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

Coronavirus Antisemitism Briefing n. 4 – 21 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: SACC (Security And Crisis Centre) by the EJC (European Jewish Congress) and the CIDI (Centrum Informatie en Dokumentatie Israel, Holland).

Executive Summary

- Iranian regime propaganda in the Spanish language promotes a number of anti-Israel stereotypes, including Israeli alleged policies against Palestinian children.
- Israel is portrayed as a virus and Zionism is referred to as “Covid-1948” or “Sion-48,” referring to the year when the State of Israel was established.
- Caricatures published in the Arab press conflate Jewish symbols, and Holocaust-related terms with the Coronavirus images.

Anti-Israel discourse

Iranian propaganda in South America

- The Iranian regime propaganda in the Spanish language through the Latin America-based HispanTV continues to promote anti-Israel speech, also suggesting that Israel enacts policies against Palestinian children.
- In at least [two pieces](#) published by HispanTV, Israel is accused of scheming to grab more Palestinian land, profiting from the international crisis. The publications also promote the Iran-sponsored Al Quds Day, marked on the last Friday of the month of Ramadan with worldwide anti-Israel demonstrations.
- A further anti-Israel topic concerns false accusations of Israel deliberately targeting Palestinian children. An item broadcast on HispanTV reports the opinions of the Spanish activist Aritz Saidi Olaortua, according to whom Israel is exploiting the situation for launching a [military campaign against Palestinian children](#). Another publication suggests that Israel’s negligent policies facilitate the [Coronavirus contagion among children in detention](#).
- In an interview with Jofré Real, [Israel is compared to the Coronavirus](#). By using expressions such as “virus sion-48,” referring to the year 1948 when the State of Israel was established, and “Zionist virus,” Israel is portrayed as a plague.

The Arab press

- A number of cartoons published in the Arab press advance anti-Israel sentiment, including the portrayal of Israel and Zionism as a virus and the alleged plan to grab Palestinian lands, exploiting the general crisis caused by the pandemic.
- The London-based Al-Quds Al-Arabi published two anti-Israel caricatures. One of them shows Netanyahu embracing an Israeli settlement, while surrounding individuals are [silenced by the protective masks against the virus](#). Another caricature shows an elderly person and a youth both silenced by a piece of cloth on which “we are returning” is written, while on the background an Israeli flag carries the word “Coronavirus 1948,” the year when the State of Israel was established.
- The media outlet Falasteen has published a series of caricatures using Jewish symbols to portray Israel as a virus. For instance, one caricature portrays the [Star of David as the Coronavirus](#), reporting the title “the most dangerous virus for humanity.” Another caricature accuses the virus of normalization conveyed by TV Series, showing a family sitting in front of [a television that \(unclear\) Stars of David together with Coronavirus](#). This caricature refers to the TV Series aired by the Saudi Tv channel MBC “Um Haroon,” which tells the story a Jewish woman living in a Gulf country in the 1940s; the TV series was highly criticized by certain the Arab press, contending that it promotes normalization with Israel.

Conspiracy theories

- As noted since the outbreak of the Coronavirus crisis, conspiracy theories play a central role in extreme-right and extreme-left narratives. Part of the conspiracy narrative is that Israel and the U.S. are behind the crisis, having caused it or profiting from it, at times portraying them as poisonous, as appeared in a [street drawing in Düsseldorf](#).
- Earlier [this month in Holland](#), a booklet was distributed in a number of cities, containing conspiracy theories and antisemitic references to Jews and Israel related to the pandemic.

Holocaust abuse

- The measures adopted to counter the pandemic have been [compared to Nazi policies](#) in Germany, where protesters gathering against the anti-Coronavirus policy also [used the yellow star](#) that Jews had to wear under Nazi rule.