terrorism was normalized in Palestinian society. The Palestinian Center for Policy Survey and Research (2024) reported that in December, 2023, 72% of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza believed Hamas's decision to attack Israel was correct. Such data show remarkable stability in the Palestinian Arab mindset. Pew public opinion survey data collected in the Palestinian territories showed 70% support for terrorism in 2009 and 68% support in 2011 (Mandel, 2013). Support for violence against Jews—especially Israeli Jews—as justified resistance has long been normative in the Palestinian Arab mindset.

10/8—An Explosion of Antizionist Antisemitism in the West

The 10/7 attacks did not only catch Israelis by surprise; Jews in diasporas quickly learned that the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust had just taken place and were united in shock,

anger, and trauma (Lee & Madhani, 2023; Russell et al., 2023). The surprise of the attacks, however, was compounded by what Mandel and Levit (2025) term “the second surprise attack of October 2023”—namely, the onslaught of antizionist antisemitism that spread across the Western world in the immediate aftermath of 10/7, and which continues unabated to this day. For a brief time, as Lévy (2024) eloquently put it in the opening quote, many world leaders expressed their sympathy and support. However, it did not take even until Israel retaliated militarily for crowds in several major Western cities, especially in their centers of intellectual excellence—their most elite universities—to come to the terrorists’ defense.

Western apologists for the perpetrators of 10/7 claimed that what had happened was not terrorism at all, let alone barbaric crimes against humanity, but legitimate, long overdue resistance. To these antizionist protesters, Israelis were not the victims of the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, but perpetrators of colonialism, apartheid, racism, and oppression of Palestinians, who deserved to be resisted in such a manner. The fact that Hamas and other terrorist groups targeted civilian noncombatants seemed acceptable, if not inconsequential, to the protesting crowds. Thus, their support of the perpetrators of these heinous crimes revealed deep moral and ethical failings in those who were ostensibly receiving the best education money can buy.

Nor was the opposition restricted to peaceful protest against the State of Israel. In Sydney, on October 9, a mere two days after 10/7, hundreds of protesters gathered outside the Sydney Opera House held placards and chanted “F- the Jews” (Narunsky, 2024). In a similar vein, Jews studying at prominent US universities were told to “go back to Poland” (namely, where many of Europe’s Jews were systematically murdered by the Nazis) and were routinely bullied and intimidated on campus (Bickerton, 2024). At Columbia University, the university administration urged the New York Police Department not to get involved in the antizionist encampment activities (Lederer, 2024), allowing Jew animus to fester. The antizionist movement also quickly adopted iconography imbued with violent messaging. For instance, shortly after 10/7, Black Lives Matter Chicago, which has approximately 60,000 members, posted a picture of the paraglider used by Hamas terrorists to infiltrate Israel with a statement saying “I stand with Palestine” (Riley, 2023). The Hamas inverted red triangle and “red hands” symbol, both of which symbolize violence against Israelis, were widely adopted by antizionist activists (Gregson, 2024). Popular chants of “Globalize the intifada” and “from the

river to the sea, Palestine will be free” were also messaging violence and even eliminationist antisemitism in the latter case, since the expression refers to a Jew-free Palestine.

Overt violent attacks, including murders, have also been witnessed. In the spring of 2025, Elias Rodriguez murdered Sarah Milgram and Yaron Lischinsky, two employees of the Israeli embassy who were attending an event at the Capital Jewish Museum in Washington, D.C. As Rodriguez was taken into custody, he chanted “Free Palestine!” (Mallin, 2025). In Toronto, a Jewish girls’ school, Bais Chaya Mushka Elementary School, was fired upon on three separate occasions in 2024 (Strauss, 2024). In Ottawa, a Jewish woman wearing a star of David was stabbed in the stomach in a Loblaw’s grocery store by the suspect, Joseph Rooke, a 71 year-old man with a history of posting antisemitic and antizionist hate online (Strauss, 2025). In Sydney, on December 14, 2025, two gunmen opened fire on Jews who were celebrating the first night of Hanukkah at Archer Park, near Bondi Beach, killing 15 people and wounding over 40 more (Ray, 2026). In Grenoble, on July 5, 2025, the home of Rabbi Yichya Lahiany was firebombed by 10 young Muslim men who threw propane bottles into the home in what French officials confirmed was a premeditated arson attack (Goldblatt, 2025). In Manchester, on October 2, 2025, on Yom Kippur, Jihad al-Shamie, a 35 year-old British citizen of Syrian descent rammed his vehicle into Jews attending service at the Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation, before exiting the vehicle and stabbing others (Shear et al., 2025). These examples, though geographically isolated, and very far from representing an exhaustive list of attacks, illustrate the extreme violence associated with the normalization of antisemitism in the West since 10/7.

