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The Lester and Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities
Tel Aviv University

הפקולטה למדעי הרוח
ע"ש ל"ט וסאלי אנטין
אוניברסיטת תל אביב

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For the Study of Contemporary European Jewry | לחקר יהדות אירופה בימינו

Coronavirus Antisemitism Briefing n. 5 – 28 May 2020

The Coronavirus Briefings analyze the development of the antisemitic hate speech connected to the Coronavirus crisis. This project, managed by Sammy Eppel, political analyst, is a common effort of the Kantor Center and its partners around the world. Among the contributors of this briefing, special thanks to: B'nai Brith Canada.

Executive Summary

- On May 22, the “Quds Day,” marked each year on the last Friday of the month of Ramadan, was an occasion to disseminate Coronavirus-related anti-Jewish accusations of plague-spreading and Israel-related antisemitic expression such as the COVID-1948 slander.
- In Turkey, antisemitic sentiment expressed publicly is growing in a general atmosphere of hate speech and conspiracy theories diffused in social media.
- A study released by Oxford University shows the relevance of conspiracy theories in the discourse concerning the pandemic, blaming China, Muslims, and Jews.

Anti-Israel discourse

Iran-related “Quds Day”

- As [reported by MEMRI](#), the 2020 Quds Day was marked by several publications and calls for the destruction of Israel, including the use of Holocaust language by the Supreme Leader Khamenei, who used the expression “Final Solution” regarding Israel. Moreover, Zionism has consistently been denoted as a virus, and compared to the Coronavirus pandemic.
- The Iranian Fars News Agency published on Twitter on May 22, at least two caricatures labelling Israel as a virus through the “[COVID-1948 slander](#),” which merges the official label of the Coronavirus COVID-19 with 1948, the year the State of Israel was establishing.
- On the same occasion another post shows a caricature featuring an antisemitic portrayal of a Jewish person with demonic traits who pierces a dove with his nose. The long nose represents what is described as “[the lie of the Holocaust](#).”
- In Canada, an online event organized in occasion of the Quds Day on May 17 featured speakers who voiced harsh anti-Zionist expressions, including the definition of the U.S. and Israel as allies of the Coronavirus, as [reported by B'nai Brith Canada](#).

Iranian propaganda in South America

- Through its Spanish language media channels, the Iranian regime spreads anti-Israel and antisemitic propaganda.
- HispanTV continues publishing articles with anti-Israel and antisemitic content, enhancing the [anti-Zionist rhetoric in occasion of the Quds Day](#). A number of publications accused Israel of [deliberately diffusing the virus among young prisoners](#) and of committing a “[slow genocide](#)” in Gaza through the virus. It should be noted that just one person passed away due to the Corona in the Gaza strip, so far.

Turkey

- In Turkey, Coronavirus-related antisemitism has been expressed among public circles and among certain politicians. An article published in the Turkish Jewish weekly “Şalom” shows how the Coronavirus caused a spike in hate speech in social media, [including antisemitic conspiracy theories](#). In an interview published on the Jerusalem Post, some members of the local Jewish community warn of the [rising anti-Jewish sentiment](#), particularly because of conspiracy theories disseminated through social media.
- [MEMRI reports](#) that Turkish press as well has on some occasions disseminated antisemitic views whereby Jews would be responsible for the pandemic, and that in at least one occasion a politician has expressed an antisemitic conspiracy theory whereby Zionism would take an advantage of the high Coronavirus victim toll.

Conspiracy theories

- The “[Oxford Coronavirus Explanations, Attitudes, and Narratives Survey \(OCEANS\)](#)” published on May 22 by Oxford University analyses the attitude of a 2,500 participants sample in the UK toward the Coronavirus. The study shows that conspiracy theories constitute a sizable part of the discourse on the Coronavirus, targeting China, Muslims, and Jews.
- To different degrees, 45.4% believe that China is responsible for the virus, while 19.1% believe Jews are behind the virus, and 19.9% believe Muslims are spreading it. The study also shows that such theories are voiced not only on the fringes of society, and that social media serves as a platform to disseminate such opinions.