

Summary for Kantor Center

Principal episodes of antisemitism in Italy in 2014

The information contained herein has been obtained from those involved (victims), from the communications of the Jewish Community or other organizations, from open sources (newspapers, radio, Web, etc.) and from analyses and studies by institutions and organizations both in and outside of the EU.

In 2014, the “Osservatorio antisemitismo” of the Fondazione CDEC recorded approximately 90 episodes of antisemitism, a significantly higher number than that recorded over the last three years and double the total for 2013.

It must be borne in mind when interpreting the tally that in September 2014, the “Antenna antisemitismo” went into operation, providing a toll-free number and online form (www.osservatorioantisemitismo.it) to allow victims and witnesses to report acts of antisemitism, allowing many more episodes to be reported.

As is true every year, the episodes tend to concentrate around International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January. A second peak was recorded over the months of July in August in concomitance with the conflict between Hamas and the State of Israel in the Gaza Strip.

Generally speaking, 2014 was marked by a continuing trend toward increasing antisemitic aggression, both verbal and nonverbal.

Principal episodes of antisemitism in 2014

While antisemitic prejudice tends to cut across all social, cultural and political classes, openly declared antisemitism tends to be the province of extremist political groups on both the left and the right. However, antisemitic sentiment also surfaces outside of these contexts, expressed in conspiracy theories, Holocaust denial, demonization of Israel, equating Israel with Nazi Germany, etc.

Below we list some of the most relevant episodes of antisemitism occurring in 2014.

When confronted with the statement “You are accused of antisemitism and of wanting to reappraise *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*” in a January interview with *Corriere della Sera* on his change of allegiance from Antonio Di Pietro’s Italia Dei Valori to Beppe Grillo’s Movimento 5 Stelle, the philosopher and professor emeritus Gianni Vattimo responded: “I just said that if they’re an invention, they’re pretty well done. As for the rest, I am anti-Zionist, not antisemitic. Far be it from me to nurture the idea of a Judeo-Masonic plot. I

believe that the State of Israel has been the beginning of ruination. And let us not forget that the Federal Reserve is owned by the Rothschilds and the Rockefellers.”

On 26 January in Rome, pigs’ heads were delivered to three symbolic locations of Roman Judaism. On 28 January, a boiled pig’s head was delivered to the offices of the Jewish Community of Florence.

In May in Rome, a great deal of antisemitic graffiti was found along Via dei Colli Portuensi, an area including a synagogue and activities administered by Jews. They included such writings as “Jewish store” with the Star of David, and “no Jews on the Colli”. There were also references to the restaurant Squisi and its owner: “Jewish store” (together with a swastika) and “Stefano Jew”.

On 25 July, a number of university faculty launched a very harsh diatribe against Israel. Professor Angelo D’Orsi of the University of Turin promoted the attack on the website Historiamagistra.it: “We accuse - We demand a Nuremberg [Trial] for Israel”. In addition to numerous accusations inspired by anti-Zionist ideology (“the governments of Israel and the Israeli army are carrying out a policy of colonial expansion, ethnic cleansing, massacre. They utilize the vilest methods of colonialism, not by chance inherited from the Third Reich. We ask the world to mobilize against Israel: we believe that the State of Israel must be brought before a special international court for the destruction of Palestine. Not just individual military or political figures, but the entire state and its accomplices: its past, its present and its presumable future”), it is emphasized that: “we accuse Israeli society as a whole. Poisoned with chauvinism and racism, it shows indifference or worse to the tragedy of the Palestinian people and exerts a grave threat to its Arab minority.” Five faculty members who are often involved in anti-Zionist polemics were among the first signers of the appeal.

A banner was put up in front of the main entrance to the Synagogue of Vercelli with the words: “#stop bombing gaza israele assassini free palestine”.

On 26 July, a group of anti-Zionist activists carrying Palestinian flags and an effigy of Benjamin Netanyahu in butcher’s clothes distributed anti-Zionist leaflets and demonstrated in favor of Gaza in front of the Turin synagogue on Piazzetta Primo Levi.