Antisemitism post-10/7: Two Perspectives

The rise in antisemitic events in the West following 10/7 have been characterized in two predominant ways. In the first perspective, the events are described as a consequence of a radicalization process that leads the perpetrators of antisemitic acts—acts which may be anything from verbal slurs, such as “Hitler should have finished the job” to acts of physical violence, such as those illustrated above. For instance, an NPR interview last year was titled, “How self-radicalization and a ‘cauldron of extremism’ fuels antisemitic attacks” (Martinez & Johnson, 2025). In the second perspective, the same types of events are described as a

consequence of a normalization process that enables the spread of antisemitism in its various manifestations. For example, B'nai Brith of Canada Foundation's CEO, Simon Wolle, recently writing on the organization's mailing list, stated, "Antisemitism in Canada today is more visible, more organized, and more normalized than at any point in recent memory" (S. Wolle, personal communication, January 2, 2026).

The two perspectives differ in more than mere framing. There are substantive differences in what these perspectives imply and indicate, yet to the best of my knowledge, they have not been carefully contrasted. My thesis is that the rise of contemporary antisemitism in the West cannot be adequately understood in terms of radicalization because of both intrinsic deficiencies in the explanatory construct and inconsistency with empirical conditions which virtually all radicalization models imply. In contrast, I propose that the concept of normalization is fundamental to understanding the escalation of antisemitism in the Western diaspora post-10/7. Although radicalization, vague as the concept has been (Coolsaet, 2019; Neumann, 2013; Mandel, 2010; Sedgwick, 2010), will be familiar to much of the readership of this journal, the concept of normalization, which I introduce, may be less familiar. Accordingly, it deserves a preliminary attempt at definition.

Toward a definition of normalization

According to the New Oxford Dictionary of English, to *normalize* is to "bring or return to a normal or standard condition or state" (2001, p. 1263). This partly captures the idea—namely, that in the post-10/7 milieu, antisemitism in the West is in the process of becoming a normal or standard condition. However, it is useful to elaborate on this definition by noting that "normal" in this context may be indicated both statistically and normatively. Statistical evidence of normalization, most directly, takes the form of evidence for the increased incidence of antisemitic acts: simply put, when incidence rates of antisemitism increase over time, and when such increases are observed in multiple and disparate geographical regions of the West, it provides evidence that antisemitism is normalizing. One might think of this as the quantitative expression of normalization.

There is, however, a qualitative flip side to normalization, expressed as normative pressure towards acceptance and legitimization of antisemitism. Such pressures operate through socially sanctioned acts of omission or commission. For instance, when Jewish

students are physically obstructed on campuses by antizionist protesters, and the university administration does not intervene to protect the safety and security of Jews (US House of Representatives, 2024), the administrators serve to normalize antisemitism through their acts of omission (i.e., failure to act when action is morally required). When they justify their (in)actions by claiming that they respect free speech, they exacerbate harm through their speech acts (i.e., commissions), which alleviate their accountability pressures and exculpate the perpetrators of antisemitism at the victims' expense. In short, the normalization of a social phenomenon such as antisemitism is indicated by its rate and pattern of spread. Greater incidence and increasing incidence rates as well as spread over disparate regions or across subpopulations of a given region indicate that the normalization of the phenomenon is advancing. Evidence of normative pressures that enable such spread provide support for causal processes implicated in the normalized phenomenon.

The Radicalization Perspective

In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the US by al Qaeda, literature on radicalization as a precursor to terrorism dramatically expanded. As Canada's representative to a NATO research task group on the psychosocial, organizational, and cultural aspects of terrorism from 2007-2009, I witnessed firsthand how impactful the concept of radicalization was on practical, intergovernmental discourse regarding terrorism, where much discussion was focused on how individuals became radicalized and how they might be deradicalized as a means of reducing the probability of future terrorist activities. At the time, the most prominent accounts were stage (or "staircase") models that lead from a nonradicalized normal state to an extremist state (for a review, see McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017). For instance, according to Silber and Bhatt (2007), two senior intelligence analysts from the New York Police Department's Intelligence Division, the path to radicalization involves four stages including pre-radicalization, self-identification, indoctrination, and "jihadization." This model assumes that radicals who commit terrorism start out "normal" (i.e., not radical) and then move along a path towards radicalization. Later accounts importantly addressed the rigidity of fixed stage models, by focusing on individual, group-level, and mass-level mechanisms that enable radicalization and increase the probability of terrorist action (e.g., Hafez & Mullins, 2015;

McCauley & Moskalenko, 2011; Sageman, 2011). Later accounts also addressed the fact that the probability of committing terrorist acts, even given significant advancement along the stages of the radicalization process as described by stage models, was low by postulating distinct attitudinal and action pathways toward (or “pyramids” of) radicalization (e.g., Moskalenko & McCauley, 2009; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2014).

Notwithstanding these significant improvements in radicalization theorizing, a fundamental problem with the radicalization concept is that it necessarily remains evaluative, subjective, and relativized. As others have noted (e.g., Mandel, 2010; Sedgwick, 2010), what may be perceived as extreme, radical, and undesirable from one perspective might be perceived as normal and desirable from another’s perspective. If radicalization refers to an *increase* in extremism, and if what is deemed extreme is in the eye of the beholder, the explanation of behavioral acts, such as terrorism or antisemitism, in terms of radicalization must be a subjective, essentially narrative exercise rather than a scientific undertaking.

