
Visual Antisemitism Across Europe During the Gaza War

Howard Grice^{a1}

^aPhD Student, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Manchester Metropolitan University

Abstract

This chapter examines how antisemitism is visually expressed in public space in Europe against the backdrop of the war in Gaza. Drawing upon a qualitative analysis of publicly documented incidents, it focuses on offline, material, and symbolic acts such as graffiti, paint attacks, stickers, and the defacement or removal of memorials. The study analyses these incidents as communicative interventions that embed antisemitic meaning into everyday environments through repetition, placement, and symbolic association. The analysis identifies four recurring visual strategies: red symbolism and implied violence; Nazi symbolism and Holocaust inversion; desecration and overwriting of Jewish memory; and the marking and targeting of Jewish space. Together, these themes demonstrate how contemporary antisemitism operates offline by creating false and dangerous equivalences between European Jews and the actions of the Israeli state, thereby normalising hostility within shared public spaces. Rather than relying on explicit declarations of hatred, these visual practices often function through implication, collapsing distinctions between Jewish identity and geopolitical conflict. By foregrounding these visual strategies and their cumulative effects, the chapter contributes to a broader understanding of antisemitism as a historically adaptive form of political hostility that becomes normalised through everyday visual exposure.

Article History

Received Feb 01, 2026

Accepted Jun 21, 2026

Published Aug 28, 2026

Keywords: Antisemitism, Visual Antisemitism, Public Space, Hate Crime, Visual Communication

Introduction

Antisemitism has long relied on visual expression to communicate hostility. From medieval caricatures to modern propaganda, it has adapted across time while preserving core symbolic narratives of accusation, exclusion, and threat. In recent years, particularly following the Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023 and the subsequent war in Gaza, antisemitism has intensified, assuming highly visible forms online and within public spaces across Europe. As a result, a substantial body of scholarship has focused on antisemitism on social media, while far less attention has been paid to the everyday offline visual acts through which antisemitic meaning becomes embedded in streets, buildings, memorials, and neighbourhoods.

¹ Corresponding Author Contact: Howard Grice, hgrice00@gmail.com, Manchester Metropolitan University, Grosvenor East, Cavendish Street, Manchester, M15 6BG, United Kingdom

This article examines how antisemitism is visually expressed in offline public space in Europe during the Gaza war. Rather than focusing on interpersonal violence or digital communication, it explores symbolic visual acts such as graffiti, paint attacks, stickers, banners, and the defacement or removal of memorials. It examines how these incidents function as communicative acts that encode blame, hostility, and exclusion within public environments, targeting specific groups through visual means. The study approaches antisemitic visuals as analytical objects, asking what messages are being conveyed, how those messages are constructed, and why particular sites, symbols, and communities are targeted. By identifying and interpreting recurring visual mechanisms, the analysis demonstrates how antisemitic meaning is produced ideologically and rhetorically, often through implication rather than explicit declaration. This article contributes to efforts to improve the monitoring and understanding of antisemitic incidents, drawing upon the substantial body of material collected by monitoring organisations and Jewish community groups on graffiti, vandalism, memorial desecration, and attacks on Jewish sites. Despite the availability of this material, relatively little academic research has undertaken detailed analysis of the visual content of these incidents. The following section outlines this broader context to better understand the cases analysed in subsequent chapters.

Background

Antisemitism has been woven throughout European societies for over two millennia, shaping patterns of exclusion, persecution, and violence that have repeatedly resurfaced in different forms (Kaplan & Small, 2006; Enstad, 2024). While this history is well documented, contemporary antisemitism studies lag behind broader research on hate and intolerance in Europe (Suárez-Vergne, 2026). This gap persists despite the recent and significant rise in antisemitism across the continent. Incident data and survey research indicate both an increase in recorded acts and a deterioration in everyday safety for Jewish communities. In the United Kingdom, the Community Security Trust (CST) recorded 4,296 antisemitic incidents in 2023—the highest annual total ever documented—compared with 1,662 incidents in 2022, with 66 per cent occurring after the Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023 (Community Security Trust, 2024). Similar patterns have been observed elsewhere across Europe, although data

availability varies by country. In France, official figures indicate a substantial increase in antisemitic acts in 2023, rising from 436 incidents in 2022 to more than 1,600 in 2023 (J7, 2025). Germany likewise experienced an almost twofold increase in incidents between 2023 and 2024, according to the Federal Research and Information Point on Antisemitism (Bundesverband RIAS e. V., 2024).

Beyond recorded incidents, survey evidence underscores the scale of the problem. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights' most recent survey found that 96 per cent of Jewish respondents across EU member states reported experiencing antisemitism, highlighting its pervasiveness in everyday life rather than its confinement to isolated or extreme events (FRA, 2024). Reports from Italy, the Netherlands, and Germany further show that a growing proportion of incidents now involve real-world verbal abuse, vandalism, and the targeting of Jewish institutions and property, with educational settings and public spaces emerging as key sites of antisemitic activity (Bundesverband RIAS, 2024; CDEC Foundation, 2025; CIDI, 2025). Cross-national data also suggest a rise in violent incidents and harassment, indicating that antisemitism since October 2023 has become more socially visible, spatially embedded, and directly threatening to Jewish life (Brå, 2025; J7 Task Force, 2025; European Commission, 2024). What is particularly concerning is the longevity of this surge. Previous research identified a statistically significant rise in antisemitic complaints during the 2008–2009 Gaza conflict, but that increase was short-lived and dissipated within weeks (Jacobs et al., 2011). By contrast, the post-October 2023 surge has endured, indicating a longer-term structural shift rather than a temporary reaction to a single geopolitical event. Similar to earlier historical conflicts, a defining feature of contemporary antisemitism is its strong linkage to Israel, Hamas, and the war in Gaza. While more research is required to understand the connection between hate crimes and conflicts (Mann, 2023), monitoring organisations across multiple national contexts consistently report that the majority of antisemitic incidents now reference the Middle East conflict, with Israel-related hostility emerging as the most prevalent form of antisemitism in countries including the UK, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden (Community Security Trust, 2024; Bundesverband RIAS, 2024; CIDI, 2025; Brå, 2025). This pattern reflects a well-researched mechanism whereby major global crises act as catalysts for racialised hostility, comparable to the rise in anti-Asian hate during the COVID-19 pandemic (Suárez-Vergne, 2026). In this instance, the conflict in the

Middle East functions as a catalyst that has reshaped the scale, form, and framing of antisemitism across Europe (Boyd, 2024; ECRI, 2024; European Commission, 2024; J7 Task Force, 2025).

The research and visuals presented here are situated against the backdrop of the Gaza war, a period in which antisemitism has again become deeply politicised and increasingly entangled in debates about Israel, Zionism, and global conflict (Waxman et al., 2022). While criticism of Israel or Israeli government policy is not inherently antisemitic, a growing body of research highlights the ways in which hostility towards Israel can become intertwined with hostility towards Jews. Scholars note that contemporary forms of antisemitism increasingly manifest through political discourse and symbolic forms connected to Israel, Zionism, and conflict in the Middle East. This is particularly evident when Jews outside Israel are treated as collectively responsible for the actions of the Israeli state (Fine, 2009; Hirsh, 2013). In these instances, opposition to the policies of the Israeli government extends beyond nation-based criticism and instead focuses upon Jewish individuals and communities. Attacks on Jewish homes, synagogues, memorials, and community institutions outside Israel are a clear example of the conflation of Jews with the Israeli state (Cox & Marlowe, 2024). The incidents examined in this research reflect this dynamic and a broader pattern of conflation identified in contemporary scholarship. Although antisemitism assumes different forms across historical periods and political contexts, it continues to reproduce familiar tropes of collective blame and hostility towards Jews. In this sense, contemporary manifestations linked to Israel, Zionism, and the Middle East conflict represent the adaptation of antisemitism to contemporary political realities (Hirsh, 2013; Chaouat, 2022; Subotić, 2022). By identifying how antisemitism operates visually and cumulatively in public space, this chapter also highlights important implications for policy and prevention efforts that remain insufficiently attuned to offline and symbolic forms of hate. Understanding why these visual strategies resonate, persist, and recur, however, requires situating them within the longer historical and structural trajectory of antisemitism in Europe.

Literature Review

Research on offline visual antisemitism remains fragmented across several fields rather than constituting a coherent area of study in its own right. Existing evidence derives primarily from monitoring bodies and policy organisations, including the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the Community Security Trust (CST), and the Antisemitism Policy Trust (APT), rather than from sustained academic scholarship. These organisations document incidents involving graffiti, vandalism, memorial desecration, and attacks on Jewish institutions, but generally focus on incident recording, prevalence, and policy responses rather than detailed visual analysis.

In contrast, academic research on antisemitism, much like hate speech scholarship more broadly, is increasingly focused on online behaviours and digital communication. Research on online antisemitism now encompasses platform-specific studies of Twitter/X, TikTok, Gab, and 4chan, examining the circulation of antisemitic rhetoric, memes, and extremist narratives across digital networks (Riedl et al., 2024; Weimann & Masri, 2021; Zannettou et al., 2020). Similarly, broader hate speech scholarship is increasingly centred on social media communication, moderation, and online harms (Nazmine et al., 2021). This emphasis is understandable given the scale of online communication and the role of the internet as a primary channel for the dissemination of contemporary antisemitic propaganda (Weitzman, 2022). While this body of research has generated important insights into online hate and digital radicalisation, comparatively less attention has been paid to the ways in which antisemitic meaning is communicated visually and materially within offline public spaces.