On 26 July, Lanfranco Lancione, former councilman in the Refounded Communist Party for the City of Teramo, posted a comment on his Facebook page asking to “reopen the concentration camps”. To those who reminded him that “the concentration camps caused immense pain and suffering, they were places where hundreds of thousands of innocent and defenseless people were murdered”, Lancione replied that “we’re tired of the Jews and their stories about antisemitism, you can’t say or do anything against them, for 50 years they’ve been massacring a people whose only guilt was that of having had their lands invaded and being forced to abandon them. The Jews are just Jews, there are no good Jews or bad Jews...they’re Jews and that’s all.” And he went on to conclude with: “the sooner Israel is destroyed the better, for everyone”.

On 5 August in the mosque in San Donà di Piave, the imam Abd Al-Barr Al-Rawdhi gave a sermon against the Jews. He said that the Jews must die. All of them, “down to the last, without sparing a single one of them”. This would make Muslims “happy”. This sermon was given during the khutbah, the Friday sermon, in front of several hundred of the

faithful, including many children. No one there showed indignation. Some nodded, all seemed to receive those words as if they were the most normal thing in the world.

Turning to the faithful, Abd Al-Barr Al-Rawdhi asks: "What can we expect of [the Jews], whose hearts are harder than stone? What can we expect of people whose hands are soiled with the blood of the prophets, not to mention that of defenseless, innocent people?"

This was followed shortly after by an invocation to genocide: "Oh Allah, bring upon them that which will make us happy. Oh Allah, count them one by one and kill them to the last one. Spare not one of them. Transform their food into poison, make the air they breathe blazing hot, fill their slumber with grief and darken their every day. Oh Allah, plant fear in their hearts."

After this episode, Minister of the Interior Angelino Alfano ordered the imam expelled from Italy for "serious disturbance to the public order and a threat to national security, and discrimination based on religion". For Alfano, "it is not acceptable that a speech of clear antisemitic tenor be pronounced, one containing explicit incitement to violence and religious hatred. May my decision serve as a warning for all those who think that hate may be preached in Italy".

In Rome on 9 August, notices were put up on the walls in certain neighborhoods, particularly in Viale Libia, against Jewish-owned stores, urging people to boycott "Israeli products" with a list of some 50 stores, signed "Vita est militia": "Boycott Israel, help stop the massacre of the Palestinian people. All Jewish products and merchants must be boycotted".

On 29 August in Genoa, an anti-euro sign was hung outside a bar among the tables and chairs, "Euro? No thanks", "Did you know that the banknotes we have in our pockets were signed by Jews?" There was a drawing of the star of David and examples: "Duisberg: Dutch Jew; Mario Draghi: Italian Jew; Trichet: French Jew". And also: "This is the result of a deception from which only England was spared. We must now regain monetary sovereignty and return as quickly as possible to our original currencies". It closed with an exhortation: "Together we can".

The Radical right

In 2014, exponents and sympathizers of radical right parties and movements were the protagonists of many antisemitic and negationist episodes and polemics and a whitewashing of Nazi-Fascism.

In September, militants from Crotone in the extreme rightist party Forza Nuova carried out a blitz during a conference organized for the "European Day of Jewish Culture". The extremists displayed a banner reading "Israel pariah state, free Palestine" and handing out flyers with gruesome images of dead Palestinian children killed during the recent conflict in Gaza. To avoid tensions, the police force allowed the Forza Nuova regional secretary to give a speech marked by anti-Zionist invective.

At the end of December, the Special Operations Group (ROS) of the carabinieri arrested a number of members of the neo-Fascist "Avanguardia ordinovista", who appeared to be planning violent terrorist actions. In their telephone conversations and posts published in social media, the extremists used brutally racist and antisemitic expressions.

Negationism

For over a decade now, negationism (Holocaust denial) is communicated principally on the Web on websites, forums and social networks in the form of articles, books, documentaries, Nazi-Rock music, photomontages and caricatures.

Negationism is part of the ideological and militant baggage of Neo-Nazi political formations such as "Azione Frontale", "Militia" or "Movimento Nazionalsocialista dei Lavoratori", which are located in only a few regions (Lombardy, Veneto, Lazio) and have few members but are very active.