Radicalization accounts, whether implicitly or explicitly, assume that radicals deviate from one or more non-radicalized norms that can have both attitudinal and behavioral aspects. Radicals may inhabit spaces where other radicals share their views, but these views are perceived as aberrant and generally shunned by the broader society in which they live. That is, normative societal pressures that determine what is permissible in both thought and action restrict radicalization. If that were not so, the very definition of radicalization would be vacuous, as there would be no basis for differentiating it from the normative background against which it represents deviance. For instance, as noted earlier, a majority of Arabs polled in Gaza, Judea, and Samaria after 10/7 regarded the massacre as justified months after the attack and roughly one year after the attack, as well (Palestinian Center for Policy Survey and Research, 2024). The results reaffirmed what was shown more than a decade earlier in other public opinion polls, namely, that most Palestinians view terrorism and political violence as justified (Mandel, 2013). Thus, in that societal context it is not radical to believe that the massacre was justified, but rather, normative. This is the problem of relativization that makes such accounts problematic (Mandel, 2010). The same attitude or action may be defined as radical in one context and as normative in another, and in any given context, the same belief or act may be seen as radical or normative (perhaps even divinely mandated) by different actors.

This assumptive scaffolding of radicalization theorizing can also motivate strategic narratives that are untrue. For instance, the view that Islamic extremism is the result of radicalization motivates a narrative in which the overwhelming majority of Muslims are peace loving towards non-Muslims and only a minuscule subset of “Islamists” become radicalized (Mozaffari, 2007). This narrative has been used for strategic messaging by both Republican and Democratic administrations in the US. For instance, speaking at the Islamic Center of Washington, D.C. on September 17, 2001, a mere six days after 9/11, President George W. Bush stated, “The face of terror is not the true faith of Islam. That’s not what Islam is all about. Islam is peace. These terrorists don’t represent peace. They represent evil and war” (§4). More pointedly, President Barack Obama stated in an interview, “...it’s very important for us to align ourselves with *the 99.9 percent of Muslims who are looking for the same thing we’re looking for—order, peace, prosperity*” (Halper, 2015, emphasis added). Yet ample public opinion survey data from predominantly Muslim countries refute such claims. For instance, analyzing Pew Global Attitudes Project data from 2011, Mandel (2013) found that one-third of Muslim respondents surveyed across Pakistan, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, Israel, Indonesia, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories indicated that they sympathized with Islamic fundamentalism. Closer to two-thirds (62%) of the same cross-national sample believed that Arabs were not involved in the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Do such polling results, such as those that show a majority of Palestinian Arabs supporting the 10/7 attacks, provide evidence of a radicalized society or a society in which the desirability of murdering Jewish civilians has been normalized? How would one tell the difference? When the education of children in a society routinely focuses on hating and even murdering Jews (Abrams, 2025), namely, where such education is normative, then is it not normal or “systemic” in such societies to be antisemitic? Would it not, in fact, be “radical” or “extreme” to buck that trend and, for instance, to value Jews as friends and neighbors and speak openly about the importance of doing so? Yet the impulse, even in cases in which antisemitism is endemic to society, is to describe the entire society as “radicalized.” This leaves the radicalization thesis unfalsifiable. In the section that follows, I argue that the radicalization thesis not only fails in the Middle-East context in which the 10/7 attacks were carried out, it also fails to explain the escalation of antisemitism in the West after 10/7.

Normalization of Antisemitism

The normalization of a social phenomenon can be studied in multiple ways. For instance, it could be examined from victim, perpetrator, or bystander perspectives (e.g., Hilberg, 1995). It could be studied in terms of the normal socio-political or psychological processes that underpin the phenomenon, much as such attempts have tried to understand the drivers of collective violence and genocide (e.g., Mandel, 1998, 2002; Rosenbaum, 1998). Normalization of antisemitism could also be explored in terms of how structural, functionalist, and hybrid accounts of antisemitism might differentially predict the probable renormalization of antisemitism given current geopolitical and cultural trends (e.g., Schäfer, 1997). In contrast to radicalization approaches, which almost invariably focus on the attitudes and behavior of real or potential perpetrators of terrorism, normalization studies can profitably test hypotheses by analyzing data from victims and about victims. Victim experiences provide valuable information about both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of normalization. Although each of the aforementioned approaches has merit and could shed light on the topic in different ways, I focus mainly on data that speaks to the victimization of Jews as this evidence is central to the normalization claims advanced here. Such evidence naturally includes data provided by victims, but it also includes documentary evidence such as law enforcement statistics and governmental reviews that speak to the contemporary victimization of Jews in the West.