The distinction is significant because offline visual antisemitism operates differently from online communication. Whereas online content circulates rapidly through digital networks, offline visual antisemitism becomes materially embedded within shared public environments through graffiti, vandalism, symbolic marking, and attacks on synagogues, memorials, cemeteries, homes, and Jewish community sites. Although visual manifestations of antisemitism are rarely examined as primary objects of inquiry, several adjacent bodies of literature provide useful insights. Research on graffiti has recognised its capacity to function not only as a form of public expression but also as a vehicle for hate speech, discrimination, and exclusion when directed at specific individuals, communities, or identities (Tavkhelidze

& Kapoor, 2026). More broadly, scholarship on racist and political graffiti emphasises its role as symbolic communication, social commentary, and public expression rather than mere vandalism (Lynn & Lea, 2005; Hána & Šel, 2021; Tavkhelidze & Kapoor, 2026).

Similarly, research on hate crime, territoriality, and public space argues that visual acts can function as mechanisms of exclusion that communicate hostility to entire communities rather than solely to individual victims (Perry, 2001; Benier et al., 2025). Places within neighbourhoods are often perceived as symbolically belonging to particular communities despite remaining formally public spaces, making territoriality an increasingly important concern within hate crime scholarship (Benier et al., 2025). In this context, attacks on synagogues, cemeteries, memorials, Jewish homes, and community institutions can be understood more not just acts of vandalism in the form of attempts to challenge, contest, or disrupt the presence of Jewish communities within particular environments. Research on collective memory and memorialisation further highlights the symbolic significance of Jewish cemeteries, memorials, and Holocaust sites as repositories of communal identity and remembrance (Young, 1994), helping to explain why such locations frequently become targets of antisemitic hostility.

Drawing upon these insights, offline visual antisemitism can be understood as operating environmentally as well as symbolically. Graffiti and symbolic marking may spread hate by targeting specific groups, denying or delegitimising identities, and communicating exclusionary messages within public space (Tavkhelidze & Kapoor, 2026). In such circumstances, graffiti moves beyond expression and constitutes hate speech. Political disagreement and criticism remain legitimate forms of public discourse, but the deliberate marking of synagogues, Jewish homes, memorials, and cemeteries with swastikas, threats, or antisemitic slogans moves beyond political expression into the realm of identity-based hostility. Antisemitic graffiti is therefore not just a form of visual communication, but more a spatial intervention that targets places carrying historical, cultural, and communal significance. Its impact is amplified by collective memory, historical trauma, and the symbolic meanings attached to Jewish sites, memorials, and public spaces.

Taken together, this literature suggests that offline visual antisemitism operates through symbols, space, memory, and public communication. However, compared with the extensive scholarship on online antisemitism, relatively little research has systematically

examined the visual forms, symbolic repertoires, and communicative strategies through which contemporary antisemitism is expressed in offline environments. This gap is particularly striking given the significant body of research in visual communication, semiotics, and political communication demonstrating the power of visuals to communicate and legitimise hostility. Bringing these insights into research on antisemitism provides an opportunity to better understand how hostility is visually directed at specific groups in public. This study therefore shifts attention towards antisemitism as a visual and public form of communication.

Definitions

First, it is necessary to clarify how antisemitism is understood in this study. Antisemitism encompasses a wide range of acts, practices, and expressions, making it difficult to define in simple terms. This complexity is particularly evident in more subtle symbolic and discursive manifestations (ECRI, 2024). Similar to hate speech more broadly, antisemitism operates across a spectrum of severity and visibility, complicating efforts to establish a universally accepted definition (Ascone, 2024). It may manifest through overt hatred, but it also appears in more ambiguous and coded forms that require greater cultural or historical knowledge to recognise and interpret (Becker et al., 2026). This variability underscores the need to approach antisemitism as a multifaceted phenomenon rather than a single, easily identifiable category.

Contemporary scholarship therefore emphasises the importance of context in understanding the nuances involved in antisemitic acts. Expressions or symbols that are not inherently antisemitic can acquire antisemitic meaning when directed at Jews or Jewish institutions in ways that attribute collective responsibility or target Jewish identity. Gidley illustrates this argument by noting that the political phrase “Free Palestine” is not antisemitic in itself, but becomes antisemitic when inscribed on Jewish homes, synagogues, or businesses whose occupants have no connection to the actions of the Israeli state. In much the same way, while a Palestinian flag represents Palestinian national self-determination and is uncontroversial when displayed at an Israeli embassy, its display outside a synagogue alters its meaning because such spaces represent Jews as Jews rather than Israel as a state (Gidley, 2015). In these contexts, responsibility is displaced from the actions of a state onto local

Jewish communities that bear no responsibility for those actions. This context-dependent nature of antisemitism mirrors research on hate speech more broadly, which stresses that meaning is shaped by location, audience, intent, and social relations rather than by words or symbols alone (Zapata et al., 2024; Wodak, 2018). As a result, considerable scholarly debate has focused on identifying where legitimate criticism of the State of Israel ends and antisemitism begins (Julius, 2010; Klug, 2003; Penslar, 2022). Crucially, as Hirsh (2013) cautions, not all criticism of Israel is antisemitic, but neither is all criticism of Israel free from antisemitism. Differentiating antisemitism from political opinion therefore requires careful contextual analysis rather than categorical judgement.

Despite the sustained focus on antisemitism, agreement on what precisely constitutes antisemitism has become increasingly fragmented, as research consistently reflects disagreement over which attitudes, expressions, and practices fall within the term's scope (Wright et al., 2025). This definitional uncertainty has been further intensified during the recent conflict in Gaza, particularly regarding where allegations of antisemitism intersect with debates about Israel and anti-Zionism (Waxman et al., 2022). As Penslar (2022) notes, controversies surrounding definitions of antisemitism reflect wider polarisation within both Jewish and international communities, especially in relation to Israel.

Despite these contemporary challenges, there is broad scholarly agreement that antisemitism is an old but highly adaptive form of hatred. While it has existed for centuries, its forms and expressions have continually changed in response to broader political shifts. Distinct manifestations of antisemitism emerge in different times and places, shaped by specific cultural and political contexts (Hirsh, 2013; Offenber, 2024). At the same time, historical continuities persist as different manifestations leave residues that remain available within a cultural reservoir, ready to be reactivated and reconfigured under new circumstances (Hirsh, 2013).

One significant change highlighted in recent research concerns how antisemitism today differs in important respects from earlier periods, operating less through direct state sponsorship and more as a horizontal phenomenon circulating across both online and offline spaces of civil society (Cohen, 2023). Antisemitism has demonstrated extraordinary adaptability, repeatedly reshaping itself without abandoning its core doctrines (Becker, 2024; Cohen, 2023). Researchers therefore emphasise the importance of analysing antisemitism

within each period on its own terms, while remaining attentive to the historical continuities that connect contemporary expressions to earlier forms (Fine, 2009; Halasz, 2006; Wodak, 2018).

Given the complexities surrounding the definition of antisemitism, this study adopts the core definition set out in the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, which defines antisemitism as “discrimination, prejudice, hostility, or violence against Jews as Jews, or Jewish institutions as Jewish” (Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, 2021). This definition is applied with sustained attention to context throughout the analysis, recognising that the meaning of antisemitic acts cannot be separated from the settings in which they occur. The Jerusalem Declaration was developed by scholars across the humanities and social sciences and is intended as an interpretive framework rather than a regulatory instrument. Its emphasis on context, intent, and the distinction between Jews and the actions of the Israeli state makes it particularly well suited to the analysis of visual and symbolic forms of antisemitism, which often operate indirectly and cannot be adequately assessed through textual content alone. These definitional considerations directly inform the methodological choices adopted in this study.

Theoretical Framing

It is useful to begin by drawing on interdisciplinary research beyond traditional antisemitism scholarship in order to better understand the incidents examined in this study. The following discussion draws on insights from visual, graffiti, and semiotic literature to understand the recurring visual strategies evident in contemporary manifestations of visual antisemitism. Visuals are deeply embedded in political communication and play an increasingly central role in shaping how political messages are produced and interpreted (Bucy and Joo, 2021). As visual scholars demonstrate, visuals function as social and political forces in their own right and not merely as representations (Crilley et al., 2020; Gakahu, 2024). They have the capacity to shape attitudes and behaviours (Lilleker, 2019), and their complexity enables them to communicate stories (Schirato & Webb, 2004). The persuasive power of such visual communication is particularly noticeable when combined with narrative structures, as narratives immerse audiences within a specific worldview and shape how actors, and conflicts

are understood by broader audiences (Doolan et al., 2025). Visual meaning is therefore produced through the cultural frameworks and prior knowledge that audiences bring to it (Schirato & Webb, 2004). In this sense, the emotions and interpretations visuals generate depend on the interaction between the image itself and the worldview of the audience (Baele et al., 2020). This can be achieved through repetition or the use of visual shorthand, whereby imagery simplifies and condenses complex ideas into easily recognisable forms (Gill & Angosto-Ferrandez, 2018). Visual communication plays a critical role in political conflict because visuals transmit meaning rapidly across cultural and national boundaries while eliciting emotional responses prior to reflective interpretation (Li, 2024; Bleiker, 2018). Their persuasive power is strengthened by the fact that visuals are typically remembered more easily than words, increasing their capacity to shape attitudes and reinforce political messaging over time (Tucker, Guess et al., 2019).