In late January, three sympathizers of the extreme rightist party Forza Nuova hung a banner reading "Remember to forget" on the fence of the Rosselli school in Aprilia, which had organized an event commemorating International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

On 13 September, during its national celebration in Cantù, Forza Nuova organized a negationist conference "Politically Correct - the Thought Gulag" with speeches by such people as Mirko "Biomirko" Viola, convicted on several occasions for his extremist and antisemitic activities, and Gianantonio Valli, an antisemitic polemicist and author of a number of antisemitic and Holocaust-denying books.

The second edition of the antisemitic and negationist conference "New Horizon" took place from 29 September to 1 October 2014 in Teheran with 31 speakers, four of which were Italian (the third most numerous delegation after the United States and France): the journalist Roberto Quaglia, Professor Claudio "Omar Amin" Mutti, the journalist Maurizio Blondet, and Claudio Moffa, professor at the University of Teramo. The Anti-Defamation League has defined "New Horizon" as a "conference dedicated to the promotion of antisemitic propaganda".

Negationist articles are published regularly in antisemitic print newspapers, most frequently in Neo-Nazi magazines such as *Avanguardia* and *L'uomo libero*.

Negationism is also quite at home in cyberspace, in forums and social networks. For years now there has been a peak in negationist writings and banners in correspondence with International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Here is a sampling of negationist episodes occurring between 27 January and 11 February

- Swastikas and writings such as "Zionism is a cancer on the world", "Israel butcher", and "No remembrance for those who falsify history" appeared around Teatro Donizetti in the center of Bergamo.
- Negationist and antisemitic words were written on the front of the municipal auditorium in Fondi (Province of Latina): "Holocaust = fraud"; "Star of David = dollar", and "Free Palestine", all complemented with the Celtic cross, the symbol of rightist extremism.

In April 2014, Beppe Grillo posted a paraphrased version of Primo Levi's poem *If This Is a Man* next to a photomontage of the Auschwitz gate where the famous "Arbeit macht frei" is changed into "P2 macht frei".

Examples of antisemitism in Italian cyberspace in 2014

In August, the Facebook page of a former Alleanza Nazionale senator included an exchange of antisemitic comments regarding the supposed construction of a crematorium in Calabria:

“With the arrival of the oven, someone was thinking of Via Giudecca [the former Jewish quarter in Reggio Calabria – translator’s note]. Fortunately they’re [the Jews, presumably – translator’s note] not there any more.”

“I would say it’s time for dessert, seeing as how we have the oven. And now that we’re going to have an oven (!?) let’s start thinking about the showers.”

The ethno-regionalist movement “Nazionalisti Friulani” (which was involved in the operation by the Special Operations Group [ROS] of the carabinieri against the subversive rightist groups in December 2014) published an array of antisemitic and racist photomontages and comments on its Facebook page. On November 12 there was a post where the Jewish Purim festival is described as a celebration of the massacre of non-Jews.

The “Anti Monsanto” page on Facebook with more than 20,000 likes regularly publishes antisemitic and conspiracy-theorist photomontages and posts, including one in December accusing the leading Italian politicians and functionaries of being “Rothschild puppets”.

Counteractions and Good Practices

On 11 October 2014, on the 70th anniversary of the deportation of the Jews from Rome, Pope Francis received a delegation from the Jewish Community of Rome. During the audience the Pope stated: “In a few days we will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the deportation of the Jews from Rome. We will remember then and pray for the many innocent victims of human barbarism and for their families. It will also be an occasion [to renew] our vigilance so that no forms of intolerance or antisemitism, under any pretext, may ever arise again in Rome or in the rest of the world. I have said it other times and I would like to repeat it again now: it is a contradiction for a Christian to be antisemitic. A Christian’s roots are partly Jewish. A Christian cannot be an anti-Semite! May antisemitism be banished from the hearts and lives of every man and every woman!”

On 31 July, after the appearance of a series of antisemitic writings in Rome, the Italian Minister of the Interior, Angelino Alfano, met with the president of the Union of the Jewish Communities of Italy, Renzo Gattegna, at the Viminale to discuss the safety and security of the people and institutions associated with the 21 Jewish communities in Italy. We read in a note from the Viminale: “During the long and cordial meeting, Alfano expressed his solidarity and friendship with the Jewish communities and their representatives following the reprehensible threats appearing on the walls of the Capital, and reaffirmed the maximum commitment of the Ministry of the Interior and the forces of law and order to protect the civil and religious freedom of the communities”.