Reported incidents

As noted earlier, a quantitative method of examining normalization of antisemitism from the victims' perspectives is by examining changes in antisemitic incidence rates over time and across regions. If antisemitism is the result of a small, radicalized social grouping that is countered through the normal organs of civic society, such as the educational system, law enforcement, and professional bodies, to name some important examples, one should expect its effects to be localized and not to rise over a sustained period of time. That is, antisemitism should not stably increase over time and, if such patterns were to occur, they should be limited geographically. Yet both of these patterns (escalation and expansion) are observed. Contrary to the radicalization hypothesis, there is ample evidence of both a recent

post-10/7 spike in antisemitism as well as a longer multi-year increase in Western countries. For instance, in Canada, there was a 125% increase in reported antisemitic incidents between 2022 (before 10/7) and 2024 (after 10/7) (B’nai Brith of Canada League for Human Rights, 2025). In 2024, 6,219 antisemitic incidents were reported in Canada, the largest number ever reported since B’nai Brith began tracking such statistics in 1982. In the US, 9,354 antisemitic incidents were reported in 2024, representing a 153% increase from 2022 (Anti-Defamation League, 2025).

Nor were these observed increases restricted to harassment. In Toronto, for instance—home to the largest Jewish community in Canada—the Toronto Police Service reported 164 hate crimes in the city in 2024, representing a 75% increase over the preceding year (J7—The Large Communities Task Force Against Antisemitism, 2025). In the US, antisemitic assaults increased by 77% and vandalism increased by 102% over the same two-year period (J7—The Large Communities Task Force Against Antisemitism, 2025). The near-decadal increase in reported antisemitic incidents from 2015 to 2024 was a staggering 893% (Anti-Defamation League, 2025), attesting to the fact that, while 10/7 was a triggering event, a longer term pattern of normalized antisemitism had already been underway. Indeed, it was before 10/7 that the Biden-Harris administration in the US released a national strategy on antisemitism, which stated:

Antisemitism is often called “the oldest hatred,” yet it remains all too present today—including in America. Acts of antisemitism are on the rise—including online harassment, vandalism, bomb threats, and violent attacks against Jewish institutions and Jewish people.² In 2022, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Christopher Wray noted that American Jews account for 2.4% of the U.S. population, but antisemitism drove 63% of reported religiously motivated hate crimes. *Perhaps most alarming, antisemitism has become increasingly “normalized” in American society.* (The White House, 2023, p. 6, italics added)

The increased incidence of antisemitism was not restricted to North America. In the same 2022 to 2024 timeframe, reported antisemitic incidents rose 112% in the UK, 260% in France, and 331% in Australia (J7—The Large Communities Task Force Against

Antisemitism, 2025). Boyd (2024) examined antisemitic incident reports in the UK by the Community Security Trust and verified that there was a substantial post-10/7 spike (a 64% increase), even after excluding incidents related to Israel or Zionism. Among the J7—namely, the seven countries with the largest Jewish Diaspora populations³—the highest rate of antisemitic incidents per 1,000 Jewish citizens in 2023 (the latest year for which data on all 7 countries is available) was in Germany (38.26 incidents reported), followed by the UK (13.77), and the lowest was in the US (1.41), followed by Canada (2.26). Boyd (2024) studied the frequency of reported antisemitic incidents by month for multiple years including after 10/7 and the spike observed in the countries already noted was pronounced and more extreme than in any previous period for Austria, Switzerland, Italy, The Netherlands, and Denmark; namely, for each country that was reported on. The J7 survey data suggest that the normalization of antisemitism is more advanced in Europe than in North America, but that the trend in both regions is towards increasing normalization of antisemitism. In light of these findings, it is perhaps also unsurprising that the highest rate of thinking about emigrating because of security concerns among a survey of Jews conducted in 13 European countries was in Germany, where 58% of respondents reported having given thought to emigration in the last 5 years (The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2024).

That the normalization of antisemitism was well underway before 10/7 is further supported by survey data of Jews living in the European Union. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2024) conducted a survey in June, 2023 (namely, months before 10/7) of 13 EU countries in which 96% of European Jews currently live. Of the 7,992 Jewish respondents in the study, 96% reported having experienced antisemitism in the past year and 80% felt that antisemitism had increased in their country over the 5 years before the survey. The report states:

The apparent normalisation of discrimination among respondents may partly explain why a mere 1% of them report incidents of discrimination to national equality bodies. Very low reporting rates contribute to discrimination against Jewish people remaining

³ The J7 includes Argentina, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the UK, and the US.

largely invisible, despite the racial and employment equality directives having been in force for nearly 25 years.” (2024, p. 21)⁴

A common reason cited for failure to report is that Jews believe no action would be taken by the relevant authorities, further pointing to the systemic basis of their experiences with antisemitism. Moreover, just under one-fifth (18%) of European Jews surveyed felt at least somewhat satisfied with their government’s actions for combatting antisemitism over the 5-year timeframe. In contrast, nearly half (47%) of European Jews surveyed were at least somewhat satisfied with public commemorations of the Holocaust in their countries. The disparity in these satisfaction rates is telling, as it highlights that Jewish opprobrium is not generalized, but rather reflects a widely shared view that governments are not taking adequate measures to keep Jews safe and secure.