Beyond immediate emotional reactions, visual communication can also shape longer-term sentiments by reinforcing attitudes towards perceived ingroups and outgroups, thereby consolidating broader social and political worldviews (Baele et al., 2020). Visuals act as heuristic devices rather than neutral reflections of reality, shaping public perception and affect through symbolism and suggestion rather than explicit argument. As visual researchers emphasise, visuals are always produced, circulated, and interpreted within specific contexts, with materiality, location, and visibility playing a decisive role in how meaning is constructed (Rose, 2016; Schirato & Webb, 2004). Visual communication attracts extremist actors, who use symbols and motifs to provoke affective responses and normalise antagonism through repetition and circulation (Lilleker, 2019; Caiani, 2024). Within this framework, visual antisemitism must therefore be understood as a connected web of ideas in which inherited symbols and historical references are continually reactivated and contested, rather than a series of unrelated events. Meaning is not fixed within objects or images but is socially produced through systems of representation in which symbols and imagery acquire significance (Hall, 1997). Within this framework, the visuals examined here often draw upon historically embedded symbolic associations that are already anchored within collective cultural memory. The use of swastikas in the marking of Jewish space, for example, activates recognisable ideological and emotional associations rooted in earlier antisemitic traditions (Milbradt, 2013). Contemporary communication formats, including memes and graffiti, allow

these symbolic structures to be rearticulated through new semiotic forms while retaining their historical resonance (Matthias et al., 2024).

Visuals operate differently from text. They offer a distinct communicative medium that often functions through emotive rather than rational pathways, making them particularly memorable, immediate, and difficult to critically deconstruct (Joffe, 2008). The capacity of visuals are frequently exploited by extremist movements, which utilise imagery to generate emotional responses, reinforce group identities, and communicate ideological messages through visually recognisable symbols (Lilleker, 2019). Graffiti, for example, becomes an environmentally embedded form of communication. It has long been understood as a medium through which political, social, and ideological messages are communicated within everyday environments (Tavkhelidze & Kapoor, 2026). It is often associated with broader social and political sentiment rather than merely marginal or deviant behaviour (Hána & Šel, 2021). Recent scholarship on visual politics similarly emphasises that images do not simply reflect political realities but actively perform and shape them through affect, contextuality, and public visibility (Armstrong et al., 2024). The location of visual hostility is often as significant as the imagery itself (Vogel et al., 2020), as symbols acquire meaning relationally through the spaces and objects upon which they are placed (Gill & Angosto-Ferrandez, 2018). Offline visual antisemitism therefore operates as symbolic expression but also as a spatial and rhetorical practice that shapes perceptions of belonging, exclusion, and hostility within everyday public environments.

Methodology

Visual antisemitism is examined here as a mode of communication that operates through form, location, materiality, and affect as much as through explicit content. The study focuses on offline, public, and material expressions of antisemitism, including graffiti, vandalism, stickers, posters, and other forms of symbolic marking. The analysis further concentrates on non-targeted acts, such as incidents directed at Jewish people as a collective rather than assaults on identifiable individuals. Digital hate speech and online-only content are therefore excluded from the dataset. Only incidents occurring in publicly accessible or publicly visible

spaces were included. Finally, some incidents were excluded because they could not be verified or lacked sufficient evidence to be clearly antisemitic.

Within these parameters, the study proceeds by systematically collecting and categorising visual incidents in order to identify recurring patterns of meaning. The material consists of documented antisemitic incidents in Europe during 2023–2024, drawn from publicly available media reports and recognised monitoring organisations. Data were collected from news outlets and monitoring bodies, resulting in a corpus of 88 visual incidents. Each incident was coded inductively using thematic analysis and assigned to a primary visual theme, even where it could plausibly align with multiple categories. This decision reflects the analytical aim of identifying dominant visual logics rather than cataloguing all possible interpretive overlaps. The resulting four themes capture recurrent visual strategies through which antisemitism is expressed in public space, including symbolic violence, Holocaust inversion, the desecration of memory, and the marking of Jewish presence. Following coding, visuals were selected as examples based on their ability to illustrate the defining characteristics of each theme. Images displaying multiple overlapping themes were generally avoided in favour of examples that reflected the most commonly observed visual elements within each category. Cases are grouped according to broader visual strategies rather than being categorised geographically, by target, or by event. Visual meaning is not fixed, but shaped by context, repetition, and shared symbolism (Schirato & Webb, 2004). Furthermore, this study does not provide a comprehensive semiotic analysis of antisemitic imagery, nor does it attempt to map the full visual language of antisemitism across different incidents. Instead, it focuses on bringing context and historical reference to situated visual acts in public space. For each theme, a small number of images are presented together to illustrate recurrent visual patterns rather than to document incidents exhaustively. These examples function as representative entry points into broader repertoires of visual antisemitism rather than as a complete record of events. All images reproduced in the article are drawn from publicly accessible sources and are used solely for analytical purposes. No private individuals are identified.

Finally, we acknowledge the limitations of studies such as this in capturing the full spectrum of antisemitic hate. First, while the incidents examined clearly demonstrate the presence of offline visual antisemitism, measuring their impact upon Jewish communities

remains inherently difficult. The effects of such acts are experienced unevenly across individuals and communities, making it difficult for this study to fully capture their broader social, psychological, and communal impact beyond the visual acts themselves. Moreover, antisemitism also manifests through violence, threats, harassment, and digital hate directed at individuals and groups. The decision to focus specifically on offline and public visual expression is therefore not intended to shift attention away from these forms of hostility, but rather to isolate a specific mode through which antisemitic meaning is produced and circulated. Second, qualitative visual analysis inevitably involves a degree of interpretive judgement. The interpretation of visual antisemitism presents methodological challenges, as visuals do not communicate fixed meanings and may be understood differently depending on cultural context, historical knowledge, and personal experience. Alternative researchers may therefore produce different codes, apply different analytical frameworks, and arrive at different findings. The aim of this study is not to establish a definitive codebook or present its findings as an objective measure of visual meaning, but rather to identify recurring patterns, symbols, and communicative themes that emerged consistently across the dataset. Third, while this study draws upon a substantial dataset of antisemitic incidents across Europe, only a limited number of representative images were analysed in depth. As a result, this research provides a more foundational understanding of offline visual antisemitism rather than an exhaustive analysis of all incidents. A final limitation concerns geographic scope. This study focuses exclusively on Europe, and while this allows for the identification of regional patterns, the findings may not be fully transferable to other national contexts where antisemitism operates within different historical, political, and cultural conditions.

Themes

Building on this methodological approach, the following themes are presented as illustrative examples drawn from a much larger collection of visual incidents. Each theme is illustrated using four images. These images represent a portion of the recurring visual incidents in which antisemitism is expressed in public space rather than an intention to capture the full variety or totality of incidents observed. The examples are drawn from a substantially larger dataset containing many more incidents that occurred in different locations, across multiple countries, and at different moments in

time. By grouping incidents thematically, this small collection of visuals can represent broader commonalities between otherwise dispersed acts, allowing patterns of repetition, circulation, and symbolic reuse to be identified—patterns that would be obscured if each incident were treated in isolation. This thematic approach reflects the analytical focus of the study and the ways in which multiple visual incidents operate through shared symbolic logics. The selected images should therefore be read as representative of wider visual repertoires of antisemitism rather than as isolated or exceptional cases. They illustrate how similar visual forms—such as blood imagery, Holocaust inversion, the desecration of Jewish memory, and the marking of Jewish spaces—recur across countries and settings, adapting to contemporary political contexts while drawing on historically established symbolic languages. Analytically, emphasis is placed on how the volume of incidents, and the cumulative effect produced by their repetition and spatial placement, contributes to an environment in which hostility communicated through public visuals becomes increasingly normalised and familiar within everyday life.

Theme 1: Red Symbolism and Implied Violence



1A
Red handprints painted onto the Shoah Memorial in Paris
(source: The Guardian, 2024)



1B
Red paint and antisemitic graffiti defacing the Jewish
Museum of Cagliari, Italy. (source: L'Unione Sarda, 2024)



1C
Red paint thrown across the entrance of a Jewish
community building in London. (source: BBC News, 2023)



1D
Red paint vandalism targeting a Jewish site in London
(source: BBC News, 2024)

The first theme captures incidents that invoke violence through symbolism rather than explicit depiction. Across the incidents examined, red paint and handprints act as visual shorthand for harm, complicity, and guilt, making violence felt without the need for graphic imagery. The power of red in this context can be understood in two ways. The first is its association with war and civilian suffering, which situates the imagery within the contemporary context of Gaza. The second, and more consequential, is its longstanding association with danger, bloodshed, and moral contamination, which extends beyond a simple political reference. The affective power of red provokes a visceral response and, when deployed in specific locations, transforms walls, memorials, and buildings into symbols of accusation directed at a clearly identifiable group.

Several incidents illustrate this strategy with clarity. In Paris, red handprints painted across the Shoah Memorial (Figure 1A) visually collapse Holocaust remembrance into contemporary political accusation, repositioning Jewish victims of genocide as morally implicated in present-day violence. The use of red hands in this context is especially charged, echoing the imagery of the 2000 Ramallah lynching and invoking the metaphor of having “blood on one’s hands”. In Cagliari, red paint and antisemitic graffiti defacing the Jewish Museum (Figure 1B) similarly transform a cultural institution into a site of implied culpability. In London, red paint thrown across a Jewish community building (Figure 1C), and the marking of a Jewish site with red paint alongside the word “Gaza” (Figure 1D), extend this visual strategy across national contexts. In each case, violence is not depicted but implied: the coating of Jewish symbols and spaces suggests guilt and collective responsibility without stating it explicitly.

While red has long been used in anti-war protest, its placement on Jewish sites fundamentally alters its meaning. In these contexts, the imagery operates through collective attribution, treating Jews as representatives of Israel and rendering Jewish presence itself politically culpable. This logic reflects a broader pattern identified by monitoring organisations, which consistently document the conflation of Jewish individuals and institutions with the actions of the Israeli state, particularly since October 2023 (Bundesverband RIAS, 2024; CIDI, 2025; ECRI, 2024; Community Security Trust, 2024). Extreme anti-Israel sentiment has been shown to correlate strongly with antisemitic attitudes, with those most hostile towards Israel significantly more likely to harbour antisemitic views

(Kaplan and Small, 2006). Red imagery thus becomes a means of redirecting geopolitical anger towards Jewish targets under the assumption that such attribution is legitimate.

Historically, this visual logic draws upon a deep antisemitic repertoire. As Langmuir (1990) observed, accusations that Jews shed innocent blood have proven extraordinarily durable, resurfacing repeatedly in symbolic form even when their literal content is no longer believed. The blood libel myth, medieval depictions of ritual murder, and early modern visual propaganda all relied upon red imagery to portray Jews as inherent perpetrators of violence. In the twentieth century, Nazi propaganda repurposed this symbolism, depicting Jews with blood-red hands and associating them with war profiteering, communist subversion, and national decline. During Kristallnacht in 1938, red paint was used alongside smashed windows to mark Jewish shops and synagogues as legitimate targets. Similar practices persisted into the post-war period, with neo-Nazi vandalism frequently employing red spray paint to deface Jewish cemeteries and synagogues as a form of visual intimidation.

Contemporary incidents echo these older strategies while adapting them to the present geopolitical context. References to Gaza or civilian suffering are not inherently antisemitic. However, when such imagery is applied to Jewish spaces wholly unconnected to the conflict, it collapses the distinction between Jewish identity and the Israeli state, assigning collective blame and moral culpability. As Baron (1976) noted, the image of the Jew as a hidden danger has repeatedly been expressed through metaphor rather than fact, and symbol rather than evidence. The persistence of blood-based visual accusations demonstrates how antisemitism continues to operate through affect, implication, and historical resonance rather than overt declaration.

The incidents grouped under this theme encompass a wide range of visual acts. While the four images presented here offer representative examples, the wider dataset includes numerous variations in scale, location, and intensity, ranging from isolated splashes of paint to the extensive coverage of building façades. What defines this theme is less about the precise form of the act, but more about repeated use of a visual language in which Jews are symbolically associated with bloodshed, guilt, and moral contamination. Through dramatic colour, strategic placement, and metaphorical accusation, red symbolism and blood imagery function as powerful mechanisms through which antisemitism is made visible and emotionally immediate.

Theme 2: Nazi Symbolism and Holocaust Inversion



2A
Holocaust memorials in Belgium defaced with antisemitic graffiti and Nazi symbols. (source: Algemeiner, 2024)



2B
Posters of Israeli hostages in Finchley defaced with Hitler moustaches and Nazi imagery. (source: The Telegraph, 2023)



2C
Swastikas painted on the door of a Jewish student's residence at the College of Europe in Bruges. (source: Politico Europe, 2024)



2D
Mural honouring Holocaust survivors in Milan vandalised (source: Algemeiner, 2024)

The second theme captures incidents that deploy Nazi imagery and Holocaust references to reverse established moral narratives, recasting Jews as perpetrators rather than victims of historical atrocity (Lipstadt, 2011). If red symbolism implies violence through affect and accusation, Nazi symbolism operates by directly inverting historical moral frameworks. These visual strategies include merging the Star of David with the swastika, depicting Israeli figures as Hitler, defacing Holocaust memorials, and invoking concentration

camp imagery. The incidents illustrated here exemplify this mechanism. Holocaust memorials in Belgium and Germany defaced with Nazi symbols (Figure 2A), posters of Israeli hostages altered with Hitler moustaches and swastikas in the UK (Figure 2B), swastikas painted on the door of a Jewish student's residence at the College of Europe in Bruges (Figure 2C), and the vandalism of a mural honouring Holocaust survivors in Milan (Figure 2D) all demonstrate how Holocaust symbolism is repurposed as a form of accusation.

Holocaust memory occupies a unique moral position within European political culture, yet it is repeatedly appropriated within antisemitic discourse through processes of inversion and trivialisation. As Gidley (2015) argues, comparisons between Jews or Israel and Nazis are manifestly false and are rarely applied to other conflicts, despite far greater asymmetries elsewhere. Their disproportionate use in anti-Israel contexts belittles the enormity of the Shoah while transforming its symbols into tools of delegitimation. Rather than engaging in political critique, these visuals weaponise memory itself.

This strategy performs several interrelated functions. First, it reframes Jewish suffering as undeserving of empathy by recasting Jews as moral aggressors. Second, it collapses historical specificity, reducing the Holocaust to a floating symbol available for political attack. Third, it redirects responsibility for contemporary conflict onto Jewish identity itself. As Wodak (2018) notes, antisemitism related to Israel and "Zionism" has emerged as a dominant post-war form, enabling hostility to be expressed through moral language rather than explicit hatred. This helps explain why Holocaust inversion persists even among actors who view themselves as anti-racist. As Hirsh (2013) argues, antisemitic tropes often re-emerge from a shared cultural reservoir, repurposed without explicit intent.

Monitoring organisations consistently identify Nazi-related language and imagery as among the dominant narrative forms in antisemitic incidents, both during periods of Israel-related trigger events and outside them (Community Security Trust, 2025). This recurrence underscores that Holocaust inversion is not an aberration but a durable and portable visual shorthand within contemporary antisemitism. As Bauman (2000) observed, modern antisemitism seeks to downplay or remove the moral meaning of the Holocaust rather than deny it outright. By turning victims into perpetrators, these visuals invert history itself, transforming remembrance into accusation.

The incidents in this theme extend far beyond the examples presented here. Across the wider dataset, Holocaust inversion appeared in a number of visual forms, including swastikas painted on memorials, synagogues, cemeteries, university spaces, and public monuments; placards comparing Israeli leaders to Hitler; and images equating the Star of David with the swastika. The variety of targets and national settings displays a remarkable consistency in symbolism. Each instance relies upon the appropriation of Holocaust symbolism to reverse established historical narratives and recast Jewish communities as perpetrators rather than victims. What defines this theme is the repeated use of Nazi imagery as a visual language, taking historical memory and transforming it into accusation, and victims into perpetrators.

Theme 3: Desecration and Overwriting of Jewish Memory



3A
Anne Frank statue in Amsterdam defaced with graffiti.
(source: Euronews, 2024)



3B
Israeli hostage posters torn down during demonstrations
in the UK. (source: The Telegraph, 2023)



3C
Holocaust memorial stones in Germany vandalised with
the phrase "Jews are criminals." (source: The Jewish
Chronicle, 2024)



3D
Jewish cemetery in Kraainem, Belgium, desecrated with
antisemitic graffiti and symbols. (source: European
Jewish Congress, 2023)

The third theme focuses on the defacement of cemeteries, memorials, plaques, and murals that commemorate Jewish history and suffering. Beyond symbolic accusation, antisemitism also targets the material foundations of Jewish memory itself. Visually, these incidents function through overwriting: new symbols, slogans, or forms of physical damage are imposed upon sites designed for remembrance, replacing commemoration with hostility. Rather than erasing memory entirely, these acts seek to appropriate it, transforming spaces of mourning into sites of contemporary political struggle and asserting control over how Jewish history is publicly narrated. As Bauer (2001) notes, antisemitism has long sought not only to harm Jews physically but also to undermine the legitimacy of Jewish continuity and historical contribution. The targeting of cemeteries and memorials reflects findings from both contemporary (Chaouat, 2022) and historical antisemitism research. The recurrence of similar visually targeted attacks across multiple countries is not without historical precedent. Kugler (2025) describes the 1959–1960 “Swastika Epidemic”, during which the desecration of a synagogue and memorial in Cologne was followed by thousands of comparable incidents across Europe, North America, and Latin America.