Ambient antisemitism and normalization pressure on Jews in Western diasporas

The preceding statistics focus on only a tip of the iceberg since, as noted earlier, most antisemitic acts go unreported. As Boyd (2024) aptly noted:

The emphasis on incidents – i.e. physical, verbal, written or online assaults on the individual or small group – fail to capture the real-life effects on Jews of what might be termed ‘*ambient*’ antisemitism – defaced or torn-down posters, stickers, media reports, online comments, public demonstrations, etc. that, whether strictly antisemitic or not, create an overarching environment that many Jews find uncomfortable, offensive, alienating, frightening or downright hostile. (p. 22, italics in original)

To try to better capture the experience of ambient antisemitism, Boyd (2025) asked UK Jews the following question: “*Thinking more generally, have you had any experiences in [period] that you considered to be antisemitic that were not directed at you personally (for example, seeing antisemitic graffiti, posters, online comments or images, media reports, etc?)*” Whereas 8% reported having such experiences “regularly” or “frequently” in 2023 before 10/7, in the

⁴ Severe under-reporting of antisemitic incidents in European countries is also documented by Boyd (2024), although the estimate given is that roughly 80% of incidents go unreported.

same year after 10/7, that figure rose to 44%—more than a five-fold increase after 10/7—and has remained fairly constant (43% in 2024 and 45% in 2025).

Jews' experiences of ambient antisemitism directly reflect the normalization process. One manifestation of such normalization, which would not be predicted by radicalization accounts of antisemitism, is a sudden shift in friendship partners from before to after 10/7 among Jews living outside of Israel and, hence, at a distance from the precipitating terrorist events. When ambient antisemitism is normalized, and the mainstream of society does not unequivocally repudiate its expression through normative pressures, social relations with those outside the Jewish community can become highly unpredictable and trigger cleavages among friends, acquaintances, and colleagues that might once have felt secure. After 10/7, many Jews could no longer reliably gauge whether a request for social support would be met with compassion, whether it would be dismissed, or even whether it would trigger further assaults on one's well-being. The data support this claim. For instance, when asked, "How close do you feel to your friends today compared to before October 7?," Boyd (2025) found that Jews in the UK were three times more likely to report feeling less close to non-Jewish friends (24%) than they were to report feeling more close (8%). In contrast, Jews were roughly six times more likely to report feeling closer to Jewish friends (37%) than they were to report feeling less close to them (6%). This asymmetry was stable across age cohorts, ranging from 16-29 years of age to 70 years or older, signaling the pervasiveness of ambient antisemitism in Jewish experience after 10/7 and the consequence of Jewish communities turning inward.

The results of Boyd (2025) parallel a study of Jewish university undergraduates from 16 US universities surveyed shortly after 10/7 in which 24%-32% (depending on the level of antisemitic hostility they reported experiencing) felt more distant from non-Jewish peers, whereas only 3%-5% felt closer to non-Jewish peers (Samuel et al., 2024). The study's authors also reported that feelings of estrangement were strongest among Jewish students who identified as liberal. Whereas less than 1% of conservative students reported feeling "very much" estranged from others who shared their political stance, between 38% (at the lowest hostility-level schools) and 47% (at the highest hostility-level schools) of liberal Jewish students reported feeling very much estranged from their liberal peers. Jewish faculty and

administrators were certainly not exempt from similar experiences. As former Columbia professor, Shai Davidai and his wife, Yardenne Greenspan, explained,

It took us a while to understand it, but once we did everything started making sense: Our friends did not have a problem with our politics, they had a problem with our *identity*. Our friends were willing to overlook the fact that we were Jewish Israelis, but only so long as we shut up about it. (Davidai & Greenspan, 2024, §7, italics in original).

The personal experiences of conditional Jewish acceptance, which Davidai and Greenspan reflected on, go far beyond a normative expectation not to utter any statement that can be regarded as a Zionist commitment. Nor is it even sufficient for Jews in Western diasporas to explicitly reject Zionism as an entrance test to wider social acceptance. Rather, in the aftermath of 10/7, it appears that for Jews to comfortably fit into the wider culture without fear of being ostracized and stigmatized as “racists” (or simply now as Zionists, which carries the connotation of racist) they are expected to proactively disavow Zionism and passively accept being mired in a sea of antizionist hateful rhetoric without offering the slightest objection. Most Jews in Western diasporas have strong cultural and/or religious connections to Israel and recoil at these preconditions. Brym (2024), for instance, found that among a sample of Canadian Jews, 96% believed Israel has the right to exist as a Jewish state and 84% felt somewhat or very emotionally attached to Israel.⁵ Consequently, such antizionist purity tests of social group membership inevitably have caused and continue to cause social cleavages between Jews and non-Jews in Western societies.