Incidents within this theme vary considerably in form and target. The vandalism of the Anne Frank statue in Amsterdam with Gaza-related slogans (Figure 3A) demonstrates how globally recognised symbols of Jewish victimhood are repurposed to convey political accusation. Holocaust memorial stones in Germany defaced with the phrase “Jews are criminals” (Figure 3C) reframe victims as perpetrators through language that directly inverts historical meaning. The desecration of Jewish graves in Kraainem, Belgium (Figure 3D) extends this logic to sites of burial, attacking memory at its most intimate and sacred. The tearing down of hostage posters (Figure 3B) illustrates a related mechanism in which absence itself becomes a visual strategy, producing meaning through erasure rather than inscription.

These acts project antisemitism across time. Jewish communities are targeted not only in the present, but also as historical subjects whose past is rendered conditional, contested, or illegitimate. The targeting of Jews before and during the Holocaust, including through the use of visual propaganda, casts a long shadow over contemporary incidents. For victims, collective suffering can promote a continued, or even perpetual, sense of fear and group vulnerability, increasing vigilance towards signs of threat (Canetti et al., 2018). While one might argue that statues, memorials, and commemorative sites possess little intrinsic value,

their historical significance and symbolic associations make them important repositories of collective memory and identity (Young, 1994). By mapping contemporary geopolitical conflict onto sites of historical trauma, these incidents collapse temporal boundaries and reassign responsibility across generations. As Antoniou, Dinas et al. (2020) show, competition over victimhood can fuel hostility by reducing empathy for out-groups and diminishing recognition of their suffering. In this context, Jewish memory becomes something to be overwritten rather than preserved. Attacks on memorials are not merely acts of vandalism against material objects, but assaults on the narratives those objects are designed to sustain (Young, 2016). Taken together, the incidents grouped under this theme demonstrate how antisemitism operates through sustained efforts to undermine Jewish memory in public life, transforming remembrance into a site of accusation and delegitimising Jewish suffering as a moral reference point.

The incidents within this theme encompass the targeting of a broad range of commemorative sites. Beyond the examples presented, the wider dataset includes attacks on Jewish cemeteries, Anne Frank memorials, Holocaust memorials, and memorials dedicated to rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust. The targets vary, but they share a common symbolic function. Each represents a location publicly dedicated to Jewish history, suffering, or remembrance. What unites this theme and these visuals is the recurring effort to contest, overwrite, or reframe Jewish memory in public space. Through this symbolic targeting, remembrance becomes a site of hostility, and the desecration or erasure of memorial spaces transforms remembrance and commemoration into objects of political accusation.

Theme 4: Marking and Targeting Jewish Space



4A
Stars of David painted on Jewish homes in Berlin (source: The Telegraph, 2023)



4B
Holocaust memorial and two synagogues in Paris vandalised with green paint. (source: The Times of Israel, 2023)



4C
Choral Synagogue of Vilnius defaced with pro-Palestinian graffiti. (source: European Jewish Congress, 2024)



4D
Porto synagogue vandalised. (source: The Jewish Chronicle, 2023)

The final theme captures antisemitic acts that operate through the visual marking of Jewish homes, institutions, and neighbourhoods. Through graffiti, paint, and slogans, Jewish

buildings are transformed into symbolic stand-ins for Jewish identity itself. The marking of Jewish homes in Berlin with Stars of David (Figure 4A) exemplifies how Jewish space is rendered hyper-visible and vulnerable, echoing historical practices through which perceived “difference” was made legible and socially actionable (Mosse, 1978). Similarly, the vandalism of synagogues and memorial-adjacent sites in Paris (Figure 4B) repositions Jewish communal institutions as legitimate targets of accusation.

Contemporary slogans play a key role in this process. The phrase “Free Gaza”, sprayed onto the Choral Synagogue in Vilnius (Figure 4C), is not inherently antisemitic. However, its placement on a synagogue fundamentally alters its meaning. As Gidley (2015) argues, symbols or slogans that would be uncontroversial when directed at state institutions acquire antisemitic significance when imposed upon Jewish religious or communal spaces, where they function as a means of assigning collective responsibility. More overt forms of targeting are evident in the vandalism of a synagogue in Porto with slogans demanding the end of Israel (Figure 4D), thereby collapsing distinctions between Jewish identity and the actions of the Israeli state.

This logic reflects a broader tendency to treat Jews outside Israel as representatives of Israel, reducing Jewish identity to a political abstraction and rendering Jewish people “fair game” for hostility. Monitoring bodies repeatedly document the conflation of Jewish communities with Israeli policy, particularly following October 7, with Jewish institutions targeted as proxies for geopolitical anger (Community Security Trust, 2024; Boyd, 2024). Such marking operates through repetition and persistence, embedding hostility into the visual background of everyday life and normalising intimidation. This threat is not a new phenomenon. For many European Jews, security concerns have long been a feature of everyday life, with synagogues guarded by police and schools protected by extensive security measures (Schnurbein, 2016). In this context, contemporary acts of vandalism represent a continuation of longer patterns of hostility rather than something historically unique. The significance of these incidents lies in their capacity to reinforce vulnerability, exclusion, and insecurity over time.

Graffiti occupies a distinctive position within this theme because it functions simultaneously as a visual, spatial, and temporal intervention. Racist graffiti is an active form of intimidation whose meaning is shaped by visibility, location, and risk (Lynn and Lea,

2005). Unlike spoken utterances, graffiti endures, continuing to signal hostility for as long as it remains in place. These incidents illustrate the temporal dimension of graffiti, often reflecting contemporary social and political issues and embodying responses to current events (Tavkhelidze and Kapoor, 2026). The concentration of incidents during the war in Gaza therefore reinforces the interpretation of offline visual antisemitism as a reactive form of political communication. Such acts translate international events into local expressions of hostility. In this sense, marking Jewish space constitutes both a claim over territory and a denial of Jewish belonging. Taken together, these incidents demonstrate how the visual marking of Jewish homes and institutions reorganises public space into informal maps of threat, collapsing identity, geography, and perceived political responsibility into a single visual act.

One of the key elements of this theme is the importance of symbolic marking. Regardless of the symbolism used, whether overt or covert, marking transforms ordinary buildings, institutions, and community spaces into visible indicators of group identity. This theme carries a significant historical dimension and deeply negative connotations for those belonging to the targeted community. While contemporary examples do not directly replicate these historical practices, they draw upon a similar symbolic logic that transforms visible spaces into objects of attention and accusation.

The incidents exemplified here extend significantly beyond the examples pictured. Across the wider dataset, Jewish homes, synagogues, schools, universities, businesses, memorial-adjacent spaces, and community institutions were repeatedly marked through graffiti, stickers, slogans, posters, leaflets, and political symbols. These incidents range from Stars of David painted on residential buildings in Berlin and Paris to antisemitic graffiti on university campuses, the targeting of Jewish-owned businesses, and the repeated defacement or removal of hostage posters. The underlying strategy is the consistent singling out of Jewish space. Through marking, identification, and repetition, public space becomes reorganised around informal boundaries of belonging and exclusion.

Discussion

Viewed together, these four themes demonstrate that contemporary antisemitism in Europe operates through a recurring set of visual strategies that produce fear, emotional harm, and symbolic intimidation in public space. The incidents identified in this study reflect a broader process of boundary-making through the marking of specific spaces, the attribution of collective responsibility, and the positioning of Jewish communities as a distinct and oppositional out-group. In this respect, the findings align with the longstanding “us versus them” narrative consistently identified within antisemitism scholarship (Cała and Golubiewski, 2018).

These visuals work by collapsing distinctions between Jewish communities and the actions of the Israeli state, between past and present, rendering Jewish identity itself politically legible and culpable. Across all four themes, antisemitism operates through a shared mechanism of collective attribution, in which Jewish identity is rendered a legitimate object of blame. While each individual incident is harmful in its own right, the power of these visuals lies less in any single act than in their repetition and strategic placement, which normalise hostility and embed collective blame within everyday environments. This transformation represents a troubling echo of historical practices through which Jewish communities were rendered visible, often marked, and exposed to significant hostility.

Across all four themes, antisemitism frequently relies upon symbolism, context, and historical resonance to communicate hostility. The symbolic violence directed at Jewish communities is therefore simultaneously historical and contemporary, local and transnational, and risks becoming normalised as it is woven into the fabric of public life. The recurrence of these visual themes across multiple countries and over time suggests that they cannot be understood solely as isolated acts of vandalism. Although graffiti is often perceived as a crime or a form of communication from the margins, it can also reflect broader social and political attitudes (Hána and Šel, 2021). The scope, scale, and persistence of the incidents examined here may therefore reflect wider narratives and assumptions circulating within public discourse. Viewed individually, these incidents may appear disconnected, but collectively the repetition of particular symbols, targets, and visual repertoires reveals a more coherent structure of hostility.