Such tests are certainly not without precedent. In fact, they represent a modern version of the “normalization pressures” Jews underwent in the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe. As Friesel (2025) stated, “Otherwise put, though in the end the Jews should be incorporated into the main social body, *they were not acceptable as they were, but as they should become*. ‘Normalization of the Jews’ was a euphemism for that demand” (p. 313, italics added). The normalization ultimatum put to European Jews during the Emancipation was multi-pronged,

⁵ I computed these statistics from the New Israel Fund dataset, which Brym (2024) analyzed, and excluded the minority of responses that were coded as “missing or don’t know.” Accordingly, the statistics reported here may deviate slightly from those reported in Brym (2024).

but had at least two distinct requirements: relinquish any notion of peoplehood and accept Judaism as private religion, and relinquish modes of economic activity in which Jews excelled by “productivizing” themselves in fields like agriculture in which they were under-represented. The pressure on Jews nowadays to disavow their commitment to Israel and even to embrace antizionism—namely, to say what is expected so that, once again, they could be tolerated in ostensibly “enlightened and progressive spaces”—is a resurgent form of “Jewish normalization” pressure. Such pressures, ironically and perhaps tragically, pushed Jews not only in Europe but also in America to embrace a form of liberalism that now demands of them further purity tests (e.g., see Halpern, 1976).

Normalized antisemitism in higher education

Perhaps nowhere has normalized, ambient antisemitism been more effusive than in higher education. The documentary evidence of systemic antisemitism in academia is extensive (e.g., Samuel et al., 2024; US House of Representatives, 2024; Wright et al., 2023; Wright et al., 2024), and only a few snapshots can be provided here to illustrate the extent to which antisemitism has already been normalized within the centers responsible for shaping tomorrow’s societal elites. University and college campuses erupted in antizionist protests with many forming longstanding encampments opposed to Israel’s continued existence. Despite the claims of antizionists that their rhetoric was not antisemitic, this was not how most Jewish students experienced these events. For instance, Wright et al. (2024) surveyed 2,196 Jewish undergraduates from 51 US colleges and universities and found that, even among students who reported little or no connection to Israel (15% of the sample), a majority (79%) agreed that claiming Israel does not have a right to exist was definitely or probably antisemitic, and likewise for the phrase, “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” (54%). For the majority of students, on the other hand, who were very much connected to Israel (59%), over 90% regarded such statements as definitely or probably antisemitic.

Silverstein and Block (2025) conducted a survey of 252 self-identified Jewish faculty and staff members and students from 85 North American universities between May and October, 2024, and found that virtually all (98.8%) reported experiencing at least one antisemitic event in the previous year. These events fell into the categories of assault (68.3%), microinsult (82.1%), microassault (95.6%), and microinvalidation (98.4%), each of which

was significantly positively correlated with depression, anger, hypervigilance, and negative physical symptoms. Frequency of experiencing antisemitism was also significantly negatively correlated with institutional commitment, suggesting that the spike in frequency and intensity of antisemitism since 10/7 may be causing Jews to disengage from many centers of higher education.

These findings indicate that for the majority of Jewish students, who have been exposed to a barrage of hostile, antizionist activity on campus, often with little or no pushback from administrators, antisemitism is experienced as commonplace, ambient, and normalized. It is not the result of the odd antisemite who sticks out from the normative background and is rebuked for his or her behavior. Nor are the great many antisemites, antizionist or otherwise, who routinely stigmatize and ostracize Jewish students on campuses robustly challenged by administrators who realize the urgency of taking legal and moral action against so-called radicals. Their fecklessness in the face of a crisis of hatred against a marginalized group making up no more than 0.2% of the world population is another facet of the normalization of antisemitism, for such normalization does not only rely on perpetrators to do their part and victims to suffer theirs; it also requires other members of society to act callously or indifferently in their roles as experts, administrators, or merely bystanders in spite of the victims' abuse—a phenomenon so pernicious to society that it was once given serious scholarly attention (e.g., Darley & Latané, 1968; Hilberg, 1995; Milgram, 1974).

The normalization of antisemitism on US campuses was detailed in a 2024 US House of Representatives staff report with input from multiple committees, which considered over 400,000 pages of documents from post-secondary institutions obtained through information requests and subpoenas. The report summarized as follows:

The House-wide investigation has uncovered deeply troubling realities about how antisemitism has been allowed to fester unchecked, including in universities and institutions across the country, with little to no accountability or oversight to prevent its continued spread. The events of the past year have laid bare the systemic failures of many universities, other nonprofit organizations, public officials, higher education administrators, and the federal government in addressing antisemitism – a pervasive issue they can no longer ignore.

The findings expose a disturbing pattern of defensiveness and denial among institutions. Rather than confronting the severity of the problem, many institutions have dismissed congressional and public criticism and abdicated responsibility for the hostile environments they have enabled. This refusal to acknowledge or address the issue has allowed antisemitism to take root and thrive in spaces that contravene the values of this great nation. (p. 42)

The report documents the complicity of academic governance at the highest levels and federal and municipal governmental bodies in enabling antisemitism. The Committee on Education and the Workforce concluded that, due to evidence of rampant, unchecked antisemitism on campuses, many US universities, including elite institutions such as Harvard University, Columbia University, and University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), were in probable violation of their Title VI [of the US Civil Rights Act §601] legal obligations, which “prohibits recipients of federal funds (“recipients”) from discriminating on the basis of race, color, or national origin” (US House of Representatives, 2024, p. 4). The report also outlined how university administrators, notably at Columbia and Northwestern University, appeased those who fomented antisemitism by creating a perpetually hostile environment for Jews on campus. Moreover, the report detailed many cases of how university leaders intentionally declined to support Jewish communities on campus, to denounce 10/7 as an act of terrorism, or to admit that chants of “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” were an expression of eliminationist antisemitism calling for the destruction of Israel and the inevitable ethnic cleansing of Jews. The depth of the problem was also revealed by university officials’ uncooperative response with the House of Representatives, leading the authors of the report to state, “So-called university leaders expressed hostility and contempt toward congressional oversight of campus antisemitism and public criticism. Rather than treat the antisemitic hate plaguing their campuses as a serious problem, they handled it as a public relations issue” (2024, p. 15).

The problems documented by the US House of Representatives committees were not restricted to university officials. For instance, the Committee on Energy and Commerce reported, “The lack of action by HHS [Health and Human Services], NIH [National Institutes of Health], and the leadership at the institutions they fund allowed antisemitism to permeate

and take root not only in the educational system but also in the medical system where vulnerable individuals need to trust that their provider will treat them fairly and appropriately regardless of their national origin” (US House of Representatives, 2024, p. 21). The report also documented how the Department of Homeland Security failed to respond to the Committee of the Judiciary’s requests for information concerning the number of cases where student visas were revoked due to resident aliens’ antisemitic behaviors. It is also noteworthy that the Ways and Means Committee “found that several American-based tax-exempt organizations have funneled or are suspected of funneling American taxpayer dollars to designated terrorist organizations like Hamas. At the same time, American-based tax-exempt organizations have used taxpayer dollars to support, enable, and organize illegal encampments and/or protests that often resulted in violence, threats, and arrests” (US House of Representatives, 2024, p. 37).

Traumatic invalidation of Jews

The normalization of antisemitism is, in fact, so pervasive that mental health researchers have identified Jewish communities in Western diasporas as suffering from *traumatic invalidation*, namely, “extreme or repetitive invalidation of individuals’ significant private experiences, characteristics identified as important aspects of themselves, or reactions to themselves or to the world” (Linehan, 2015, p. 304). Harned (2022) described nine types of traumatic invalidation: being ignored, emotional neglect, being criticized, being blamed, being misinterpreted, having your reality denied, being controlled, being excluded, and being treated unequally. Bar-Halpern and Wolfman (2025) document many common examples of each type of traumatic invalidation that has afflicted Jewish diaspora communities since 10/7. As one illustration of emotional neglect, they cite the example of how protesters outside the Nova Music Festival Exhibition in New York City chanted slogans in support of the 10/7 massacre and waved banners that read “Long Live October 7th” and “The Zionists are not Jews and not humans” (Schumer, 2024). As Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer stated in response to the protests after having visited the exhibition, “It is the lowest of the low for anyone to protest an exhibit dedicated to honoring the memory of the precious lives that were brutally murdered by Hamas” (2024, § 6).

As another illustration of this phenomenon, Silverstein and Block (2025), in the survey study described earlier, found that the most frequently experienced form of antisemitism among Jewish university students, faculty and staff was microinvalidation in the form of collective delegitimization (e.g., claims that Jews are not indigenous to the land of Israel or views promoting the elimination of Israel as a Jewish state), and microinvalidations were significantly and substantially correlated with multiple measures of negative psychological functioning. Likewise, in a study of Canadian Jews studying social work, respondents who were surveyed before 10/7, already then, reported fear of being cancelled and pressure to conform to antizionist ideologies that were antithetical to their Jewish identities (Poizner et al., 2022).

Another Canadian study of Jewish experiences conducted between November 2020 and June 2021 found that some respondents reported antisemitic denials of antisemitism being a problem in Canada, with antisemitic tropes about Jews being powerful, controlling, and money-grubbing often being invoked to minimize their victim status (Stein et al., 2024). Such experiences as noted in these two Canadian studies, given their timing, indicate that the normalization of antisemitism was underway before 10/7. Stated differently, the 10/7 pogrom did not cause the normalization of antisemitism. Rather, it was the preceding normalization of antisemitic attitudes which enabled 10/7 to ignite antisemitic sentiments and acts across Western countries in ways that have not been seen since the Holocaust.