Beyond its substantive findings, this study demonstrates the value of collecting, grouping, and analysing antisemitic incidents as a body of visual communication rather than solely as individual acts of criminal damage. The approach adopted here complements existing monitoring efforts by providing insights into how hostility is visually expressed, reproduced, and normalised within public space. More broadly, similar approaches could be applied to other forms of hate crime, symbolic violence, and identity-based hostility, particularly those that emerge in response to major political or international events. Understanding the scale, variety, and recurring patterns of these incidents, rather than treating them as isolated or spontaneous acts, is essential for grasping the complexity of contemporary antisemitism and, in turn, for developing more effective responses to it.

Policy Recommendations

The findings of this research suggest that offline antisemitism requires greater recognition in contemporary policy responses to antisemitism. Considerable attention, both from a research perspective and a policy perspective, has been devoted to online hate speech and digital forms of antisemitism. However, the incidents examined here demonstrate that hostility towards Jews is also communicated through the symbolic marking of public space. They may be overt or covert but clearly communicate hostility, blame, and exclusion within everyday environments. Existing European strategies on antisemitism have placed increasing emphasis on monitoring, education, and the protection of Jewish life (European Commission, 2024). However, comparatively little attention has been paid to the visual dimensions of offline antisemitism identified in this study. The increased focus on digital antisemitism is vital but risks overlooking hostility in public space (Lupu et al., 2023). Research suggests that propaganda and hostile messaging that gain traction in digital spaces do not always translate directly into offline popularity, indicating that online and offline environments function as distinct spheres of information consumption with different communicative strategies (Diab et al., 2023). Greater political recognition, beyond advocacy groups, of offline visual antisemitism as a distinct manifestation of contemporary antisemitism would provide a stronger basis for understanding how visual political communication can spread hate towards specific communities. Such recognition would also encourage policymakers to move beyond

treating these incidents solely as acts of vandalism and instead consider their broader communicative, social, and psychological impacts upon Jewish communities.

A second implication for addressing this issue concerns the relationship between monitoring, research, and evidence-based policymaking. Effective policymaking relies upon understanding the nature, scale, and characteristics of the problem being addressed. In the context of antisemitism, effective responses require both an assessment of antisemitism's prevalence and an understanding of its causes before appropriate interventions can be developed and adapted to specific contexts (Lange et al., 2018). While monitoring organisations across Europe collect substantial quantities of data on antisemitic incidents, relatively little research has examined the visual content through which antisemitism is communicated in offline public spaces. This is despite the high prevalence of such visual hostility, as demonstrated by this research. These findings demonstrate both the scale and severity of incidents across Europe. The broader patterns identified here reveal recurring symbols, narratives, and targets that extend beyond individual incidents. As the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2019) notes, inadequate recording and analysis of antisemitic incidents limits the ability of policymakers to develop effective responses. While translating knowledge into policy is a complex endeavour (Parkhurst, 2017), the broader European focus on evidence-based policy in tackling hate crime requires robust evidence. Building upon existing monitoring efforts, greater analysis of visual antisemitic incidents would strengthen the evidence base available to policymakers by improving understanding of recurring themes evident in antisemitic incidents and placing policymakers in a stronger position to implement effective responses. Such an approach is consistent with broader research on hate crime prevention, which highlights the importance of robust data collection and systematic monitoring (Groma, 2018). The importance of research in identifying trends and adapting preventative measures is also reflected in calls from affected communities (European Union of Jewish Students, 2024) and may help address the challenges caused by a lack of reliable evidence demonstrating the nature and extent of antisemitism when formulating effective responses (Dudek, 2024). Expanding both the collection and analysis of visual antisemitic incidents would therefore strengthen the evidence base upon which preventative policy is built.

Finally, the findings highlight the need for more anticipatory responses to antisemitism during periods of international crisis. The incidents examined throughout this study occurred against the backdrop of the Gaza war and reflect a broader pattern identified by monitoring organisations and previous scholarship, in which overseas conflicts act as catalysts for antisemitic hostility directed towards Jewish communities outside Israel (Jacobs et al., 2011; Boyd, 2024). This pattern is not new. In the UK, previous flare-ups between Israel and Gaza in 2009, 2014, and 2021 were each accompanied by clear spikes in antisemitic incidents (Boyd, 2023). Conflicts in the contemporary era possess the ability to evoke emotional responses across borders, becoming embedded within political discourse in countries external to the conflict. Although European policymakers cannot control conflicts in the Middle East, they can prepare for their domestic consequences, particularly in the context of recurring conflicts that produce recurring patterns of hostility. Research on radicalisation increasingly emphasises that effective interventions must be adapted to context-specific circumstances rather than relying upon universal solutions. Different European states contain distinct political, social, and demographic conditions, meaning responses must be grounded in an understanding of national and community-level realities (Schmid, 2013). The importance of this contextual dimension is further reflected in broader research on evidence-based policymaking, which emphasises the need to understand the social, cultural, and political environments within which problems emerge and policies are implemented (Hantrais et al., 2023). The visual incidents examined in this study demonstrate how antisemitism becomes embedded within specific environments while simultaneously responding to wider international events. Similar to preventative frameworks used in hate crime prevention and counter-extremism, periods of heightened international tension could trigger enhanced monitoring, rapid reporting mechanisms, and stronger collaboration with the communities most affected. Targeted community engagement and increased support for vulnerable Jewish institutions and sites would not eliminate antisemitism but could help reduce the extent to which overseas conflicts are translated into hostility towards Jewish communities across Europe. More broadly, recognising that antisemitism manifests in complex and context-dependent ways reinforces the need for tailored responses rather than one-size-fits-all solutions and provides a stronger basis for addressing the cumulative, spatial, and symbolic forms of hostility identified within this study. This has historical and contemporary precedent.

Examples of anticipatory and rapid-response strategies can already be observed across several European states during periods of heightened geopolitical tension. In the UK, for example, conflict in the Middle East has repeatedly triggered enhanced security measures around synagogues, Jewish schools, and community institutions, supported by close coordination between police and the Community Security Trust (CST). In France, periods of increased antisemitic risk have similarly prompted the deployment of police protection around Jewish institutions. Germany has adopted comparable measures, including increased police protection for synagogues and Jewish schools, enhanced monitoring of antisemitic incidents, and closer cooperation with community reporting organisations such as RIAS. These examples demonstrate that such responses already form part of Europe's broader approach to combatting antisemitism. However, this approach would benefit significantly from more consistent implementation across Europe and a stronger focus on the systematic monitoring of offline visual antisemitism. Expanding these measures to better understand the visual dimensions of offline antisemitism would strengthen early responses, allow for closer cooperation between communities and state security actors, and improve preventative responses to emerging antisemitic threats.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how antisemitism is visually expressed in public spaces across Europe against the backdrop of the war in Gaza. It demonstrates that contemporary antisemitism operates not only through online discourse and acts of violence, but also through persistent symbolic interventions embedded within everyday environments. By identifying recurring visual strategies, the analysis shows how antisemitic meaning is often communicated through implication rather than explicit declaration. Across the themes identified, Jewish individuals and institutions are repeatedly positioned as proxies for the Israeli state, collapsing distinctions between identity and state action and rendering Jewishness politically culpable for events to which European Jews have no connection. The scale of the problem is problematic, as evidenced by the volume of incidents recording in this research particularly in European countries with sizeable Jewish populations.

These findings highlight the importance of understanding antisemitism as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that operates cumulatively and spatially. The relative lack of research examining how public spaces are visually transformed remains a significant concern. As these visual strategies draw upon longstanding antisemitic repertoires, reiterating historical symbols and narratives while adapting them to contemporary political contexts, it is vital that policy responses are timely, proportionate, and contextually informed. By shifting analytical attention away from digital environments and towards offline, material expressions of antisemitism, this chapter contributes to a fuller understanding of visual antisemitism in public space and highlights the need for specific conceptual, methodological, and policy responses.

Antisemitism requires a comprehensive response involving both state and non-state actors (The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, 2025). Such an undertaking extends far beyond the remit of a single study. Rather than offering a complete solution, this chapter makes a modest contribution by identifying an area that remains comparatively under-examined within contemporary scholarship. Specifically, it demonstrates the value of systematically analysing offline visual antisemitism and argues for greater attention to the visual, spatial, and communicative dimensions of antisemitic hostility. Addressing antisemitism is essential, but doing so effectively requires a deeper appreciation of its complexities, stronger collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and communities, and a more holistic approach to developing meaningful interventions.