Traumatic invalidation in cases where ambient antisemitism is expressed publicly is not merely caused by the direct perpetrators themselves, but by the indifferent reactions of bystanders who fail to object to their repugnant spectacles and especially by individuals in positions of power who fail to take appropriate action in response to antisemitic incidents. These acts of omission are perhaps even more demoralizing than overt acts of antisemitism because they demonstrate to the Jewish community the degree to which they stand alone and the abuse of Jews as an ordinary facet of daily life is tolerated. The failure of bystanders to object to reprehensible acts of antizionist hate and Jewish animus signals a tacit acceptance of harm to Jewish communities and further emboldens antisemites. Such failure may also reflect the peculiar societal conditions Jews in Western diasporas find themselves in, where despite experiencing the highest per-capita rates of hate crime (e.g., see Royal Canadian Mounted Police, n.d.), Jews are viewed as improbable targets of hate crime. For instance, Simpson

(2019) found that among a representative sample of Canadians surveyed in 2019, 59% believed that Arabs or Muslims were most likely to be a target of racism, whereas only 12% thought Jews were most likely. This disparity was also observed in earlier polling waves conducted in 2017 and 2005, indicating a stable misperception. In 2024, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (n.d.) reported 920 hate crimes against Jews and 229 against Muslims, despite the fact that Jews constitute a substantially smaller proportion of Canada's population.

Concluding Remarks

The evidence presented in this article provides only a snapshot of how antisemitism has become normalized in the West and how that normalization was catalyzed by the 10/7 pogrom in Israel. Much of the evidence reviewed focused on statistical findings and documentary evidence. The incidence rates over time show that antisemitism has skyrocketed in Western countries since 10/7, but that there already was a trend toward increasing antisemitism before 10/7. The normalization of antisemitism is enabled by media bias (e.g., B'nai Brith Canada, 2026), infiltration of antizionist narratives into primary and secondary education (e.g., Brym, 2025), and as already noted, through higher education, nonprofit organizations, and sectors of government.

Normalization, however, does not imply that most non-Jews in Western countries are antisemites. Opinion polls such as the American National Election Studies show that from 1964 to 2024, attitudes toward Jews has been on the “warm” side of neutral in every election cycle over 60 years. This is true regardless of the gender, age, and political affiliation of respondents and it remains true in the 2024 data (i.e., the only wave collected since 10/7).⁶ Moreover, a greater proportion of Americans surveyed in March 2023 by Pew Research Center were favorable toward Jews (35%) than towards Mormons (15%), Muslims (17%), atheists (20%), Evangelical Christians (28), mainline Protestants (30%), and Catholics (34%) (Tevington, 2023). However, research also shows that positivity toward Jews may be inflated because “old” antisemitism that focuses on negative sentiment towards Jews per se rather than

⁶ These conclusions are based on my analyses of the data, which are available at <https://electionstudies.org/data-center/anes-time-series-cumulative-data-file/>. In each of the demographic disaggregations I noted, “temperature toward Jews” was well above the neutral midpoint of the scale (with higher values indicating more positive attitudes toward Jews. However, also see Cohen (2018).

Israel or Zionists is regarded as morally repugnant (Cohen et al., 2009). We do not currently have survey data from non-Jewish populations in the West that would resolve whether a shift in “new” (i.e., antizionist) antisemitism is taking place and whether there has been a discontinuity in attitudinal change after 10/7. Such research is sorely needed.

Important as such data would be to providing a clearer understanding of the factors shaping contemporary antisemitism, note that the normalization-of-antisemitism thesis does not require or even postulate that antisemites constitute a majority of the population. What is required is that antisemitic acts are permitted to propagate through vital centers of societal influence and control, such as the media and educational systems, and that is precisely what has been observed since 10/7. For example, when three presidents of elite US universities were asked by Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-N.Y.) before the U.S. House of Representatives whether calling for the genocide of Jews would violate their code of conduct, all three equivocated, stating that it would depend on the context (Binkley & Levy, 2023). By failing to condemn antisemitic acts unequivocally, they sent a powerful message to Jews, antisemites, and the probable majority of non-Jewish non-antisemites alike. The message sent was that antisemitism is tolerable in some contexts and its expression is, therefore, not taboo. Such statements by societal elites promote the normalization of antisemitism in multiple ways. First, they signal to antisemites that antisemitic acts will be tolerated within conveniently ambiguous bounds, emboldening them to escalate their actions. Second, such statements signal to Jews that they cannot depend on protection from prejudice and discrimination, encouraging them to retreat from or self-censor within unsafe spaces. Third, they indicate to the broader community that the protection of Jews is not a priority, giving at least some community members the license they may desire to cross the rubicon, while more subtly shaping the views of others.

Finally, although the present thesis is that the rise of antisemitism since 10/7 in Western diasporas reflects its normalization and cannot be explained sufficiently by radicalization concepts, it is worth noting that several of the psychological processes that undergird contemporary models of radicalization are likely to play just as vital a role in normalization processes. For example, the 3N model of Kruglanski and colleagues (2019) posits that individual needs, ideological narratives, and organizational and social networks play key roles in the radicalization process, yet the same types of process surely play key roles

in normalization phenomena as well. The central difference may not be the psychological processes involved, but the extent to which their effects have become systemic and centralized within societal power structures. Thus, much of the theoretical advances in radicalization research could ultimately prove to be instrumental, in developing theories of normalization. As this article hopefully has shown, however, a focus on normalization also benefits from an analysis of victimization patterns, which typically fall outside the scope of radicalization research. In the present case—the study of contemporary antisemitism—this focus is arguably essential.

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