References

- Antoniou, G., Dinas, E., & Kosmidis, S. (2020). Collective victimhood and social prejudice: A post-Holocaust theory of antisemitism. *Political Psychology*, 41(5), 861–886.
- Armstrong, M. A., Rice, C. A. G., & Warwick, B. (2024). The visual communication of Brexit in Northern Ireland: Decoding public imagery on identity, politics and Europe. *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 12(9), 1390–1408.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2022.2115544>
- Ascone, L. (2024). Countering antisemitism online: A discursive analysis of Facebook and Twitter/X comments. In M. J. Becker, K. Blatter, & C. Vincent (Eds.), *Antisemitism in online communication: Transdisciplinary approaches to hate speech in the twenty-first century* (pp. 137–158). Open Book Publishers.
- Baele, S. J., Boyd, C., & Coan, T. G. (2020). Lethal images: Analysing extremist visual propaganda from ISIS and beyond. *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 5(4), 634–657.
- Baron, S. W. (1976). Changing patterns of antisemitism: A survey. *Jewish Social Studies*, 38(1), 5–38.
- Bauer, Y. (2002). *Rethinking the Holocaust*. Yale University Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2000). *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cornell University Press.
- Becker, M. J., Ascone, L., Placzynata, K., & Vincent, C. (Eds.). (2024). *Antisemitism in online communication: Transdisciplinary approaches to hate speech in the twenty-first century*. Open Book Publishers.
- Becker, M. J., Blatter, K., Hagen, T., Bolton, M., & Chapelan, A. (2024). *Decoding antisemitism: A guide to identifying antisemitism online*. Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft.
- Benier, K., Sydes, M., & Higginson, A. (2025). PROTOCOL: Correlates and antecedents of hate crime: A systematic review of place-level risk and protective factors. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 21(3), e70048.
- Bleiker, R. (2018). *Visual global politics*. Routledge.
- Boyd, J. (2015, November). Combating antisemitism: Lessons from the United Kingdom. Paper presented at the Athens Conference on Antisemitism, Athens, Greece.
-

Boyd, J. (2023). *How conflict in Israel and Gaza affects Jews in the UK, and what you can do about it*. Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

Boyd, J. (2024). *Antisemitism in the aftermath of October 7: What do the data tell us, and what more do we still need to know?* Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

Bucy, E. P., & Joo, J. (2021). Editors' introduction: Visual politics, grand collaborative programs and the opportunity to think big. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 26(1), 5–21.

Bundesverband RIAS e. V. (2024). *Antisemitic incidents in Germany 2023: Annual report*. Federal Association of Departments for Research and Information on Antisemitism.

Caiani, M. (2024). Visual analysis and the contentious politics of the radical right. *Sociology Compass*, 18(9), e13267.

Centre for Information and Documentation on Israel (CIDI). (2025). *CIDI monitor antisemitism 2024: English summary*. CIDI.

Chaouat, B. (2022). Theories on the causes of antisemitism. In S. Katz (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to antisemitism* (pp. 497–516). Cambridge University Press.

Cohen, B. (2023). The Jews are our misfortune! Contemporary antisemitism as a hydra-headed phenomenon. *Israel Affairs*, 29(1), 5–30.

Combat Antisemitism Movement. (2026). *Research*. Combat Antisemitism Movement Community Security Trust. (2024). *Antisemitic incidents: January–June 2024*. Community Security Trust.

Community Security Trust. (2025). *Antisemitic incidents report: January–June 2025*. Community Security Trust.

Council of Europe, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). (2024). *Annual report on ECRI's activities: Covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2023*. Council of Europe.

Cox, C., & Marlowe, D. (2024). *Understanding antisemitism: A guide for teaching and social work practice*. Council on Social Work Education.

Crilley, R., Manor, I., & Bjola, C. (2020). Visual narratives of global politics in the digital age: An introduction. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 33(5), 628–637.

Diab, A., Jagdagdorj, B.-E., Ng, L. H. X., Lin, Y.-R., & Yoder, M. M. (2023). Online to offline crossover of white supremacist propaganda. *arXiv*.
<https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2303.07838>

Doolan, M., Cox, K., & Sarma, K. M. (2025). PROTOCOL: Understanding the content, context, and impact of far-right extremist propaganda disseminated online: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 21, e70076.

Dudek, C. M. (2024). The EU’s combating antisemitism policy: Agenda setting and the making of a “European polity.” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 62, 671–687.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13521>

Enstad, J. D. (2024). Facing antisemitism in Europe: Individual and country-level predictors of Jews’ victimisation and fear across twelve countries. *Social Forces*, 103(3), 1186–1209.
European Commission. (2024). *First progress report of the EU strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life*. European Commission.

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2024). *Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism: Results from the third survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU*. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

European Union of Jewish Students. (2024). *The rise of antisemitism at European universities as a result of the October 7 massacre*. European Union of Jewish Students.

Fine, R. (2009). Fighting with phantoms: A contribution to the debate on antisemitism in Europe. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 43(5), 459–479.

Friesel, E., & Schwarz-Friesel, M. (2023). The Israelization of Jew-hatred and the concept “antisemitism-light.” *Israel Affairs*, 29(1), 107–119.

Gakahu, N. (2024). Image-centrism in Africa’s political communication: A social semiotic analysis of self-presentation practices by women political candidates in Kenya’s social media space. *Information, Communication & Society*, 27(8), 1687–1711.

Gidley, B. (2015). *50 days in the summer: Gaza, political protest and antisemitism in the UK*. All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism.

Gill, G., & Angosto-Ferrandez, L. F. (2018). Introduction: Symbolism and politics. *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 19(4), 429–433.

Groma, V. (2018). Monitoring hate crimes and hate incidents as a means of prevention. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 51, 01009. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20185101009>

Halasz, G. (2006). Is “new” antisemitism really “new”? *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, 4(2), 101–109.

Hall, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage Publications.

Hána, D., & Šel, J. (2021). Political graffiti in the political symbolic space of Prague, Czechia. *Urban Research & Practice*, 15(5), 679–698.

Hantrais, L., Lenihan, A. T., & MacGregor, S. (2015). Evidence-based policy: Exploring international and interdisciplinary insights. *Contemporary Social Science*, 10(2), 101–113.

Hirsh, D. (2013). Hostility to Israel and antisemitism: Toward a sociological approach. *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism*, 5, 1401–1422.

Hirsh, D. (2017). *Contemporary left antisemitism*. Routledge.

Jacobs, D., Veny, Y., & De Geest, S. (2011). The impact of the conflict in Gaza on antisemitism in Belgium. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 45(4), 341–360.

Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism. (2021). *The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism*. <https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/>

Julius, A. (2010). *Trials of the diaspora: A history of anti-Semitism in England*. Oxford University Press.

Kahn-Harris, K., & Boyd, J. (2023). *The field of research on contemporary antisemitism and Jewish life: Working towards a European research hub*. European Commission.

Kaplan, E. H., & Small, C. A. (2006). Anti-Israel sentiment predicts antisemitism in Europe. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 50(4), 548–561.

Kiewe, A. (2018). *Antisemitism and communication*. Oxford University Press.

Klug, B. (2003). The collective Jew: Israel and the new antisemitism. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 37(2), 117–138.

Lange, A., Muzicant, A., Porat, D., Schiffman, L. H., & Weitzman, M. (2018). *An end to antisemitism! A catalogue of policies to combat antisemitism*. European Jewish Congress.

Langmuir, G. (1996). *Toward a definition of antisemitism*. University of California Press.

Li, J. (2024). The pictorial turn and visual rhetoric: Analysing image agency and persuasion in contemporary media. *Advances in Humanities Research*, 9(1), 31–35.

Lilleker, D. G. (2019). The power of visual political communication: Pictorial politics through the lens of communication psychology. In A. Veneti & D. G. Lilleker (Eds.), *Visual political communication* (pp. 37–51). Palgrave Macmillan.

Lipstadt, D. E. (2011). *The Eichmann trial*. Schocken Books.

Lupu, Y., Sear, R., & Zhang, Z. (2023). Offline events and online hate. *PLOS ONE*, 18(1), e0278511.

Lynn, N., & Lea, S. J. (2005). “Racist” graffiti: Text, context and social comment. *Visual Communication*, 4(1), 39–63.

Matthias, J. B., et al. (2024). *Antisemitism in online communication: Transdisciplinary approaches to hate speech in the twenty-first century*. Open Book Publishers.

Milbradt, B. (2013). Antisemitic metaphors and latent communication. In C. A. Small (Ed.), *Global antisemitism: A crisis of modernity* (pp. 45–49). Brill | Nijhoff.

Nazmine Khan, M., Tareen, H. K., Noreen, S., & Tariq, M. (2021). Hate speech and social media: A systematic review. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, 12, 5285–5294.

Niedick, J., Juang, L. P., & Bitter, L. (2026). Education against antisemitism: A scoping review. *Zeitschrift für Bildungsforschung*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s35834-025-00529-x>

Offenberg, S. (2024). Get the joke or get the Jew: Satire and the performance of antisemitism from the Middle Ages to the twenty-first century. *Religions*, 15(12), 1561.

Parkhurst, J. (2016). *The politics of evidence: From evidence-based policy to the good governance of evidence*. Routledge.

Penslar, D. (2022). Who's afraid of defining antisemitism? *Antisemitism Studies*, 6(1), 133–145.

Perry, B. (2001). *In the name of hate: Understanding hate crimes*. Routledge.

Riedl, M. J., Joseff, K., Soorholtz, S., & Woolley, S. (2024). Platformed antisemitism on Twitter: Anti-Jewish rhetoric in political discourse surrounding the 2018 US midterm election. *New Media & Society*, 26(4), 2213–2233.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221082122>

Rose, G. (2016). *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials* (4th ed.). Sage.

Schirato, T., & Webb, J. (2004). *Reading the visual*. Allen & Unwin.

Schmid, A. P. (2013). Radicalisation, de-radicalisation, counter-radicalisation: A conceptual discussion and literature review. *ICCT Research Paper*, 4(2).
<https://doi.org/10.19165/2013.1.02>

Schwarz-Friesel, M. (2024). Why the black response of hatred towards your existence, Israel? *Israel Affairs*, 30(5), 958–962.

Suárez-Vergne, Á. (2026). Mapping hate crime research in Europe: Trends, challenges, and future directions. *Deviant Behavior*, 1–21.

Subotić, J. (2022). Antisemitism in the global populist international. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 24(3), 458–474.

Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå). (2025). *Antisemitic hate crime: Contemporary experiences from Jewish congregations and organisations*. Brå.

Tavkhelidze, T., & Kapoor, S. (2026). Graffiti—Freedom of speech? In S. Kirschner & T. Lask (Eds.), *Speak up! Einblicke in das ostbelgische Innovationslabor zum Umgang mit fake news und hate speech* (pp. 415–436). transcript Verlag.
<https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472644-415>

Tucker, J. A., Guess, A., Barbera, P., Vaccari, C., Siegel, A., Sanovich, S., Stukal, D., & Nyhan, B. (2019). *Social media, political polarization, and political disinformation: A review of the scientific literature*. Loughborough University.

UNESCO. (2025). *Strategies to counter antisemitism: A handbook for educators*.

<https://doi.org/10.54675/ZRVW7864>

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. (2025). *United Nations action plan to enhance monitoring and response to antisemitism*. United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.

Vogel, B., Arthur, C., Lepp, E., O'Driscoll, D., & Haworth, B. T. (2020). Reading socio-political and spatial dynamics through graffiti in conflict-affected societies. *Third World Quarterly*, 41(12), 2148–2168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2020.1810009>

Waxman, D., Schraub, D., & Altshuler, G. (2022). Arguing about antisemitism: Why we disagree about antisemitism, and what we can do about it. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 45(9), 1803–1824.

Weimann, G., & Masri, N. (2021). TikTok's spiral of antisemitism. *Journalism and Media*, 2(4), 697–708.

Weitzman, M. (2022). Antisemitism in social media and on the web. In S. Katz (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to antisemitism* (pp. 481–496). Cambridge University Press.

Whine, M. (2021). Europe's undertakings to combat antisemitism. In A. Lange, K. Mayerhofer, D. Porat, & L. H. Schiffman (Eds.), *Comprehending and confronting antisemitism: A multi-faceted approach* (pp. 369–388). De Gruyter.

Wodak, R. (2018). The radical right and antisemitism. In J. Rydgren (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of the radical right* (pp. 61–85). Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190274559.013.4>

Wright, G., Hecht, J., & Laird, C. (2025). Antisemitism, Israel, and political ideology on the American college campus. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 1–23.

Young, J. E. (1994). *The texture of memory: Holocaust memorials and meaning*. Yale University Press.

Young, J. E. (2016). *The stages of memory: Reflections on memorial art, loss, and the spaces between*. University of Massachusetts Press.

Zannettou, S., Finkelstein, J., Bradlyn, B., & Blackburn, J. (2020). A quantitative approach to understanding online antisemitism. *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*, 14(1), 786–797. <https://doi.org/10.1609/icwsm.v14i1.7343>

Zapata, J., Sulik, J., & Vasiljevic, M. (2024). Bystanders' collective responses set the norm against hate speech. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 335.

Appendix A. Image Sources

The images reproduced in this article are drawn from publicly available media reports and monitoring organisations and are used solely for analytical and illustrative purposes under fair dealing provisions. No private individuals are identified. All sources are listed below in the order in which the images appear in the figures.

Figure 1. Red Symbolism and Implied Violence

(1A) The Guardian (2024), Red handprints painted on Paris Holocaust memorial.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/may/22/france-russia-paris-holocaust-memorial-graffiti-red-hand>

(1B) L'Unione Sarda (2024), Red paint and antisemitic graffiti at the Jewish Museum of Cagliari.
<https://www.unionesarda.it/en/sardinia/red-paint-and-anti-semitic-writings-intimidating-act-at-the-jewish-museum-of-cagliari-k5ltr2fk>

(1C) BBC News (2023), Red paint attack on Jewish community building in London.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-67127778>

(1D) BBC News (2023–2024), Antisemitic vandalism involving paint at Jewish site in London.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx285v8djejo>

Figure 2. Nazi Symbolism and Holocaust Inversion

(2A) Algemeiner (2024), Holocaust memorials defaced in Belgium and Germany amid antisemitism surge.
<https://www.algemeiner.com/2024/06/20/holocaust-memorials-defaced-belgium-germany-antisemitism-continues-spike-europe/>

(2B) The Telegraph (2023), Israeli hostage posters defaced with Hitler moustaches in Finchley.
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/10/25/israel-hostages-defaced-finchley-hitler-moustaches-amas/>

(2C) Politico Europe (2024), Swastikas painted on Jewish student's door at the College of Europe.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/college-of-europe-probe-jewish-student-door-antisemitic-swastika/>

(2D) European Jewish Congress / Algemeiner (2023–2024), Holocaust survivor mural vandalised again in Milan.

<https://www.algemeiner.com/2024/12/23/mural-holocaust-survivors-italy-completely-painted-over-antisemitic-vandalism/>

Figure 3. Desecration and Overwriting of Jewish Memory

(3A) Euronews (2024), Anne Frank statue in Amsterdam defaced for second time.

<https://www.euronews.com/culture/2024/08/06/anne-frank-statue-in-amsterdam-defaced-for-second-time-in-less-than-a-month>

(3B) The Telegraph (2023), Why Israeli hostage posters are being torn down in Britain.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/columnists/2023/11/09/why-israel-hostage-posters-torn-down-palestine-supporters/>

(3C) The Jewish Chronicle (2024), 'Jews are criminals' scrawled on Holocaust memorial stones in Germany.

<https://www.thejc.com/news/world/thugs-scrawl-jews-are-criminals-on-holocaust-memorial-stones-in-germany-p55mfbu2>

(3D) European Jewish Congress (2023), Jewish cemetery desecrated with antisemitic tags in Kraainem, Belgium.

<https://eurojewcong.org/news/communities-news/belgium/kraainem-jewish-cemetery-desacrated-with-antisemitic-tags/>

Figure 4. Marking and Targeting Jewish Space

(4A) The Telegraph (2023), Stars of David painted on Jewish homes in Berlin echo Nazi past.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2023/10/14/star-of-david-graffiti-berlin-jewish-homes-echo-nazi-past/>

(4B) The Times of Israel (2023), Holocaust memorial and synagogues vandalized with green paint in Paris.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/holocaust-memorial-two-synagogues-in-paris-vandalized-with-green-paint/>

(4C) European Jewish Congress (2023–2024), Choral Synagogue of Vilnius defaced with pro-Palestinian graffiti.

<https://eurojewcong.org/news/communities-news/lithuania/choral-synagogue-of-vilnius-defaced-with-pro-palestinian-graffiti/>

(4D) The Jewish Chronicle (2023), Porto synagogue vandalised following Hamas terror attack.

<https://www.thejc.com/news/world/porto-synagogue-vandalised-in-wake-of-hamas-terror-qdz74ivr>

About the JD Journal for Deradicalization

The JD Journal for Deradicalization is the world's only peer reviewed periodical for the theory and practice of deradicalization with a wide international audience. Named an ["essential journal of our times"](#) (Cheryl LaGuardia, Harvard University) the JD's editorial board of expert advisors includes some of the most renowned scholars in the field of deradicalization studies, such as Prof. Dr. John G. Horgan (Georgia State University); Prof. Dr. Tore Bjørgo (Norwegian Police University College); Prof. Dr. Mark Dechesne (Leiden University); Prof. Dr. Cynthia Miller-Idriss (American University Washington D.C.); Prof. Dr. Julie Chernov Hwang (Goucher College); Prof. Dr. Marco Lombardi, (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore Milano); Dr. Paul Jackson (University of Northampton); Professor Michael Freeden, (University of Nottingham); Professor Hamed El-Sa'id (Manchester Metropolitan University); Prof. Sadeq Rahimi (University of Saskatchewan, Harvard Medical School), Dr. Omar Ashour (University of Exeter), Prof. Neil Ferguson (Liverpool Hope University), Prof. Sarah Marsden (Lancaster University), Prof. Maura Conway (Dublin City University), Dr. Kurt Braddock (American University Washington D.C.), Dr. Michael J. Williams (The Science of P/CVE), Dr. Mary Beth Altier (New York University) and Dr. Aaron Y. Zelin (Washington Institute for Near East Policy), Prof. Dr. Adrian Cherney (University of Queensland), Dr. Wesley S. McCann (RTI International), and Dr. Daren Fisher (Hampton University), Prof. Dr. Maria Moulin-Stożek (Jan Długosz University).

For more information please see: www.journal-derad.com

Twitter: @JD_JournalDerad

Facebook: www.facebook.com/deradicalisation

The JD Journal for Deradicalization is a proud member of the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).

ISSN: 2363-9849

This Special Issue of the Journal for Deradicalization was guest edited by: Arie Kruglanski and Sophia Moskalenko